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## **Hon Minister's Speech – Commissioning of boreholes BAT – 22 May 2019**

General Manager and Senior Management of the British American Tobacco;

Members of the Mavua, Raiwaqa and Muavesi communities;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Cola Vina and good morning to you all.

I am delighted to here at Mavua village, to commission the Mavua, Raiwaqa and Muavesi boreholes and I sincerely thank the combined efforts of the villagers for their warm welcome. Vinaka Vakalevu. The commissioning of these three boreholes is indeed an auspicious occasion, something you've been waiting for, for a long time. I can tell you that your waiting days are over and I applaud you for your tolerance and patience.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to reiterate that the Fijian Government will not leave anyone behind and will not tire of its responsibility to deliver the best services. Your Government will always lend a helping hand, as we want to ensure stability for all Fijians. For the Aqua Project facilitated by the British American Tobacco, I have been told that the Mineral Resources Department had assisted greatly in identifying and confirming the boreholes. So, I would like to thank the Mineral Resources Department for their guidance and assistance.

I would also to acknowledge and commend the British American Tobacco Fiji for this great initiative and implementing such projects. Therefore, to commemorate today's event, I will conduct the ribbon cutting here at Mavua village, while a Senior BAT Executive will also do the same at Raiwaqa and Muavesi villages later today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today is a day for celebration as these three communities, will have a consistent supply of clean water. This water comes from deep within the earth, past the natural filters and allow your families to drink this water without boiling it, unlike the river catchment used in the past. This project not only installs a borehole into the ground, but also connects its installation structure to a 10,000-liter tank for resilience. This feeds into the village water system to transport clean drinking water to each and every household.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Human survival is dependent on water, thus the commissioning of these borehole has multi-facet benefits. It supports balanced economic development and at the same time, contributes to the preservation and sustainable utilisation of resources, to name a few. Ultimately, the development of projects such as boreholes, are part of our endeavor to build greater resilience at grass-root level.

History tells us that human beings have fought over access to water, but for the three villages, I am pleased to see that this need has been brought to you. Today, you will no longer need to fetch water or rely on hand dug wells.

Hence, as the Minister for Community Development, such partnership with the private sector, in bringing the much needed clean water to your communities is crucial. I would like to reassure you that the Fijian Government and the private sector, will ensure that clean, adequate and safe water as stated under the Fijian Constitution, is made available to communities such as Mavua, Raiwaqa and Muavesi.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This \$90,000 project, will help you meet the requirements for a reliable, sustainable and improved supply of quality water in Mavua, Raiwaqa and Muavesi. These are areas, which struggle with shortages of water especially during the dry season. I was informed that the commissioning of these boreholes will benefit more than 500 people, 3 churches and 3 community halls.

You will now be able to enjoy a better life, as water plays a crucial role in your daily lives, especially for the purpose of drinking, bathing, washing and cleaning. However, whilst we enjoy these benefits, let's not forget how important rainfall harvesting is, to supplementing ground water.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this juncture, I would also like to acknowledge the Yavusa Tubainuqi – Taukei Bukusia and the Yavusa Nabuavatu – Taukei Nakutadrodoro for their continued support, in agreeing to drill the boreholes that would provide water to the three villages. This partnership and collaboration is a testimony of the greater things that are yet to come for the people of Mavua, Raiwaqa and Muavesi. I therefore encourage you all to continue working together in developing your livelihood and community as a whole.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given the investment and the infrastructure provided, I urge you to adhere to the recommended pumping rate and durations to ensure sustainability of the project. I wish to also remind you that failure to comply with this, could lead to an unsustainable yield and a possible degradation in water quality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With those words, it gives me great pleasure to officially commission the Mavua, Raiwaqa and Muavesi boreholes and wish the communities all the best.

Vinaka vakalevu, thank you.

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