



NATIONAL STATEMENT
HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
THEME: “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while
advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development”

Monday 18 July 2022, Conference Room 4

OPENING REMARKS

Mr. President, I have the honour to deliver this statement in my national capacity. Fiji aligns this statement with the earlier statements by Alliance of Small Island Developing States (AOSIS), Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) States and the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS). I congratulate you, Mr President, on your successful Presidency that coincides with the 10th Anniversary of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

I wish to acknowledge the momentous nature of the in-person HLPF this year. The on-going COVID-19 pandemic has extracted a huge toll on countries across the World. Its impacts are most pronounced in small island developing states. The pandemic has meant that scarce resources had to be deployed to respond to the health crisis and a deep socio-economic crisis that the pandemic triggered. This has placed the SDGs at high risk across SIDS.

At this HLPF, the World needs to redouble efforts to ensure that we do indeed build back better from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Pacific Small Island Developing States face a long road to economic recovery. The structural challenges faced by Small Island Developing States is not only due to their special characteristics of size, geography, remoteness, vulnerability to frequent natural

disasters and external shocks; it is also due to the ways in which the international development system, which includes the UN system, disadvantages them systematically. Fiji welcomes the Secretary General's report on the development and use of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) which will help SIDS to overcome the systematic disadvantages that they face in assessing credit, concessional financing and securing debt relief.

It is time that we collectively strengthen the links between the United Nations Funds and Programs and the IFIs. IFIs, multilateral development banks, regional development banks, national development banks and Member States must work together to develop a new framework for development finance that is responsive to and that works for SIDS; and not against them as they often do. The achievement of the 2030 Agenda will be contingent on this.

SGD 4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Education has faced the full brunt of COVID-19 as 90 per cent of all students were kept out of school as a direct consequence of school closures that were caused by COVID. This has reversed years of progress on education making it harder for countries to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all. Remote learning was a major challenge for the developing world including Fiji. It is alarming to know that remote learning will remain out of reach for at least 500 million students and that over 200 million children will remain out of school in 2030.

This year Fiji is honoured to co-chair the Action Track 5 on Financing for Education of the Transforming Education Summit (TES) that will be held in September. We have concluded the Pre-Summit in Paris recently. It is our hope that Member States will commit to a bold financing framework that includes enhanced access to concessional finance; support for innovative financing solutions such as IFIs, securing increased philanthropic and private sector engagement; improved domestic financing and

resources and climate proofing education in order to deliver on SDG 4. We look forward to a new global compact on financing education.

For our own part, Fiji has maintained a central focus on education – protecting teacher salaries even during the period when the economy was fully shut down; increasing financing for higher education and at the Pacific Islands Forum regional level agreeing to a new framework for early childhood education.

SDG 5 GENDER EQUALITY

For millions of women and girls, COVID-19 marked a period of increased violence and abuse. As the pandemic enforced lockdowns, we witnessed another kind of pandemic whereby millions of women and girls were subjected to violence in their own homes in every corner of the world. COVID-19 has amplified the realities of our global order, unveiling the growing inequality that exists among us.

The widening gender gap between men and women can be seen in many areas; women are forced to provide care often without compensation, women are paid less for the same forms of employment as men, physical and sexual harassment at the workplace has increased against women, and their collective role in governance and parliaments across the world has declined. The rights of LGBTI community are being rolled back.

Women's rights are human rights. We need to collectively get back to work like never before if we are to secure SDG 4 – without gender equality, progress on all other SDG's will remain uneven.

SDG 14 LIFE BELOW WATER

Mr President, we welcomed the 2nd UN Ocean Conference. Ocean health is under severe pressure. Our ocean is an intricate arrangement of ecosystems, biodiversity and marine life. Once a vast expanse of rich ecosystems teeming with biodiversity and

marine life now confronts a “code red”. Deep sea mining, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, subsidized commercial fishing, piracy in the high seas, nuclear waste and harmful pollution and discharge into the ocean are growing challenges confronting ocean health and sustainability.

