



COUNTRY STATEMENT: INTERNATIONAL MEETING TO  
REVIEW THE BARBADOS PROGRAMME OF ACTION  
DELIVERED BY THE HON. MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
AND EXTERNAL TRADE, MR. KALIOPATE TAVOLA: FIJI

Mr Chairman

The Government of Fiji wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the Government of Mauritius for hosting this international meeting.

Mr Chairman

The devastation caused by the recent natural disaster sent shockwaves throughout the entire global community. Wrath of nature has brought about significant loss of lives and property. The Government and the people of Fiji were deeply touched by the suffering caused, and wish to express sincere sympathy and condolences to all those affected.

Mr Chairman

Fiji actively participated in the preparatory process towards the ten-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action. We developed the National Assessment Report to assess the progress made in implementing the BPOA. It became obvious that we encountered several obstacles in achieving the targets.

Mr Chairman

My Government has incorporated, in accordance with the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the three pillars of sustainable development in the Strategic Development Plan for the period 2003 — 2005.

We had also factored the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into the National Development Plan. In this way, we were able to directly link the two relevant MDGs of environmental sustainability and global partnership for development to the BPOA process.

Mr Chairman

Like other Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Fiji is constrained by extreme levels of social, economic and environmental vulnerability, arising from small economies of scale, remoteness, rapid urban population growth, rapid development in the coastal areas and continuing migration of skilled labour. Good environmental management is critical for the sustainable development of Fiji's natural resource based economy. To this end, the Environment Management Bill will be enacted soon.

Mr Chairman

SIDS are vulnerable to frequent natural disasters. Over the last decade, damage caused by tropical cyclones, floods and drought, has cost Fiji an estimated \$500 million and claimed many lives.

Mr Chairman

We welcome Russia's decision to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. We strongly urge our developed partners to ratify the Protocol and to support us in the implementation of the Regional Framework for Climate Change, Climate Variability and Sea Level Rise.

Mr Chairman

Fiji's progress in implementing the 15 priority areas of the BPOA has faced challenges that require continuing intervention by development partners. Yet, we note that the overall ODA to the Pacific region has declined by 50% in recent times. In the spirit of partnership, and in honoring the pledges made at various international fora at Barbados, the Millennium Declaration, Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg, we call upon the development partners for a renewed commitment.

Mr Chairman

Our efforts to achieve the set targets in the BPOA have been further weakened by new and emerging issues. These too are critical to Fiji as it strives to secure a steady economic growth for overall development. Issues such as HIV/AIDS, limited market, access, migration, poverty combat, capacity building etc have hampered our capacity in achieving the milestones set in the BPOA.

Mr Chairman

HIV/AIDS is becoming a major socio-economic impediment globally. It poses a threat to Fiji's social and economic development with serious consequences if the current trend continues. Non-Communicable Diseases are also a Public Health concern in terms of impact on productivity and high prevalence amongst the working population.

Mr Chairman

Trade preferences on sugar will phase out after 2007. The resultant loss of revenue will be compounded by the high costs of internal adjustment programmes to diversify resource base into alternative livelihood for both domestic consumption and export. Fiji is continuously looking at ways of further promoting trade relations with bilateral and multilateral partners. The cost of integration into the multilateral trading system will also affect our progress towards the agreed goals.

Trade preferences on garments also phased out in 2004. We express appreciation to Australia for the extension of the garments scheme for another seven years, with assurance of market access and continued employment for those in the industry.

Mr Chairman

May I reiterate that Fiji, like all SIDS, needs the firm commitment of development partners to enhance our efforts for sustainable growth. A genuine level playing field is not just an ideal. It is itself an obligation of responsible global citizenship to collectively leave behind for the next generation a world better than we had inherited.

Mr Chairman, I Thank you.