2002 VANUATU UPDATE

Welcome speech

The Hon. Sela Molisa
Minister for Finance and Economic Management, Government of Vanuatu

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu, I take this opportunity to welcome you all to Vanuatu and Port Vila on the occasion of the Vanuatu Update Seminar.

This Vanuatu Update provides an opportunity for all the major players in the economy to engage in a public debate over current issues of common interest. Some of the issues as you can see from the program are of high importance.

Without wanting to discuss at this point the program in detail, let me just highlight the importance of such an opportunity. It is particularly timely as our country is still undergoing the process of the Comprehensive Reform Programme, and such seminar as the Vanuatu Update must be considered a complementary effort to such exercises as the CRP Summit and others. It is pleasing to note the interest expressed by your participation and I would like to ensure you that the heavy representation by Government Senior Officials today indicates the strong commitment and endorsement by the Vanuatu Government of the Vanuatu Update exercise.

I would like to encourage a free, open, constructive and honest debate and would also suggest that a report of the seminar, which I understand is held every two years or so, is compiled for future reference and any subsequent follow up activities.

I wish to thank the Australia National University for spearheading this exercise. The in-country Update seminars as I understand it is a regional exercise and I am informed that the same activity was recently conducted in Fiji and other neighbouring countries.

I would also like to thank the University of the South Pacific, Emalus Campus for collaborating with the Australian National University in facilitating the local arrangements for the seminar.

My sincere thanks also go to AusAID for acknowledging the importance of the Vanuatu Update exercise and agreeing to fund it.

It is my final wish that our discussions today become fruitful and provide us leaders and major players of the Vanuatu economy with further ideas and suggestions on the ways to work more closely together for the betterment of our nation.

I wish you all a pleasant seminar.