Bainimarama urges global crusade to save oceans
By Tevita Vuibau Wednesday, June 07, 2017 – The Fiji Times

Members of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces brass band perform the traditional yaqona ceremony to formally welcome dignitaries at the Ocean Conference in New York, US, yesterday. Picture: SUPPLIED

PRIME Minister Voreqe Bainimarama says Fiji seeks the commitment of all 7.5 billion people on planet Earth to ensure the health of the oceans is improved.

He made the appeal in his opening address at the United Nations Ocean Conference, saying there was no country or government that could afford to ignore both threats to the ocean as well as climate change.

"We seek a commitment from all 7.5 billion people on earth to join our crusade to improve the quality of our oceans.

"Let us all seize this moment in history to make a difference. To place SDG 14 at the very top of the global agenda alongside decisive climate action. We can do it. We must do it. Because the alternative in both cases is catastrophe."

Mr Bainimarama lamented the rapid deterioration of ocean fish stocks and the polluted state of oceans.

"So much of what we dispose of carelessly finally ends up in our seas through stormwater drains, creeks and rivers," he said.
"Our waterways are choking. Our seas and oceans have become vast rubbish dumps. And the creatures who live in them are suffering acutely — turtles, dolphins and sharks caught in netting, whales with stomachs full of plastic bags and other rubbish.

"Humankind is slowly killing off one of our most precious resources — the rich bounty of our seas and oceans that generations across the millennia have relied upon for sustenance, and to earn a living."

He thanked New Zealand, Australia, the US and France for their assistance in warding off intruders who would seek to plunder Fiji’s fish stocks.

"Where there was once abundant fish — where I was able to throw a line overboard and quickly bring in a catch — the haul is increasingly sparse or non-existent.

"In too many instances, greedy nations and greedy commercial interests are robbing us of our food and our livelihoods. Because overfishing threatens both our food security and our economic base.

"Small island developing states like Fiji lack the means to effectively police our economic zones. And in this context, I want to use this opportunity to warmly thank our larger neighbours — New Zealand, Australia, the United States and France — for coming to our assistance with the occasional naval deployment to ward off intruders."