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FIJI DELEGATION'S STATEMENT AT THE 48th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Special theme: *"Realizing the future we want: integrating population issues into sustainable development, including in the Post-2015 Development Agenda"*

New York, 15 April 2015, 3pm

Madam President,

Firstly, allow me to congratulate you Excellency and your Bureau on your election. The Fiji Delegation assures you of its full support and cooperation, and welcomes the special theme for this forty-eighth session of the Commission on Population and Development.

Madam President, Fiji aligns with the statement delivered by South Africa on behalf of G77 and China.

As we gather here, more than two decades after the landmark Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, we are reminded of the global consensus under which our governments set out an ambitious agenda to deliver an inclusive, equitable and sustainable global development. Fiji's unwavering commitment to this global consensus, as expressed in subsequent appraisals, is displayed in our evolving national policies and programmes – where much progress has been recorded in the last two decades.

Madam President, although Fiji is faring reasonably well with the implementation of the programme of action, there remains much to be done. We believe the programme of action has stood the test of time and that its pre-existing track should be used to progress the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Madam President, like other Small Island Developing States, Fiji is faced with implementation challenges imposed by geography and demographics. Our country is made up of over 300 islands and our population is both concentrated in urban and peri-urban areas, while also being dispersed around remote outer-lying islands. Successfully addressing the core ICPD issues is made all the more challenging by new demographic challenges arising from growing environmental pressures, including through the impacts of climate change, such as the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters. The recent tropical cyclone Pam that devastated our neighbor Vanuatu is a case in point. Decades of development are undone in a day by such natural disasters. Fiji itself has had to relocate some villages, with more planned for relocation, as a result of these villages becoming less livable, to ensure the health and right to development of the peoples of these communities. Thus, achieving meaningful solutions from the Paris COP this December, coupled with honest implementation of the Sustainable development Goals, is the only path we can see towards sustainable lives for our people.

Madam President, as we approach the uncertainties of the future, we are fortified in Fiji by our 2013 Constitution's firm provisions on

development issues, for the new Constitution enshrines a broad range of civil, political and socio-economic rights. It is for instance now incumbent upon Government to ensure the right to education, the right to economic participation and of special relevance to today's gathering, the right to health. Under section 31 of the Constitution, the State is required to take reasonable measures to achieve the conditions and facilities for the good health of all citizens, and to provide health care services, including reproductive health care. To complement the Fijian government's work towards the progressive realization of all human rights, concerted action by the international community through support of such national efforts is required.

The Government of Fiji recognizes the importance of having a people-centered approach to development that addresses social exclusion as a core issue. The marginalized within society, including the disabled, the elderly, and women and girls, are often excluded from national plans. Regarding gender inequality, on the eve of International Women's Day in 2014, Fiji launched its National Gender Policy, which is the guiding document for mainstreaming gender issues across all sectors and within all spheres of national life. Since then, the Fijian Parliament has witnessed 14% women's representation, the highest in the Pacific Islands, and has elected the nation's first female Speaker of Parliament. This represents solid progress, but as we have said already, much remains to be done.

Madam President, in addressing gaps of implementation, the Fiji Delegation underlines the importance of data in development planning. We have repeatedly noted in previous UN reports and documentation

that statistical data from the Pacific Islands region is patchy or often listed as missing. We therefore stress the importance of timely and appropriately disaggregated and verified data from our region being represented in the design of evidence-based programs and development planning. This recurring problem is by no means insurmountable, thus we see an urgent need for adequate resource allocation to be applied to correct this anomaly, and we urge cooperative action and collaboration between governments, relevant UN agencies and other stakeholders to ensure necessary capacity for effective integration of disaggregated and verified population data pertaining to the Pacific Islands.

Madam President, in conclusion, I reiterate Fiji's firm commitment to the further implementation of the Cairo programme of action and to addressing priority areas, particularly where either the global review has found gaps in implementation, or our own national analyses have found greater needs. To ensure a robust approach to implementation, we recognise that mutually supportive partnerships are crucial. We must garner resource allocation from all available sources, and find new ways to expand and enrich our partnerships for progress. We believe it is imperative that national and partnership efforts be dedicated towards bridging gaps in implementation, advancing the ICPD agenda and ensuring its progress within the onward march of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

I thank you, **Madam President**