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P R E S S R E L E A S E

Eni F.H. Faleomavaega
Chairman

The Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington, D.C.

**FALEOMAVAEGA SUGGESTS PATH FOR U.S. TO
HELP FIJI RESOLVE POLITICAL PROBLEMS**

The Chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment, Rep. Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, today sent Secretary of State Hillary Clinton a letter outlining his views on a path for the United States to help Fiji's resolve its longstanding political problems. He also conveyed his thoughts on the situation to Kurt Campbell, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (America's top diplomat for the region), at a meeting the two participated in this morning. The Chairman developed his views in close consultation over an extended period of time with key leaders – including those from the opposition – representing all major constituencies involved in the political issues confronting the country.

“Fiji's problems, which can be traced directly to the country's unique colonial history, have included four military coups and one civilian coup – under three different constitutions – in the period since 1987. I have visited Fiji three times in the past three months and spoken with leaders from all sides, and I have also consulted other key figures in the region. Fiji, the United States and the Asia Pacific as a whole have an enormous stake in ensuring Fiji's swift return to stability, democracy and economic growth,” said Faleomavaega.

“I was pleased to learn that Kurt Campbell will be leading a high-level U.S. interagency delegation next week to the Post-Forum Dialogue of the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) in Cairns, Australia. Kurt is an old friend, and I look forward to working with him in coming months and years on issues affecting Oceania, as well Northeast and Southeast Asia, three of the four regions over which my Subcommittee has jurisdiction – and the three regions his bureau oversees. The fact that Kurt will be leading such an important group will send precisely the right signal about the Obama Administration’s commitment to engaging the Pacific Island countries and helping Fiji address its problems. The key topic for the upcoming PIF will be the current situation in Fiji, including the country’s suspension from the Forum last May.”

“There is ongoing debate among the countries of Oceania on how best to address the problems in Fiji. Two weeks ago, the Melanesian Spearhead Group, which includes the countries of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji, called for the PIF to lift its suspension of Fiji. The Group also recognized Fiji's right to participate in regional trade and economic agreements. On the other side, Australia and New Zealand have sought to sanction Fiji. But their actions have proved notably counterproductive, in my view, resulting only in greater hardship for the people of Fiji. Fortunately, Wellington and Canberra seem to be toning down their rhetoric lately, and appear more willing to engage in constructive dialogue with Suva,” added Faleomavaega.

“On my three trips to Fiji this year, I have held discussions with interim Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama, deposed Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase and a couple dozen others. On my most recent trip last week, I presented Prime Minister Bainimarama with a letter outlining my views on how the United States might offer expertise and resources to assist his country in achieving equal suffrage and other political, economic and social reforms targeted under the ‘Strategic Framework for Change.’ Such U.S. assistance would help strengthen bilateral ties, improve regional conditions and speed the sort of reforms that the interim Prime Minister, I believe, sincerely seeks.”

“I am looking forward to continuing my conversation with both Secretary Clinton and Assistant Secretary Campbell and stand willing to assist in any way I can. I firmly believe we should seize the opportunity we have right now to help Fiji move more speedily toward democracy, stability and prosperity,” Faleomavaega concluded.



Rep. Eni F.H. Faleomavaega and Kurt Campbell, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.
July 30, 2000

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