Mr Vatimi.T.T.K. Rayalu

Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Waterways

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON "APPLICATIONS OF JUNCAO TECHNOLOGY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO ALLEVIATING POVERTY, PROMOTING PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT"

20-22 February 2024

Excellency the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Mr Zhou Jian,

Chief National Strategies and Capacity Building Branch DSDG/UNDESA- Mr Amson Sibanda,

Chief Scientist, National Engineering Research Center of Juncao Technology, FAFU- Professor Lin Zhanxi,

Hon Fellow Ministers,

Respected Representatives of the International Organisations from various countries,

Senior Government Officials,

Friends and media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ni sa bula vinaka and a very good morning to you all.

I am pleased to be present here this morning to be part of this significant occasion officiating **"International Workshop on the Applications of Juncao Technology and its contribution to alleviate poverty, promoting productive employment and protecting environment"** through the generous co-operation of UNDESA and the National Engineering Research Center of Juncao Technology, FAFU, and also choosing Fiji to host of this International event.

The China-Fiji Juncao Technology Project was jointly initiated and promoted by the governments of China and Fiji since the inception of the project in 2014. MOAW has worked closely together with China-Fiji Juncao Technology Demonstration Center in successfully promoting the transfer of Juncao Technologies to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to acknowledge the Government of the People's Republic of China for its commitment in introducing "Juncao Technology" in Fiji allowing farmers in Fiji to have access to diverse commodities which are sustainable enabling safe food systems which are not only environmental friendly but also meets nutritional and food security demands. The "Juncao Technology" has enabled the promotion and development of edible and medicinal mushroom using Giant Juncao Grass.

Fiji faces numerous problems ranging from geographical isolation, susceptibility to natural disasters due to climate change that hinder Agricultural development and Sustainable food security. It is imperative to transform agri food systems on scaling up investments in agriculture.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Fiji is not new to this application of Juncao Technology. Phase 1 of the project started on 17th October, 2014, almost 10 years ago with the construction of Juncao Technology Demonstration Center at Legalega Research Station with the introduction of 8 edible mushroom as a food product into our local communities and 2 varieties of Juncao grass. This opened the pathway to mushroom farming creating new employment opportunities in rural communities and providing solutions that addresses climate change particularly in the production of nutritious livestock feed and protection against soil erosion for our river banks.

Ladies and gentlemen, Phase 2 of the project included capacity building of staff and stakeholders in mushroom and livestock farming and establishment of 2Ha of Giant Juncao grass at Legalega Research station which serves as the raw materials for making mushroom substrate.

Ladies and gentlemen, The 3rd Phase of China-Fiji Juncao Technology Demonstration Center has started on 1/1/23 and has successfully established stakeholders. The major objective of the third phase of this project is to commercialize mushroom production, promote Giant Juncao grass for livestock feed empowering rural women and youth in Fiji while addressing soil erosion and desertification. These opportunities has been

extended to other Pacific Island Countries to reap the benefits of Juncao Technology. A regional workshop will be conducted for our Pacific Island countries starting this Friday (23/2/24 to 29/2/24).

To date we have worked closely with 3 technical Institutions, 1 in west (Votualevu College and 2 in Central (NATI and FTG), and 5 women's group, 4 in central (Naitasiri Women's group, Ravodrau cluster, Lomaivua Women's cluster, Tailevu South Group) and 1 in west (Nasavu Women's Group) and 3 vulnerable group (2 in central and 1 in west) and 9 registered business. **Ladies and gentlemen** you will meet the representatives of the above and share their success stories during this workshop.

52 trainings has been conducted by the JUNCAO team in collaboration with MOAW with over 2400 technicians. Last year 12 local participants were selected for short courses in China, to broaden their knowledge on Juncao Technologies.

The China-Fiji Juncao Technology Demonstration Center in collaboration with MoAW in last five years have supplied 2m Juncao cuttings to 1200 livestock farmers all over Fiji which had 34% female recipients. It had supplied more than 400,000 of mushroom substrates to over 2400 farmers and stakeholders which had 35% female recipients. More than 200 mushroom farmers and stakeholders were assisted during COVID 19 pandemic for food security and quick income generation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Fiji currently imports 100 tonnes of mushrooms annually valued at $0.9 million (2022 FARS/FBoS trade data). COVID 19 pandemic has taught us to revise our policy measures and incentives to

address the impact of compounding food crisis to meet Food and Nutrition security requirements of our nation. With new innovative models of development, Juncao Technology has the capacity to effectively respond to disasters, external shocks and uncertainties to our food systems. The technology has proven to integrate and complement our community's traditional production systems to counter income shortfalls, promote diverse cropping systems, empower women and youth and promote green diverse cropping systems.

Ladies and gentlemen, This workshop will witness the various benefits of this technology by visiting the China-Fiji Juncao Technology Demonstration Center, farmers and stakeholders who are growing high temperature mushrooms, using giant Juncao grass as livestock feed, and to solve ecological and soil erosion issues.

Ladies and Gentlemen, We note the generous contribution from UNDESA and the support from the Government of the People's Republic of China to Fiji in initiating this workshop for a progressive step transformation towards safer agri food systems using Juncao Technology for poverty reduction. I sincerely believe this is a milestone towards sustainable food system.

To conclude, we really to promote climate resilient agriculture which are not only environmental friendly but adaptive to climate change hence allowing continuous growth of Fiji's Agriculture sector and I believe with this healthy collaboration, Fiji and the International Participants will reap the benefits on the application of Juncao technology and strengthen the Fijian Governments commitment in improving food and nutrition security.

I would like to acknowledge and sincerely express my gratitude to the government of the People's Republic of China, UNDESA for giving this opportunity to Fiji to provide this workshop for regional and International participants.

Ladies and gentlemen, with these words I have great pleasure in officially opening this International Workshop for greater collaboration and enhancement in Juncao Technology for the benefit of our world and meeting Sustainable development goals 2030.

Thank you, Vinaka vakalevu and Dhaanyavaad.

End.