



**Statement delivered at the General Debate on
Nuclear Disarmament and International Security
71st session of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly**

Date: 3 October, 2016

Venue: UNHQ Conference 4

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee at its 71st session at the same time I extend my warm congratulations to members of the Bureau. Fiji is confident that with your stewardship the 71st session of the First Committee will be a success. Also, I assure you, Mr. Chairman of Fiji's support during the 71st session.

Mr. Chairman,

Fiji will once again stresses the serious concerns we have on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the harm any detonation can cause on human health, the environment and vital economic resources.

Fiji has witnessed first-hand experience of the destruction and the long lasting effects that nuclear weapons have had on its people and eco-system. We are

still living with the repercussions today. Fiji and the Pacific region have experienced more than 300 forced nuclear tests. This regrettable history puts Fiji and the Pacific in a position to voice our grievances and to support all measures that look to accomplish global zero.

Fiji supports strengthening nuclear weapon free zones and encourages states to create nuclear weapon free zones in their respective regions. This is an important first step in our collective endeavour towards a complete nuclear disarmament. In 1985, Pacific Island countries resolved to keep the Pacific free of nuclear weapons under the Rarotonga Treaty. A treaty that only illustrates the commitment of 14 states, namely Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Samoa to keeping a region nuclear free but also evinces an effective measure and an important first step towards a nuclear free world. For the people of Fiji and the Pacific nothing less than a complete prohibition of nuclear weapons, the trade of such weapons, and concrete steps to provide effective redress for those who suffer the effects of nuclear testing, is acceptable. This is both a moral and a legal issue.

Mr. Chairman,

The time has come for us to show leadership in eliminating and prohibit the use and trade of nuclear weapons. Fiji supports the establishment of a

comprehensive legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons to plug the current lacuna in international law as agreed in the Open Ended working Group Meeting held in Geneva.

Fiji does not want to again witness, the catastrophic and long-lasting consequences that nuclear weapons can have: on human health, the environment, climate, food production and socio-economic development. We must move towards complete nuclear disarmament and prohibit all use, development, and test of nuclear weapons.

Mr, Chairman,

We have collectively pledged in September 2015 to mobilise the global community to end all forms of poverty, fight inequality and while we do so, we will leave no-one behind, wherever they live on the planet. Fiji and the Pacific do not want to be left behind due to an accident or intention on the detonation of a nuclear weapon in the Pacific region.

The vast size of our oceans and the sporadic presence of littoral States in the Pacific make the region particularly vulnerable to the risk of transshipment and carriage of nuclear waste and materials through our waters. An accident in our waters can wipe away our environment and our livelihood.

Small Island Developing States are vulnerable and fear a nightmare scenario where a single event scoring a direct hit could wipe out our economy and set

us back for decades. These will make it impossible for us (SIDS) to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, Fiji is convinced there must be enough assurance by the international community to safeguard the interests and territorial integrity of similar states from States that do possess nuclear weapons.

Also, Fiji welcomes the recommendation made at the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) Meeting held in Geneva in August to convene a Conference in 2017 to commence negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prohibit the manufacture and use of nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.

I thank you