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**STATEMENT BY H.E MR. ISIKIA SAVUA ,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
DURING THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE TO REVIEW PROGRESS MADE IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION
TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT TRADE
IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS
26 JUNE 2006, UNHQ**

Mr. President,

My delegation is happy to see you presiding over this conference. Fiji associates itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum nations.

In our South Pacific Region the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons is small; small though it may be but they are still the cause of the majority of casualties of all armed conflicts in the region. The proliferation of these weapons though is significant in as much as our region becoming the depository of many weapons manufactured by a lot of countries and left behind after the World Wars. The efforts made by regional Governments individually and as part of a Regional Process has exerted a modicum of control on the movement and usage of these weapons resulting in stopping a much wider proliferation. In addition the initiatives of Australia and New Zealand to assist other members of the South Pacific Region has seen a compatibility of control measures that allows all members to advance at an even pace.

We thank the Secretary General for his report contained in S/2006/109 dated 17 February 2006 reflecting the initiatives undertaken to implement the recommendations on ways and means in which the Security Council could contribute to dealing with the question of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

The South Pacific Forum Regional Security Committee met last week in Fiji and discussed Small Arms and Light Weapons from which a number of issues emerged, we never advocated a global ban but more of our regional efforts and how these may be strengthened in the international fora. I will mention a few;

Pacific countries have taken steps to harmonize their laws and develop a common approach to weapons control through the 2000 Nadi Framework. The challenge remains to implement the Framework in full and develop effective brokering legislation and policies in all jurisdictions in the region. We ask the Review Conference to:

- Call on states to increase efforts to adopt and implement national legislations governing transfer, production, trade, possession and storage of SALW
- Urge states to take into account the outcomes of the upcoming Group of Government Experts on brokering when reexamining national controls and developing legislation and administrative procedures
- Urge further international cooperation and assistance to build the capacity of states in the area of legislations.

On the question of stockpile management the Pacific experience, of inadequate infrastructure, poor weapons accountancy and weak armoury management have contributed to the leakage of weapons from official stocks. This has been a major source of SALW proliferation and misuse. Over the past five years, Pacific countries have worked with regional partners to upgrade and build new armouries, train personnel in weapons management and destroy surplus weapons and ammunition. Further efforts and cooperation is required to strengthen implementation in this area.

We believe the Review Conference should;

- urge strengthened implementation of the framework contained in the PoA particularly articles II.17 and II.18 and
- Underline the need for further international cooperation and assistance in armoury management and stockpile destruction.

Regional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) projects have used short-term amnesties, with strong penalties, to facilitate weapons collection. Swift disarmament and demobilization, combined with community-based initiatives, such as the Weapons-Free Village program in the Solomon Islands, have revived public confidence in affected areas and reduced the potential for further armed conflict. Demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants and armed civilians, including through income generating activities and development strategies, has been essential for longer term peace-building. We see security sector reform (SSR) as a necessary complement to DDR. There is an evident need for further external assistance to help ensure the success of DDR/SSR programs. The Review should;

- affirm reintegration of ex-combatants/decommissioned military and police personnel as an essential part of the DDR process;
- underline the need for accountability of military and civilian police for service weapons, especially during the demobilisation process, as a part of security sector reform;
- underscore the added value of external assistance, when requested, in national DDR/SSR programs.

Not all South Pacific states have reported under the PoA. A lack of capacity and competing reporting obligations are contributing factors. The region recognizes the need to increase the rate of reporting under the PoA. The Review Conference should;

- encourage the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs (UNDDA) to identify a common format for reporting, adding a section on needs for assistance ;
- identify actors that can assist countries with formulating their report (e.g. UNDP, UNDDA);
- align the timing of reports with Biennial Meetings of States and Review Conferences to facilitate analysis;
- endorse the possibility of regionally-based reporting which would allow regional entities to collate information and report on behalf of groups of small island developing states, if so desired.

Mr. President,

The South Pacific Region by its actions has clearly demonstrated that no country nor region can hope to fully implement the Programme of Action without the cooperation and assistance of the international community. The Review Conference has to provide the necessary leadership that enables everyone to work together in a spirit of cooperation, coherence and compatibility.

Thank you Mr. President