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Fiji Country Statement

Symposium on "Strengthening the Capacities of Public  
Institutions & Developing Effective Partnerships to  
Realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"

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The Minister for Interior & Safety, Republic of Korea

The Under-Secretary General, UNDESA

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentleman

First and foremost, let me extend the Fijian Government's sincere appreciation to the Government of Korea and UNDESA for co-hosting this very important Symposium. This is an important event for all the Nations present because we have all

agreed that we are now experiencing an increase in the level of risk and impact of disasters, on our people and economies across our regions.

A symposium such as this enables small island states like Fiji to learn from the experience of countries in the Asia Pacific Region and the Indian Ocean. At the same time, it allows us to take home some of the key learnings from the discussions and design relevant home grown solutions which are relevant to our context.

For the information of this forum, Fiji has embraced the Sustainable Development Goals and recognizes that the State has the primary role in the achievement of these 17 goals. This is with the understanding that this responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector, the non-government sector, and other stakeholders.

The Fijian Government is localising the SDGs through its 5 year and 20 year National Development Plan that shows Our achievements have been driven by the establishment of a modern and inclusive Fijian Constitution, along with an unprecedented programme of administrative reforms across Government; substantial and consistent public investment in

infrastructure, public utilities, education, health and social inclusion; and a concerted effort to position Fiji as the hub of economic activity and regional engagement in the Pacific. Fiji has also emerged as a respected advocate on some of the great challenges facing humanity, including climate change, sustainable development and the preservation of our oceans.

The NDP is aligned with global commitments including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Consistent with the goal of the Paris Agreement to achieve climate neutrality and a low-emission world, we are currently in the process of developing a 2050 Pathway to decarbonise the Fijian economy.

In this regard Fiji has implemented various actions to achieve the SDGs including the establishment of public institutions for building resilience in SDG investments , I will highlight a few:

1. **The Green Climate fund:** as you may all already be aware of, the GCF is the main financial Instrument of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC]. In Fiji, the point of access for GCF is the Climate Change and International Cooperation Division under the Ministry of Economy. The Climate change Division is under the Ministry of Economy because not

only is it an Environmental issue but it is an issue that affects our Economy. It was imperative that the CC Division be placed in a Central Agency for cross cutting purposes.

2. Fiji has a GCF supported urban water supply and waste water project valued at USD \$405 million with a GCF contribution of up to USD \$31million. The Fiji Development bank was accredited by the GCF in 2017 for projects up to USD \$10 million.
3. Building awareness of GCF and developing capacity in engaging with GCF funds is a priority for Fiji Moving forward.

The Pacific region in totality has already made strong progress in relation to the GCF, including seven projects totalling more than USD \$250 million approved for the Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. These projects will involve building the regions resilience to climate impacts and tapping the potential for renewable energy and energy efficiency solutions.

The outlook for Fiji is:

1. Ensuring access to climate finance opportunities to provide sustainable climate finance of a sufficient magnitude

2. Support from the GCF can potentially facilitate Fiji with a range of obligations such as the International Climate obligations to the UNFCCC, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, regional instruments such as the S.A.M.O.A pathway and the framework for a Pacific Oceanscape and National Instruments such as the NDP, National Climate Change Policy, Green Growth Framework, and the National Adaptation Plan. These instruments dovetail towards a pathway for low carbon and climate resilient development for the people of Fiji.
3. Whilst obtaining support from the GCF is not a superficial task, institutional arrangements and capacities have been strengthened in Fiji through the Green Climate Fund readiness Programme. This development for GCF projects for Fiji contributes to Fiji's national priorities and has transformative impacts on all Fijians in terms of prosperity, safety, health and wellbeing.

The second Initiative by the Fijian Government I would like to highlight today is the Environment and Climate Adaptation Levy also known as ECAL. ECAL is a tax prescribed on services, items and income. ECAL helps fund critical work across Fiji to protect our Natural environment, reduce our carbon footprint, and adapt our economy, our communities and our infrastructure to the worsening impacts of climate change.

ECAL is collected by Government through the Fiji Revenue & Customs Authority and administered by the Ministry of Economy in accordance with various financial legislations

Through ECAL the Fijian Government has been able to financially support major sectors across Government:

1. FJ \$0.96 million for Disaster Relief and Response
2. FJ \$1.04 million for Meteorological Services
3. FJ \$1.10 million for Rural Development
4. FJ \$29.50 million for Cyclone Rehabilitation
5. FJ \$1.25 million for Urban Development
6. FJ \$4.60 million for Agricultural Development
7. FJ \$1.83 million for Sustainable Resource Management
8. FJ \$63.77 million for Infrastructure Development
9. FJ \$1.50 million for Energy Conservation
10. FJ \$0.52 million for Environmental Conservation

As at 30<sup>th</sup> April, FJ \$110.6 million ECAL funds had been collected with FJ \$106 million utilized as of the same date for forty six [46] projects across the various sectors.

On a more Global level Fiji is currently part of the UNFCCC initiative “Oceans Pathway Partnership” which aligns itself to SDG 14. Fiji’s COP 23 presidency is a voice for the most vulnerable countries that include small island and coastal states that are literally on the nexus of the ocean and climate change. A healthy ocean is critical to the economic, cultural and social wellbeing of vulnerable countries and a significant threat to their survival with the impacts of climate change including sea level rise, acidification and intense storms and weather patterns compromising their future.

Fiji and Sweden co-chaired the first UN Ocean Conference in June 2017 and the Call for Action underlined the urgency for a healthy ocean and the critical relationship between the ocean and climate. Action for a healthy ocean is action on climate change and vice versa. It is imperative that Fiji as President for COP23 ensures an effective and cohesive home for the ocean in the UNFCCC process. Fiji as a Pacific Small Island Developing State (SIDS) also recognizes the significance of their role as Large Ocean States with more than 90 percent of their national boundaries made up of ocean. Fiji is also a member of the Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS) in the United Nations. While SIDS representatives have held important positions within the UNFCCC process, Fiji is the first Island nation to hold

the Presidency of the Climate Change COP. Embedding the ocean in the UNFCCC is an imperative for all SIDS and coastal states and Fiji's Presidency of COP a formidable opportunity.

Finally, the current acknowledgement of the ocean in the Paris Agreement falls under the recognition of the important role of ecosystem services to climate change and its role as a carbon sink. The ocean is the most critical of all natural ecosystems for our climate due to a combination of its composition and scale. There is no solution to global climate change without action on the world's ocean. A special case for a healthy ocean and climate is established under this Fiji Presidency.

Fiji, is currently in the process of completing its Voluntary National Review [VNR] of the SDGs and hopes to have this presented at the High level Political forum in New York in July, 2019. This VNR will show the great progress in the provision of services in many sectors including education, health and infrastructure to name a few. However, despite many positive achievements in the health sector, such as the reduction of the maternal mortality rate, challenges have risen from the increase in non-communicable diseases.

The Fijian Government has taken steps to address these challenges by developing long, medium and short term plans, and allocating resources to realize those plans.

The principle of leaving no one behind forms the core of the SDGs and thus, the achievement of the SDGs mandate the adoption of an inclusive growth approach. Welfare policies and programmes that include health system, education system, and social protection programmes further contribute to ensuring that no one is left behind.

Distinguished delegates, I look forward to working and collaborating with you over the next few days and more so into the future in achieving some of our actionable commitments as set out in the SDGs. This collaboration is important in ensuring that we continue to work on building the resilience of SIDS moving into the future.

Thank you and Vinaka Vakalevu.