Fiji is proud to offer its strongest possible commitment to the protection, preservation and conservation of ocean health and governance by enforcing a 10-year moratorium on deep sea mining of the seabed in its national jurisdiction. Fiji has joined the Alliance for a Deep-Sea Mining Moratorium because we refuse to destroy what we do not understand. We won't be able to replace the potential discoveries that seabed mining could grind into dust. We have to put knowledge first and defend the deep. We encourage other Member States to follow suit.

The Western and Pacific Ocean accounts for more than 54 per cent of the world's tuna catch making tuna not only a key economic resource for development of the region but vital for global food security. The Pacific's tuna plays a crucial role in food security and even more so in the context of growing famine and food insecurity globally.

Climate change is not a natural phenomenon and neither is climate triggered sea-level rise. For Fiji, climate change is a real peril that has uprooted entire communities. Ambulatory baselines must not limit maritime entitlements of coastal states.

Mr. President, last week our Pacific Leaders met in Suva, Fiji and endorsed the Pacific Islands Forum's *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*. This framework helps us elevate our collective ambition to secure the SDG's.' By 2030, Fiji will achieve total real-time surveillance of its waters. We will be single-use plastic free; ocean literacy will be mandatory within our education system; and we'll lower carbon emissions in our shipping sector by 40%.

We will produce at least 160k metric tonnes of sustainably farmed and harvested ocean product, supporting 53k new jobs on the way to supply half of our blue foods from

sustainable fisheries by 2035. And by 2050 we aim to create 100k new jobs in sustainable fisheries. By 2050, Fiji will be a net-zero society. Our fisherfolk will have universal access to electric outboard motors, the Pacific will be home to a green shipping fleet and all fishing nets in Fijian waters will be biodegradable.

Fiji is pursuing the biggest ocean governance transformations in our history — perhaps one of the biggest in the world. Not because it's simple or comfortable but because these protections can't wait. These investments can't wait, nor can the jobs they create. Climate change action, ocean health and integrity, sustainable management of island and ocean resources and the health of the Pacific peoples are at the heart of the priorities of this 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

SDG 15 LIFE ON LAND

The triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss call for real action in this decade of action. Increased human activity through deforestation, pollution, industrialisation that has caused global warming, climate change, and climate induced sea-level rise are among the causes of biodiversity collapse. A million species are at risk of extinction if we do not immediately change our consumption practices, lifestyle patterns, methods of exploitation that are clearly demand driven, we will become more susceptible to pandemics and other external shocks if we do not take measures to restore the balance and equilibrium of ecosystems and recommit to a pathway that keeps global temperature rise to within 1.5 C. Everyone, G20, G7 and all member states needs to do a lot more to get there.

As a member to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), we are fully cognizant of the need for an ambitious and actionable framework that responds to the scale of challenges before the planet. We must draw focus on ecosystems and people to pursue positive trends in biodiversity rather than focusing all our efforts on achieving numerical targets. We must embrace biodiversity as life rather than numbers and activities.

Mr President, the Aichi Targets have expired in 2020. We are now in 2022 but we still have not completed our negotiations that would fully anchor new commitments to protecting biodiversity by 2030. For this reason, the Fifteenth Conference of States Parties (COP 15) is of such a profound significance. We look forward to participating actively in COP15 that will be held in Montreal, Canada.

SDG 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

The calls for substantive partnerships for SDG's could not be greater.

We call for a renewed partnership between the Global North and the Global South to achieve vaccine equity is one that needs to be delivered on. We call on OECD and OPEC countries to deliver on substantial new partnerships to bring the SDG's back within reach of SIDS. We call on the UN to work with private sector and philanthropic institutions to catalyse development finance on scale and speed that is needed. We call on G20 and the G7 to increase their commitment to SDG's – this is a plan for security and stability of our shared planet. Solidarity and substantive partnerships are the minimum starting points for getting SDG's back within reach.

CONCLUSION

Mr President, I wish to congratulate the 44 Member States who have presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) in this HLPF Fiji will present its 2nd VNR in the next HLPF that will coincide with the second SDG Summit in September.

In supporting the Ministerial Declaration, we have given new hope and expressed a firmer global commitment to securing the SDGs within this decade. The hope that the UN and multilateralism offers to the world and especially its young rests on securing the SDG's.

I thank you Mr. President.

Satyendra Prasad

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations

New York 18th July 2022.
