



FIJI MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS
630 Third Avenue (7TH Floor)
New York, NY 10017
Tel. (212) 687-4130 Fax. (212) 687-3963
Email. mission@fijiprun.org

Statement by Mr. Filimone Kau,
Counsellor/Deputy Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations,
during the Second Biennial Meeting of States to consider the implementation of the
Programme of Action to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illicit trade in
Small Arms and Light Weapons

12 July 2005, New York

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My delegation associates itself with the statement by Samoa on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum Group.

Fiji, like others, agree that actions to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade and transfer of small arms and light weapons is a national responsibility and every effort should be made by Member States to implement its Programme of Action. The next Fiji annual national report scheduled for this year will be submitted soon. However, to remain constantly engaged is not easy without regional and international support through effective partnerships, networking, and information sharing.

In this regard, we gratefully acknowledge the contributions of Australia and New Zealand and others like Japan and the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament which have been active in the Pacific region. Fiji has contributed through various initiatives including the hosting of two important regional meetings, one of which resulted in the adoption of the Nadi Framework in 2003. The Framework continues to be the working model for the region in relation to border control and weapon markings and stockpiling. Our contributions, we hope, will enhance regional cooperation and assist in arms control. The Asia/Pacific Region is as vulnerable as any other region and as such we appeal to the UN system to allocate to us our fair share of support and assistance.

Fiji strongly supports calls for the replication of successful models of “Weapons for Development” driven in large by provision of economic and social incentives to communities and populations emerging out of conflicts. We also believe that initiatives such as “Arms-buy-back” targeting used and illegal weapons should be expanded to include developed partners and manufacturers as incentives for disarmament and to manage unnecessary stockpiling. If implemented effectively, disarmament can be regarded as achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as supporting efforts to integrate disarmament, humanitarian and development activities.

Fiji as a small island developing state with limited resources and expertise, the issue of capacity for controlling illicit weapons proliferation is a challenging issue. The limited capability of law enforcement agencies and the demand of proper boarder control due to lack of equipment and trained personnel in the Customs, Police and other law enforcement agencies is a serious threat for Fiji and other Pacific islands. We certainly need outside assistance to improve capacity building and resource mobilization to overcome the serious challenge posed by the growing incidents of arms trafficking and its associated serious crimes. We are encouraged by the level of commitment expressed at the first Biennial meeting; however, we pray that walking the talk will result in concrete outcomes to cover resource shortfalls.

Like most developing countries our citizens continue to rely on governments for their security and protection. There exists therefore a need to enhance and strengthen the role of our security forces to better answer this reliance by the people. Like other countries in the region we need special assistance to ensure that a weapons-free and communal approach to dealing with crime and conflict resolution continues to be the hall mark of our existence and development. To this end, Fiji supports efforts to provide initiatives for community-based policing, programmes to address gender violence. Other projects include; local empowerment and capacity building and non-formal education for non violence approaches to conflict resolution.

Size should not be used as an excuse to limit one’s commitment to the implementation of the Programme. We can only reiterate the fact that our failure to implement this commitment will translate in the demise and further destruction of our children and grandchildren.

Thank you.

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