

**COUNTRY STATEMENT BY HON JONE V. NAVAKAMOCEA AT
THE 2006 ASIAN REGIONAL FORUM ON AID EFFECTIVENESS
MANILA, PHILIPPINES
18-20 OCTOBER, 2006**

Representatives of the Government of the United Kingdom & DFID,
Representatives of the Government of Japan & JICA,
Representatives of the World Bank,
Representatives of the ADB,
Representatives of other International and Donor Organizations,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Bula vinaka and a very good morning to you all. We bring you greetings from the sunny Fiji Islands. We also bid you farewell this morning, as all good things have to come to an end.

I am indeed honored and privileged to be invited to lead our delegation to this important high level forum on Aid Effectiveness. On behalf of the delegation and the Government of Fiji, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Asian Development Bank and the co-sponsors of this forum for the invitation. The forum has been very informative and fruitful for us and we have certainly learnt many lessons.

There are many issues on our table to resolve, to clarify and commit ourselves to, through dialogue amongst our partners in attempting to move the Paris Declaration forward.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would just like to remind ourselves that people and the communities at large are at the very heart of the Paris Declaration. Country systems and processes are just tools to ensure that aid flows reaches and makes

an impact on the lives of peoples and communities. Aid is effective if it is able to make a difference in their lives – hence it becomes more meaningful for them. We must always ensure that aid reaches the people and communities whilst at the same time continue to strive to improve our country systems and processes. Weaknesses in country systems and processes should not be used as an excuse of diverting aid from the very people that need them.

Therefore, in the context of implementing the Paris Declaration, may I reiterate the observation made by Dr Dante, which I very much share, that the effectiveness of Aid is really the tangible benefits that accrue to the recipient countries, the people and local communities in alleviating poverty and raising their living standards. We must always keep this in mind when developing mechanisms for enhancing the implementation of the Paris Declaration. Importantly, the objective of reducing transaction costs of aid is critical to allow more resources to flow to the final recipients and make a greater impact of aid at the community level and in their lives.

This forum is really important for us and certainly there many lessons that we will be taking back home, because, we are planning to organize a donor coordination meeting early next year. The donor coordination meeting, amongst other things, will also be an important forum for us, to present to our development partners a progress report on the implementation of the Paris Declaration.

As I had raised during my intervention on the Breakout Group on “Ownership” that we have just completed a draft Strategic Development Plan 2007-2011, after having gone through various phases of consultations, culminating in a National Economic Summit on the 28-29th of September, 2006. This draft plan will be tabled in Parliament during our budget debate in November, 2006.

Therefore, it is our intention to present at the donor coordination forum, the Strategic Development 2007-2011, the Public Sector Investment Programme

2007-2009, which outlines our medium term expenditure framework and a progress report on the implementation of the Paris Declaration. High on our workplan is the development of a Policy Implementation Matrix where donors and government, as partners, list their priorities and together, can match intervention to further deliver our development agenda.

To move the Paris Declaration forward, the country requires technical assistance from development partners. Assistance is needed, particularly from the World Bank and/or Asian Development Bank to elaborate on the national aid management framework and an aid management information system to track the delivery of aid. We wish to work out a strategy that will spell out how the country will coordinate aid, a guide for both donor and national agencies.

The inclusion of civil society organizations in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the national policy is a great asset to improve conditions for all our peoples. In this area, we need to develop a policy framework to govern the working relationship between Government and Civil Society Organizations.

The levels of discussions and interactions at this forum between donors and partner countries have been encouraging. However, there is the need to take the forum at a lower level involving subregions and countries. Ladies and Gentlemen, you will appreciate that “ownership” and the other components and commitments on the Paris Declaration have different meanings and interpretations across regions and countries. Therefore, I feel that there is a stronger need to contextualize the Paris Declaration to our own local and country situations to make it more meaningful for all of us. In this connection, I extend a request to the ADB and the co-sponsors of this forum to kindly organize a subregional forum for Pacific Island Countries in Fiji.

To conclude, the Government of Fiji is pleased to have been invited to participate in this, the first Asia-wide discussion to follow the Paris Declaration last year.

We acknowledge the level of assistance donors have provided in the past years and reiterate the need for continuous dialogue on matters relating to Aid, particularly in the implementation of the Paris Declaration and pledge our commitment to ensure that aid is made more effective, not only for Fiji but for all Small Island Developing States with which we share the South Pacific.

On behalf of the delegation and the Government of Fiji, I would like to thank the ADB for the organization and hosting of this important forum. I would also like to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude to other organizations/Governments that have co-sponsored this forum.

Lastly, I would like to sincerely thank the Government of the Philippines and its people for their hospitality and making our stay enjoyable. Thank you indeed.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for listening. Vinaka Vakalevu, ni sa moce. Salamat Po, Paalam.
