

**Opening Remarks by the permanent Secretary for Health,
Dr Salanieta Saketa
At the Regional Training on World Breastfeeding Trends
Initiative (WBTi)**

Tanoa Plaza, Monday 6th of June 2011

The UNICEF Representative,
The IBFAN Asia Representative,
The Manager FNFC,
The Facilitators of the Training,
Dear Participants from the Region and Fiji,

Ladies and gentlemen,
Bula vinaka and Good Morning.

I am honored and pleased to be here at the opening of your two days training on World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative. Firstly I take this opportunity on behalf of the Government of Fiji and the Minister of Health to warmly welcome our counterparts from Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Kiribati to our shores.

Secondly to appreciate the efforts of the organizers of this very important training for its timing considering the efforts that each of our countries are making towards the attainment of the MDGs for maternal and child health by 2015 and for Fiji in particular it would assist us more in the implementation of the Code for marketing Controls of Foods for Infants and Children recently passed by cabinet in 2010.

This milestone achievement for Fiji would not have been possible without the support of UNICEF and IBFAN Asia.

Additionally I Wish to inform that Fiji has had its 21 public hospitals declared Baby Friendly and could be declared a Baby Friendly nation although we still have to achieve this Baby Friendly status with our one only private hospital. It has a National Breastfeeding Policy, has an existing maternity leave period of 84 days for government employees and has integrated and adopted the 10 key IYCF messages into its management protocols such as IMCI and the new WHO growth assessment.

Last month I had the pleasure as a member of the Fiji National University Council to endorse the new paternity leave policy for the FUN staff. I am hoping that more employers of this country will follow suit in this path.

I was also pleased to be informed last week that the ministry of Fisheries and Forest will launch the opening of their workplace crèche to promote breastfeeding of their lactating female workers and I quote his words “I want to be able to ensure that I assist the women workers who are breastfeeding their children to give the best start in life for their child which will have a generational effect just like we are doing with our plant a million trees program’.

I am sure that our friends from our neighboring countries will certainly have a lot to share in terms of how their countries are progressing towards the attainment of the MDG 4 and 5 just as Fiji is doing in the next 2 days of your training.

Of course it is very well that we have these policies and programs but we must ensure that these are translated into public health action which henceforth will make impact on the live of the children in our countries.

So having a tool to monitor and evaluate progress is crucial and I am pleased to note that this 2 day training is basically for this purpose.

I have been informed that the Would Breastfeeding Trends Initiative is a tool developed by IBFAN Asia to assess the status and benchmark the progress of the implementation of the Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF).

The tool is based on two important global initiatives namely WABA's Global Action Participatory Action Research (GLOPAR) and on the World Health Organization's "infant and Young Child Feeding: A Tool for assessing national practices, policies and programmes."

This tool will certainly assist all our countries in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of our policies and programmes towards the protection, promotion and support for optimal infant and young child feeding practices.

At this juncture I wish to acknowledge the assistance UNICEF Pacific, IBFAN Oceania and the Fiji National Food and Nutrition Centre for co-hosting this very important training.

I wish to conclude by wishing you a very enjoyable and successful training and look forward to the results of your evaluations once your return to your countries and implement what your have learnt.

Thank you, Vinaka vakalevu and Dhaanbhad.