



FIJI HOTEL AND TOURISM ASSOCIATION'S HOTECH TRADESHOW
OPENING ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND
MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION, HON. VILIAME
GAVOKA

24 October 2024

Sheraton Fiji Golf and Beach Resort

10:00 am

Denarau, Nadi

President Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association, Narend
Kumar,

Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association Board Directors,

Chief Executive Officer, Fiji Hotel and Tourism
Association, Fantasha Lockington, and your members,

Valued Sponsor and Event Partners,

Esteemed Guests, Exhibitors,

Industry Partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bula Vinaka! It is my honour to join you all at the 2024 Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association's HOTECH Tradeshow, here at the Sheraton Fiji Golf and Beach Resort.

I am glad to see that the HOTECH has become one of Fiji trade events. So, to Fantasha and the team – congratulations.

A GROWING TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two weeks ago, I was in Perth at a World Travel and Tourism Council Summit, and attended by some 800 tourism and travel professionals and leaders from around the globe.

The dialogue on the status and future of tourism and travel are mind boggling.

1. The travel industry will account for US\$1 out of every US\$10 spent globally in 2024 as the sector's contribution to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It will increase 12.1 percent year-on-year to a record USD\$11.1 trillion.
2. This means travel is responsible for 10 percent of global GDP – a 7.5 percent increase from 2019.
3. By 2034, we as a sector will supercharge the global economy with a staggering US\$16 trillion, making up 11.4 percent of the entire economic landscape.
4. This will provide 449 million jobs, nearly 12.2 percent of the workforce.
5. Looking at Oceania as a region, the sector could inject an additional US\$112 billion to our regional economy by 2034, bringing the total contribution to US\$336 billion.

6. This boost could also support an extra 1.1 million jobs, raising the total employment in the region supported by Travel and Tourism to 3.5 million by 2034.

I want us to take a moment to appreciate these figures and what it really means for us here.

Whether you represent a hotel, a supplier, an exhibitor, a farmer or in logistics – each of us will be impacted.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We know as the Fijian tourism industry; we are growing each year – despite the many challenges we are resilient.

We also make significant positive impacts like encouraging our people to create economic opportunities and jobs within their villages.

The good news is, we are well positioned to leverage this growing global industry. Developers are building hotels

and our airline adding seats. So, we are not starting from scratch. There will always be a growing demand, and we are gradually developing capacity to meet the demand.

As an update, tourism is 40% of the GDP. Year to date as of September 2024, we are 7% up from last year and at this rate we could be inching closer to the 1 million visitor mark by year end.

Gross receipts for last year are 3.3 billion and Tourism Fiji believes that we can achieve 4 billion in the next few years.

That said, the type of demand we see, continue to change. Some of the other interesting trends I learnt were:

1. Despite cost of living, Generation Z those born between 1995 and 2010 is prioritising tourism over other aspects of life such as purchasing homes. But there is more scrutiny now with 85 percent of Gen Z

indicating they did not have a brand in mind before choosing a destination.

2. The Chinese generation of 50s and 60s with disposable income and time will be travelling more. By next year, over 100 million seniors will travel.
3. India has seen a rise in young aspiring Indian travellers who are motivated by the need to 'live in the now'.
4. More travellers are looking for eco-friendly, authentic outdoor experiences as well as wellness.
5. Artificial intelligence will drive tourism and change traditional business models.
6. Customers are increasingly digitally enabled and want to use digital wallets to pay for everything from airline to local transport, entertainment, and food and beverage.

7. 81 percent of travellers say trying local foods and cuisines is the highlight of their trip and 47 percent of Gen Z and Millennials have planned an entire trip around visiting a specific restaurant.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our job as an industry is to hone in on these trends and see how we can cater for them.

A lot of this requires partnership, keeping up with the latest technology and innovative solutions, looking at new products and techniques.

Events like HOTECH provide the platform to keep building on these gains.

HOTECH TRADESHOW – A CATALYST

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The HOTECH Tradeshow represents far more than a mere exhibition. It is a space for innovation, collaboration, and growth within our tourism sector.

With local suppliers and international exhibitors showcasing their offerings, this event opens new doors for partnerships that will shape the future of hospitality in Fiji.

I understand you have activities like cooking master class, wine training and barista and mixology classes. These are opportunities that can help not just individual businesses – but the industry lift its standards.

It is through the collective efforts of stakeholders like you, showcased here today, that our industry continues to thrive.

IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we look to the future, the importance of sustainability in tourism cannot be overstated.

Our industry relies heavily on the pristine natural environment that we are blessed with, and it is our responsibility to protect it for future generations.

This year's HOTECH Tradeshow also gives us the opportunity to keep updated on sustainable products, energy-efficient technologies, and form strategic partnerships that prioritize environmental stewardship.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Global travel and tourism industry's Green-House Gases (GHG) emissions were 6.7 percent in 2023, a reduction from the 7.8 percent recorded in 2019. This means we are doing our part as a global sector.

The efforts you make in your businesses directly contribute to this.

As you know, in a few days Fiji will also be at the 29th Conference of Parties (COP29) where we will be negotiating and spearheading the voice of the Pacific.

And I am very pleased that for the first time, “Climate Action in Tourism” will be part of the Action Agenda. This really is a milestone for an important economic sector such as tourism.

NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FRAMEWORK

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year, I am particularly excited about the Sustainability in Practice Session, running in parallel with the tradeshow.

I am even more pleased to see it align to Fiji’s National Sustainable Tourism Framework, which embodies Fiji's

commitment to weaving sustainability into every aspect of the industry.

The Framework encourages us to integrate practices that not only reduce our environmental footprint but also enhance the well-being of local communities, preserving the cultural heritage that makes Fiji so unique.

COALITION GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO TOURISM

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Coalition Government remains committed to this very important sector. We have made considerable strides in infrastructure development, improving air connectivity, and positioning Fiji as a top-tier destination on the global stage.

Our strategic investments in airports, roads, and public amenities are directly supporting tourism growth and this will continue.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the organisers, exhibitors, and all participants whose dedication has made this event possible.

The HOTECH Tradeshow is a celebration of innovation, and also a critical moment to reflect on the direction of our industry.

Let's use this opportunity to learn from each other, collaborate on new ideas, and continue leading the way in sustainable tourism.

Vinaka vakalevu, and I wish you all a successful and inspiring HOTECH Tradeshow.

Thank you.