



**MINISTER FOR FINANCE, COMMERCE AND BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT**

HON. ESROM IMMANUEL

**THE OPENING OF THE TOPEX 2025 CONFERENCE
SOFITEL RESORT & SPA, NADI
21 NOVEMBER 2025**

- President of the Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation (FCEF), Mr. Eldon Eastgate;
- Chairperson for the TOPEX 2025 Committee, Ms. Rowena Taito; and TOPEX Committee
- Members of the board of FCEF;
- Distinguished local and international speakers;
- Government representatives;
- Delegates;
- Members of the media;
- Ladies and gentlemen.

A very good morning to you all. It is a pleasure to be here at the Top Executive Conference 2025, **a gathering that continues to shape leadership, strategy, and innovation across Fiji's business community.** Having seen how the TOPEX conference brings together Fiji's private sector leaders, I am pleased to be part of this very important forum; this is my first TOPEX experience. And from what I have been told, you are all in for an incredible two days.

The theme for TOPEX 2025, ***From Challenge to Catalyst: Global and Local Perspective***, is most prevalent today. As geopolitical, economic, and social structures around the world evolve at an unprecedented pace, businesses are faced with a range of intricate challenges and uncertainties. These shifts call for a collaborative approach, where the private sector comes together to build sustainable pathways forward.

Despite these complexities, the theme highlights our shared commitment to achieving the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals set for 2030.

I understand that the 2025 Top Executive (TOPEX) conference has gathered over 400 delegates, marking the largest attendance since TOPEX began in the 1980s. This year also commemorates TOPEX's 65th anniversary. The government acknowledges the Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation (FCEF) for its role as the voice of the private sector and national private sector representative, established in June 1960 by 21 founding organizations.

I commend FCEF for achieving this milestone, showcasing remarkable growth and setting a high standard with a conference that brings together leading figures from the private sector in one room.

Fiji's private sector is a vital force in the nation's progress, and each of you here today represents the leadership that shapes its development and future direction. I want to express my gratitude for the essential role you play in driving our nation's growth.

Through its initiatives and the National Development Plan, the Fijian Government has demonstrated its commitment as a true partner to the private sector. Although there are many challenges together, we have collaborated to develop and implement policies that sustain businesses and support the vitality of the Fijian economy.

Our National Development Plan aims for Fiji to be a high-income country by 2050. To realise this target, we need real GDP growth at an average annual rate of 5-6% per annum. Such growth can only be enabled by greater private sector engagement, leadership and investment.

As a government, we are working on improving the ease of doing business in Fiji. We have allocated \$4.3 million to support the Ease of Doing Business program through the BusinessNOW Fiji platform. An additional \$562,500 has been directed toward the broader DigitalFIJI initiative. Additionally, the establishment of the Investment Facilitation Committee aims to boost investor confidence by creating a platform for raising issues that hinder a conducive investment environment.

With the support of FCEF we have launched the Trade Information Portal, and we are now working towards realising the Single Window Trade Platform. This will enhance our capacity to export, benefit many local manufacturers and reduce our trade deficit.

To address the challenge of access to finance MSMEs face, we have worked with FCEF to introduce a legislation to introduce small offers and equity crowd funding. This will allow MSMEs to raise capital by offering shares or equity in their business to investors. With FCEF we will soon be launching the

“Investment Ready” programme for MSMEs under FCEF’s Fiji Enterprise Engine (FEE).

As we look to the future, it is essential that the government and private sector strive to maintain a strong partnership, to drive sustainable development and economic resilience. Close collaboration between these sectors will ensure that we effectively address emerging challenges, leverage new opportunities, and work toward our shared national goals for growth and prosperity.

I commend FCEF on their foresight with the establishment of TOPEX. The bringing together of leaders, decision makers, policy creators is an incredible opportunity to encourage collaboration, generate constructive dialogue and facilitate healthy debate with a solutions-based outcome. A powerful platform for formulating private sector perspectives that inform the government’s economic reviews.

This collaboration plays a crucial role in enabling the Fijian Government to address the nation’s development and growth effectively.

I am confident that the outcome statement from this year’s conference will provide a valuable framework to help shape our path forward. The thematic areas discussed over the next two days are of critical importance. We the government is eager to explore ways we can work together to integrate these priorities into our strategic planning and development.

As I conclude, I cannot overstate the vital need for continued public -private partnerships. In your deliberations over the next two days, I encourage you as you discuss priorities and

solutions, be mindful of how the private sector can continue to strengthen its partnership further enhance its collaboration with the public sector while exploring priorities and solutions.

With those few words, it is my pleasure to officially open TOPEX 2025. I wish all delegates, speakers, TOPEX committee members and FCEF Board the very best for the days ahead.

May God bless us all and bless Fiji!

Vinaka Vakalevu
