



Honourable Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji

NATIONAL STATEMENT AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE 3RD
WORLD CONFERENCE FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Sendai International Center
Miyagi Prefecture, Japan

Tuesday 17 March 2015
1000 Hours

Madame President, the Hon. Mrs Eriko Yamatani MP,
Chairman of the National Public Safety Commission and
Minister for National Disaster Management of Japan

President of the General Assembly Excellency Sam Kutesa

Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

Madame President may I on behalf of the Government and people of Fiji offer our condolences to the government and people of Vanuatu for the tragic loss of lives and devastation caused to housing and livelihood by Cyclone PAM. We stand with them in solidarity at their hour of suffering and need and pray for speedy recovery.

It is indeed an honor for me to deliver this statement on behalf of Fiji at this important conference, where we will collectively set the agenda for the next 15 years towards achieving a resilient and sustainable global society.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge with appreciation the consistent commitment by the Government of Japan to the issues of disaster risk reduction, including through hosting the world conference for DRR for the 3rd time. The Fijian delegation thanks Japan for the warm reception and excellent arrangements made for the Conference. I also acknowledge the great work done by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for working steadfastly, promoting disaster risk reduction as a way forward towards reducing risks and cost of risks, thus promoting sustainable development at the last decade.

Madame President, Fiji's transition in disaster risk management since the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in 2005 has been slow but sure.

At the introduction of the People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress in 2007, Fiji's pathway towards a progressive and prosperous society through merit-based equality of opportunities for all was put into motion.

These two frameworks dovetailed in their approach. The vulnerable and less fortunate have been given equal footing in the national development of Fiji.

Special groups like women, children, disabled persons, youths and older persons are recognized as important partners towards building a better Fiji. The 2013 Fijian Constitution provides a further basis for this approach to all policy areas on the basis of equality for all persons, and freedom from discrimination on any ground. The Fijian delegation trusts that such an approach will equally underpin the substantive agenda of the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework.

As we look ahead to finalising the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework, we must ensure that there is some continuity in implementing those aspects of the Hyogo Framework of Action where gaps have been experienced. We also need to ensure that there is alignment between this framework and the broader post-2015 development agenda as far as disaster risk reduction is concerned. It is important for Fiji and no doubt for Small Island Developing States that the SAMOA Pathway

for Action from the 3rd International SIDS Conference of 2014 will find mention in the framework, as the SAMOA Pathway document provides detail relating to the particularities of Small Island Developing States that would otherwise be missing from any future implementation activities relating to the framework in our countries.

Madame President, it is of fundamental importance for Fiji that climate change has been included as a major driver of disaster risk in the framework we are to adopt. Fiji's reality is one of climate change needing to be mainstreamed across all areas of disaster risk reduction and management, from policy planning and preparation, to disaster response and rebuilding. Equally important is an inclusive approach, with communities, the private sector, and civil society involved.

This is particularly so when we consider that adaptation has included in Fiji the need for relocation of communities. The increasing frequency and severity and repetitiveness of hydro meteorological hazards in Fiji, undoubtedly manifestations of climate change, continue to hamper efforts in Fiji to harness Fiji's assets and resources towards a progressive and prosperous society. Economic growth is difficult to achieve when disasters strike with increasing frequency, hampering recovery efforts. Building back better requires time and resources,

and neither are available in sufficient quantum between disasters. For affected communities in coastal, low-lying and riverbank areas, the only long term solution has been relocation.

The Fijian government has initiated a model where a whole community is relocated to a new place and given a new life which is sustainable and conducive to the aspirations of the community. A case in point is the Vunidogoloa whole community relocation where the integrated efforts of government and partners result in a successful adaptation venture. This DRR approach requires resources, not just in terms of the resources to build new and resilient communities in less disaster-prone areas, but also in terms of time and consultations with communities that often have strong traditional links with the land in their villages, and are resistant to relocation despite the obvious dangers of staying.

This also requires consultations with the private sector, given the importance of the Fijian tourism sector and establishments to our economy, and the impact of disasters on that sector as well. Nonetheless, the Fijian government has adopted this approach so as to build more resilient communities, and also to secure long term human rights, in terms of access to livelihoods, clean water, and other socio-economic rights that the Fijian

Constitution now provides for through a comprehensive Bill of Rights.

In all this, Madame President, international cooperation plays a crucial role. The Fijian Government without a doubt takes ownership of our DRR policies and plans, and we are proceeding with or without international cooperation to establish more emergency evacuation centres, to coordinate community responses to disasters in an inclusive manner, and to include awareness of DRR with stakeholders who sometimes do not see the relevance until a disaster strikes. Nonetheless, Fiji does not always have the data, or the technical capacity or resources to implement plans and policies beyond the immediate response to a disaster. To move truly beyond disaster response to disaster resilience, targeted and focused cooperation with countries who have had the experience and expertise is required. In this we look not just to traditional donor countries, but also to developing countries who have had experience responding to disasters and who face similar hydro-meteorological hazards as Fiji.

Madame President, Fiji has been participating consistently in the biennial review of the HFA programs. These reviews have been a good yardstick to gauge our progress on the 5 priority for actions given, and I can confidently say that despite certain hiccups and

downturns, we have been able to achieve these priority for actions at varying degrees.

We are of the view that the HFA approach and methodology should be adapted towards the new global DRR framework. Our commitment to share, and participate at various forums include the past 3 preparatory committee meetings towards this conference is our contribution towards a united approach to promote resilience within our global community.

Our institutional base for implementation is relatively stable in view of current governance instruments like the Disaster Management Act and Plan, and Climate Change policy. The Act and Plan require amendments, are currently revised for completion prior to year end. Their completion will result in a defining landscape towards implementation of DRR in the country, as most pertinent issues like change and special groups will be included.

Madame President, our inaugural national platform for DRR and climate change in 2014 resonates the need to develop an integrated approach towards climate change and disaster risk management. We are mindful of this mandate and will establish a National Strategic Plan towards this process.

In 2012, Fiji established the Pacific Island Development Forum to oversee green initiatives and sustainable development for all sectors in the region.

Under the direction of the Prime Minister and with the support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), a Green Growth Framework for Fiji was formulated in July 2014 following an extensive and inclusive consultative process. With the theme “Restoring the Balance in Development that is Sustainable for Our Future”, the Framework is intended to guide the design and application of future Development Plans. The Framework recognises the need to address and manage emerging challenges of population growth, growing urbanisation, unsustainable consumption and waste generation patterns, unsustainable resource use, infrastructure deficiency, the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters and the impacts of climate change.

Madame President, Fiji is not isolated from island countries in the region and strongly supports the development of a Strategy for Resilience Development for Climate and Disasters in the Pacific (SRDP). This will translate and cascade to a national approach where current work on DRR and Climate Change are integrated strongly.

The transboundary impact of disasters, and the need to include transboundary action on the DRR agenda, is one that Fiji foresees as being necessary in coming years, and this delegation will work with the international community to ensure that this is brought onto the agenda.

One only need to remember that it has already been necessary for Fiji's neighbour and friend Kiribati to buy land in Fiji for food security given the situation in Kiribati to realise the magnitude of the problem being faced by States such as ours on the frontline of climate change and most vulnerable to disasters.

The outcome of this 3rd World Conference for DRR is eagerly awaited! Fiji in anticipation and its commitment towards the new framework fully supports the progressive work done so far and the anticipated outcome of this conference.

I thank you Madame President, for the opportunity given to Fiji to share its experiences in DRR.

Vinaka vakalevu and thank you.