

Traditional Ceremony of Welcome to the Director General of IUCN

National Trust Staff spent two weeks organising the welcome ceremony which was hosted by the Ministry of Education, National Heritage, Culture and Arts for the Director General of IUCN Ms. Julia Marton – Lefevre on her first Oceania region visit to Fiji.

Held at the Fiji Museum on the evening of 9 June 2009, the ceremony was attended by Fiji's Vice-President, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, government ministers, permanent secretaries, diplomatic missions, CROP agency representatives, IUCN Commission Members, IUCN regional Councillors and IUCN Partners and associates.

A Fijian Traditional Ceremony of welcome and traditional meke was presented by Master Laisiasa Veikoso and the students of the Fiji Music Conservatory. Appointed as Director General by the IUCN General Congress at Barcelona in 2008, Ms. Marton-Lefevre is on a tour of the IUCN offices around the world, meeting staff and partners. This is her first visit to the Oceania Region. She hopes this visit will strengthen to role of IUCN and its capacity to deliver to members in the region.

The Interim Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration, Ratu Epeli Ganilau, in welcoming Ms. Marton-Lefevre, announced Fiji's inception as a State Member of the IUCN. "As the first Pacific Island Country to join the IUCN, Fiji will become part of a collective and global voice in conservation planning and decision-making at local, national and regional levels and in the international arena by participating in the Union's World Conservation Congresses and other platforms for discussing conservation issues" he said.

National Trust of Fiji chairman, Mr. Radike Qereqeretabua expressed his appreciation for the visit by Ms. Marton-Lefevre. "The National Trust became a member of IUCN in 1978 and we value this partnership for our organisation," he said.

"Julia had a fabulous time in Fiji and has been truly challenged by the special issues of the Pacific," said IUCN Oceania Office Director, Mr. Taholo Kami.