



**Consumer Council of Fiji  
Chief Executive Officer  
Seema Shandil**

## **Speech at the 2023 World Consumer Rights Day National Celebrations**

**Bula Vinaka and a very good morning to you all,**

First of all, let me welcome you all to the 2023 World Consumer Rights Day National Celebrations.

On behalf of the Council's Board, Management and Staff, I would also like to convey my heartfelt appreciation to our Chief Guest for the event Hon. Manoa Kamikamica, panellists and all guests for accepting the invite to attend, participate and contribute to this national event, which also will be held globally today.

Ladies and Gentleman,

The World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD), which is celebrated every year on 15<sup>th</sup> March, is an important annual event to mark the global solidarity within the international consumer movement. WCRD is our chance to make the biggest impact possible on issues affecting consumers and the planet. Working together, our voices calling for change are far more powerful than they would be alone. Such platforms give us the opportunity to bring to the world's attention on crucial consumer issues and seek reforms where needed.

Ladies and gentleman,

For 40 years the Council as the only leading consumer advocacy body and member of the global consumer movement has celebrated World Consumer Rights Day and raised national awareness on consumer rights by carrying out diverse and strategic national campaigns and activities.

This year, the theme for WCRD is **'Empowering Consumers through Clean Energy Transitions'**. Amid the greatest cost-of-living crisis in a generation and as the energy world grapples with supply and climate issues, consumers have a core role to play in supporting and pushing for a just transition.

For this reason, the Council is not only raising awareness on clean energy, but is also initiating productive discussions with policy makers and industry players here today on the pathway to take in the upcoming years.

Ladies and gentleman,

What is the role of consumers – the largest group of economic stakeholders – in these changes?



How can they be protected and empowered through clean energy transitions?

Consumers are the actors for change. We all wield power as marketplace actors. We are all consumers of energy services, and as such, we have the potential to take action that accelerates clean energy transitions.

And World Consumer Rights Day 2023 is trying to demonstrate how the choices we make each day as consumers, in how we travel, cook, or heat or cool our homes, have the potential to accelerate transformative changes for the planet, and to call on governments and business to provide greater support for people making these changes.

Ladies and gentleman,

Research has shown that demand-side changes could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 70% by 2050. In practice, this means consumers and policy makers are trying to trigger transformative changes by adopting low-carbon alternatives – like carpooling or using public transport instead of a private vehicle – and improving other existing habits such as heavy reliance of fossil fuel. Your demand decisions matters if we really want to achieve the stated 70%.

The opportunities for people and planet are clear. But there are many challenges such as availability, affordability and accessibility to clean energy and corresponding products needs to be overcome and lack of consumer empowerment. Consumers also need to have access to relevant knowledge and information on the need and opportunities for the transition.

Whilst we all know clean energy transition is not easy and cannot happen overnight and requires all stakeholders engagement; the Council is calling on consumers to begin this transition atleast at household level - you can make responsible and informed decisions on energy products and services, form part of local energy communities and become prosumers at the community level as the good news is that we still have the lifeline Infront us such as solar and hydro and biomass which has strong potentials in Fiji and far much cheaper than fossil fuel and coal. Remember, even the simplest of actions can go a long way in clean energy transition.

However, the opportunity for consumers to accelerate clean energy transitions is currently being missed. Consumers need to be supported and empowered to overcome consistent technological, infrastructural, financial, regulatory and knowledge related barriers, which stand in the way of transformative action.

To empower consumers in taking action, we should consider the essential needs of consumers on the journey towards consumer action, and the barriers they face at each stage. Acknowledging and proposing solutions for these barriers is crucial for consumers to transition towards clean energy. And we believe that action from consumer advocates, decision-makers and other stakeholders can ensure that consumers are protected in the transition.

We must focus on a ‘consumer focussed’ energy transition.

Ladies and gentleman,



We know there are huge bumps in energy transitions and will have significant effects on how energy transitions unfolds And as I already have said and would want to reiterate – we need collective and unwavering efforts from policymakers, businesses, and other stakeholders in order to address the barrier to clean energy transition

As I have also mentioned, we need to work towards empowering consumers in clean energy transition and our esteemed panellists here today will shed more light on it.

With these words, I once again thank everyone for taking their time out to attend this very important event and I look forward to engaging in the discussions.

Thank you.