

LEADING FIJIAN PARLIAMENTARIAN APPOINTED AS UNAIDS SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

Geneva, 10 June 2005 – The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is pleased to announce the appointment of the speaker of the Fijian House of Representatives Ratu Epeli Nailatikau as UNAIDS Special Representative for the Pacific.

In 1999 Ratu Epeli held the post of Secretary for Foreign Affairs and External Trade in Fiji and in 2000 was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Fijian Affairs. He has been Speaker in the Fijian House of Representatives since 2001 and also serves as the Chairman of the Parliamentary Appropriations Committee and the House Committee. He also currently serves as Chair of the Pacific Parliamentary Assembly on Population and Development.

Ratu Epeli is widely respected in the Pacific through his lifelong service to Fiji and the region. He is dedicated to advocating on the potential impact that HIV could have on small island states has spoken out on sensitive HIV-related issues including condom use.

Patron to a number of social and community causes in Fiji, Ratu Epeli has previously been a UNAIDS Pacific spokesperson, a UNICEF Pacific advocate on children's and young people's issues, and has championed a number of other causes with significant connection to HIV. In October 2004 he hosted and chaired the First Conference of Pacific Parliamentarians on 'The Role of Pacific Parliamentarians in the Fight against HIV/AIDS' held in Suva.