



International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

National Observance

Opening Remarks by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation

**30 June, 2025
9:00 AM**

**Suva Civic Center
Suva**

The Minister for Policing, Honorable Ioane Naivalurua,

The Police Commissioner, Mr. Rusiate Tudravu,

Your Excellency's, High Commissioners and

Ambassadors,

Invited Guests,

Members of the Media,

And most importantly our torch bearers of tomorrow, the
children who are here with us this morning,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Ni sa Bula Vinaka, Namaste, and a very good morning to you all.

First and foremost I would like to pay homage, tribute and deep respects to the owners of the land that we now stand, ki ***Nadonumai vua na Turaga na Tui Suva, its leaders past present and emerging.***

It is an honour for me to stand before you today on behalf of the Honourable Prime Minister to mark the national observance of the **International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 2025.**

This year's theme, "**One Nation, One Goal: Illicit Drug-Free Fiji,**" could not be more fitting. Our unity as a nation, our shared goal, is to protect our people, our values, our communities, and our future from the devastating grip of drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

Though global in origin, this observance takes on a uniquely Fijian meaning today. We've rescheduled our national event to June 30 to ensure full participation from our schoolchildren, the torchbearers of tomorrow, who have just completed their exams. Their presence here isn't symbolic. It's essential. The fight we wage today is for them.

Fiji's Fight: More than a Law Enforcement Issue

Fellow Fijians,

Let's be clear. Drug abuse and trafficking aren't just criminal matters. They are developmental, social, and economic threats. They break families, endanger lives, and erode the foundations of our wellbeing. The burden they place on our health systems, justice system, and economy is immense and overbearing!

At the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, we understand this deeply. **Our industries rely on one critical truth: "Fiji must be safe"**. Our reputation as a destination of peace and happiness, where travellers

come to heal, connect, and be inspired, depends on the safety of our communities and the health of our people.

The Brand We Protect - and What Threatens It

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tourism Fiji's global campaign, "**Fiji, Where Happiness Comes Naturally,**" is more than a slogan. It's a national promise. But we must face reality. There is no happiness if we ignore the shadows threatening it.

Drug abuse, left unchecked, will damage our tourism brand. ***It will hurt communities and push our youth away from opportunity and into despair. The time to act is now.***

What We Are Doing — Together

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As part of our response, my Ministry has reconvened the Tourism Risk Mitigation Unit. This unit — in close partnership with the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Fiji

Police Force, the civil aviation sectors, and private sectors, is addressing risks of all kinds: natural, economic, and social. That includes the rising threat of illicit drugs.

We are working proactively, not reactively, to safeguard our people, our travellers, and our national brand. From the safety protocols at our resorts to the vigilance at our airports, our message is clear: ***Fiji will not compromise on safety.***

Beyond today, we must sustain this momentum. The Ministry of Policing, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, organising the IDADAIT event throughout Fiji today, will continue to meet and plan in a new space, which I am honoured to name today as the: **Illicit Drugs-Free Fiji: Integrated Planning Space (IDF-IPS).**

This integrated platform will ensure coordinated action and shared responsibility, strengthening our community policing approach and work in:-

- Harm Reduction,
- Supply Reduction,
- Treatment and Rehabilitation, as well as,
- Legal support.

The fight against drug abuse and illicit trafficking will only be cost-effective and achieve greater impact through collaboration and unity of effort.

That message is being reinforced by your Coalition Government in the 2025–2026 National Budget through increased support to the Fiji Police Force, including a recruitment drive for over 1000 new officers. This is not just support for law enforcement. It's an investment in national stability and public trust.

The Broader Vision: A Safer, Smarter Fiji

But enforcement alone won't solve this. Just as sustainable tourism thrives on education and community involvement, our fight against drugs must include:

- **Prevention**, starting in schools and youth spaces

- **Treatment and rehabilitation**, offering hope and recovery
- **Faith-based and community engagement**, to strengthen values.
- **A whole-of-government strategy**, reflected in the **Illicit Drugs-Free Fiji: Integrated Planning Space (IDF-IPS)**

Call to Action

Fellow citizens,

This is our moment to take ownership, speak clearly, and act with urgency. IDADAIT may be observed in one day or for the whole week, but our commitment must endure beyond this National Observance.

Every act of prevention shapes a stronger Fiji. Every life we protect strengthens our economy. Every child we save is a win for our future.

To everyone listening: Let's build a Fiji where happiness comes naturally—because it comes from safe communities, secure neighbourhoods, and lives free from drugs.

Let me say that again, ***Let's build a Fiji where happiness comes naturally—because it comes from safe communities, secure neighbourhoods, and lives free from drugs!!***

Let us stand together — One Nation, One Goal — with conviction and compassion.

And with that, I now declare the national observance of **International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 2025**, officially open!

May God bless you all, and may God bless our beloved Fiji!

Thank you, Dhanyavaad and Vinaka vakalevu.