



Republic of Fiji

**STATEMENT BY COMMODORE JOSIA VOREQE BAINIMARAMA
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
AT THE
GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE 65TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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The President of the United Nations General Assembly,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mr. President,

Bula Vinaka and a good morning.

I extend to you and this august Assembly, warm greetings from the Government and people of Fiji.

May I take this opportunity Mr. President, to congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of the General Assembly's 65th Session, and pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Dr. Treki.

Mr. President, as I highlighted last year in my address, Fiji and her people, through the Strategic Framework for Change have embarked on a path of structural reform to modernize and liberalize our economy to today's global environment.

As part of this agenda, the Fiji government has revamped its foreign policy. Our new foreign policy direction stems from the philosophical basis that while determining our own destinies as sovereign states, we must work in collaboration with all Member States with the aim of sustainable world peace, substantive justice, dignity and respect for all.

However, Mr. President we cannot achieve these objectives, nor have actual implementation of these noble principles, if we simply fall into predetermined political spheres of influence or have predetermined alignments.

We must be prepared to expand the range of our international relationships. We must not simply subscribe to bloc voting. We must assess and decide on each issue on its merit. We must decide each matter based on equality, substantive justice and international law. We must keep an open mind.

This approach will result in the manifestation of a fairer and more just system for all its citizens.

Mr. President, this significant shift in foreign policy direction heralds the globalization and maturity of Fiji. It demonstrates Fiji's intention to become a good and engaged global citizen. Accordingly, over the past year Fiji has formalised diplomatic relations with many countries with which no ties previously existed. In addition, Fiji has sought membership of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The broadening of our engagement with the rest of the world was given further impetus in June of this year in Abu Dhabi when a summit was held between the Pacific Islands Developing States (PSIDS) and the Arab League member countries at the invitation of the Arab League and hosted by the United Arab Emirates.

This commitment to being a good global citizen is further expressed through Fiji's ongoing engagement with the United Nations and its associated agencies and secretariats. There is no better example of this engagement than Fiji's long contribution to the cause of UN peacekeeping and peace-building. Fijian servicemen and women currently serve in peacekeeping missions in Iraq, Southern Sudan, Liberia, Darfur and Timor Leste.

Mr. President, I offer my country's tribute to the selfless service given by UN peacekeepers and peace builders, past and present, in the troubled regions of our world. We pay special tribute to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the cause of peacekeeping.

On the subject of peace and security, Fiji is proud to have been among the Member States in 2006 that voted in favour of preparations for a robust and legally-binding Arms Trade Treaty in 2012. We also remain committed to the work of the United Nations in curbing illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Fiji has also ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions and regards this instrument as a welcome development in humanitarianism and international disarmament. Fiji also remains fully committed to international efforts against terrorism.

In the resolution of the world's territorial and sovereignty disputes, Fiji stands firm with all international efforts aimed at peaceful resolution through genuine dialogue processes. Fiji welcomes the recent resumption of direct negotiations between the leaders of Israel and Palestine and hopes for a successful outcome.

Fiji is also an active member of the UN's Special Political and Decolonisation Committee. Following our participation in the Ministerial Mission of the Melanesian Spearhead Group to New Caledonia this year, Fiji subsequently sponsored the UN Special Committee's 2010 resolution on New Caledonia. We urge all concerned parties to accelerate the progress of the provisions of the Noumea Accord.

Over the past year, the Fiji government has effected a number of legal changes that have not only modernized our laws and brought about gender and social parity, but has also ensured compliance with international conventions. These changes include but are not limited to the Crimes Decree, which removes archaic rules in respect of rape trials.

We have implemented for the first time a comprehensive law against domestic violence to be consistent with our international obligations and protect the welfare of women and children. We now have child welfare laws which compel the reporting of violence against children or suspicion of abuse of minors. These and other new laws assist in the compliance of the Rome Statue by recognizing and incorporating crimes against humanity in our domestic laws.

Fiji was also present at the June review conference of the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court held in Uganda and is of course supportive of the work of the ICC.

Reforms taking place in our laws and in our outlook help us to comply with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). They also support our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Mr. President, I would like to reaffirm the critical points made at last week's MDG Summit, and at the high-level review of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI). I make these points in the context of being one of the UN Members classified as Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

In spite of the considerable domestic efforts in cooperation with the international community, the SIDS have had very mixed results in achieving the MDG goals. Going forward, we and our development partners have to examine where success has been achieved, where efforts have been unsuccessful and identify country-specific priorities to achieve the MDGs.

Mr. President, the threat of climate change, particularly sea level rise, continues to hang over us all. While some of us are more vulnerable than others, we must work in concert as a responsible international family to mitigate the adverse effects of this global phenomenon.

In this context, I reiterate the common call of the SIDS that the promised fast-track funding from the international community for the finance of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, be delivered without delay.

Mr. President, through the Pacific Small Island Developing States, Fiji pledges itself to assist in increased representation of the Pacific Island countries in the UN system. The aim is to also increase employment of Pacific Island nationals within the UN Secretariat and its affiliated bodies.

To this end, I must also state that Fiji has taken a prominent role in the International Telecommunications Union. I note that only a few days ago the Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon accepted an ITU report on digitalization including accessibility to broadband.

Mr. President, in this area Fiji has also embarked on its own initiatives for accessibility to, and improvement in, telecommunications and information technology.

These include the process of finalizing a national policy on broadband and spectrum management. We therefore appreciate the Secretary General's initiative in this respect, and urge him to carefully consider the report and provide that impetus on a global level through the United Nations (UN). Mr. President, improved technology and e-access will provide that trajectory in meeting the MDG's and improving the lives of all our peoples.

Mr. President, as one of the founding signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Fiji has kept its oceanic obligations at the core of its foreign policy. Fiji therefore follows, and expects fellow member states to also adhere to, the legal regime of the exclusive economic zone which encompasses sovereign rights.

Since it is the Year of Biodiversity, we call upon the International Seabed Authority to be vigilant in safeguarding the environmental integrity of the world's seabed. Within this context one of the great challenges of Pacific Small Island Developing States is to be effective in conserving the fish stocks of the Pacific Ocean. These fish stocks are critical to our livelihoods, to our economies. Those countries which over-exploit these fish stocks must be informed that this practice is unsustainable. As owners, investors and harvesters, we should follow and adhere to international law and chart a path to sustain stocks for the benefit of all.

Mr. President, what I say today is that we must recognize that meaningful dialogue is essential – within our respective countries, within our respective regions and in the world as a whole. Seeking to achieve resolutions and solutions through dialogue is the way forward.

In the true spirit of international cooperation, we must at all times as sovereign states in our community of nations develop and maintain relationships based on respect, dignity and equality. We must also decide on issues and matters before this august assembly based on merit, justice and international law.

Mr. President, once again my congratulations on your election and best wishes for a productive 65th Session of the General Assembly.

Vinaka vakalevu. I thank you.