



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Ratu Tevita Mara's Response to Announcement by the Regime on Constitutional Process**

Canberra: 9<sup>th</sup> March 2012

As expected, the constitution process announced today by Bainimarama has all the hallmarks of control and bias associated with his regime. It will not pass any international test of credibility and independence.

*"He is clearly embarking on a so-called consultation that will be stacked in his favour and propelled by a massive regime propaganda exercise which must be rejected "* says Ratu Mara

Two of the three people appointed initially to his Constitutional Commission to engage in a "civic education process", should resign immediately. Professor Nandan is a prominent Bainimarama disciple who has publicly and lavishly praised his 2006 coup. Taufa Vakatale is widely-regarded as a Bainimarama supporter who has willingly accepted appointments by the regime. Their sympathies will obviously come into play during the consultations.

The Chairperson, Professor Yash Ghai, is certainly experienced in constitution-making and is familiar with Fiji. However, his role as academic supervisor to Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Bainimarama's chief collaborator, when Sayed-Khaiyum prepared a controversial thesis on indigenous Fijian culture, raises questions about his appointment. The same applies to his earlier role as a constitutional consultant to certain Fiji political parties.

The evidence for the planned national brain-washing is contained in Bainimarama's reference to government collating and printing material for "civic education".

He is intent on forcing the People's Charter for Change down people's throats. This has been adopted by the government as its own manifesto. But it does not have a valid mandate from the people. If the Bainimarama manifesto is to be the ideological reference point for the constitution then the manifestos of political parties with proven support should also be put to the people.

The details about the planned constituent assembly are very vague and obviously have not yet been fully thought out. But one thing can be certain, it will be Bainimarama's creature - expected, ultimately, to do his bidding.

He should tell the people whether the army will be sitting in the constituent assembly.

