

## PRESS RELEASE



### **Joaquim Da Fonseca Appointed Chairperson of the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

**Thursday, 29 January 2026:** Joaquim Da Fonseca was sworn in as the Chairperson of the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission (FTRC) by the President of Fiji, His Excellency Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu, at the State House this morning.

As the Commission advances into a pivotal phase of its mandate, Mr Fonseca assumes the role alongside the four local Commissioners: former High Court Judge Sekove Naqiolevu, gender specialist and leadership coach Ana Laqeretabua, human rights advisor and communications specialist Rachna Nath and retired Fiji Airways pilot Captain Rajendra Dass.

A national of Timor-Leste, Mr Fonseca is a distinguished diplomat and senior adviser with more than two decades of experience in reconciliation, peacebuilding, transitional justice, and human rights across post-conflict and transitional settings.

In accepting the appointment, Mr Fonseca stated that he would undertake the role with humility.

“Reconciliation is not a destination but a journey that requires the courage of the entire nation. I am honoured to accept this responsibility and to walk this path with the people of Fiji,” he said.

Mr Fonseca has been at the forefront of Timor-Leste’s reconciliation and justice processes since 1999, contributing from the early truth and reconciliation initiatives under the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) through to the development of national mechanisms that continue to guide the country’s healing and unity.

“The core lesson from Timor-Leste is that while a commission cannot always resolve every grievance or address every wrong due to legal or political constraints, the integrity of the process is paramount. The recognition and validation of the survivors and witnesses experiences is, in itself, a form of justice. It is my hope that these lessons will support Fiji as it navigates its own path toward truth, healing, and national unity.”

His professional experience is grounded in the Timorese independence struggle, national truth-seeking processes, and post-conflict peacebuilding, and is complemented by senior diplomatic leadership as Ambassador to the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United Nations in Geneva. Throughout his career, he has consistently bridged across government, civil society, and multilateral institutions to advance justice, reconciliation, and social cohesion.

Fluent in English, Portuguese, Tetum, and Bahasa Indonesia, Mr Fonseca brings strategic vision, diplomatic leadership, and a proven record in transitional justice aligned with the Commission’s mandate.

Section 5 of the Fiji Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2024, subsection (2) and (3) states, that:

“(2) The Commission consists of 5 Commissioners appointed by the President, 3 of whom must be citizens of Fiji.”

“(3) The Chairperson is appointed by the President from among the Commissioners.”

#### **About FTRC:**

The FTRC is an independent entity set up for truth-telling, reconciliation, and national healing. The mandate of the FTRC is to examine past political upheavals and their impact on people’s lives. The Commission is looking at the physical and emotional harm, loss of life and property, and systemic injustices on people.

The purpose of this work is to foster unity and social cohesion in a society where everyone feels safe, equal, included and able to thrive. The Commission seeks to honour the lived experiences of survivors by providing a platform for voices to be heard, validated, and acknowledged.

The Commission emphasises that truth-telling is not about retribution. It is about recognition, healing, to ensure that history is not repeated. Through reconciliation, the Commission aims to build a stronger and peaceful Fiji for future generations.

**Note:** The Commission is encouraging members of the public to contact us in relation to any of the above. We look forward to hearing from you. Reach us by phone, email, or through our Facebook page, where a contact form is also available.

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