



**Republic of Fiji**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI,  
RATU EPELI NAILATIKAU  
AT THE  
2011 HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON THE COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF  
THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN REALISING THE DECLARATION ON  
COMMITMENT ON HIV/AIDS AND THE POLITICAL DECLARATION ON  
HIV/AIDS,  
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK,  
WEDNESDAY, 8 JUNE 2011**

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The President of the United Nations General Assembly,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to you all.

I extend to you Mr President, and to this revered Assembly, warm greetings from the Government and the People of Fiji. In my contribution, I will give you the Fiji perspective as well as touch on the regional perspective. For a small island developing nation in the middle of the South Pacific Ocean, such as my country, the threat of HIV-AIDS is like a ticking time-bomb. We fully recognise that the productive portion of our population- the young people, the youth- is under threat from this scourge. If this scourge is not immediately responded to more vigorously, it will threaten to debilitate not only our people but also our island economy. Fiji's economy is heavily dependent upon tourism, and it is vital that we maintain controlled health regimes in our small country if we are to safeguard this lifeblood of our economy.

In Fiji, like in many of the Pacific Island Countries, religion and tradition have great influences on behavior. We therefore recognise the commitment and exemplary actions that these social institutions have, as to be central to our response to HIV/AIDS.

The Pacific continues to enjoy strong leadership in response to HIV and AIDS through the endorsement of a regional framework on HIV and STI since 2006. This provides and guides national and regional response to HIV and AIDS. At ministerial level, HIV and AIDS continue to be featured in health ministerial meetings since 2004. In 2004, there was the Suva Declaration on HIV and AIDS by Pacific Parliamentarians and in 2009 there was the Madang Commitment articulating clear recommendations and the way forward.

In the Pacific, in the area of legislation and reform, much work has been done – legislations have been reviewed. However, progress towards legislative amendments has been slow because HIV related law reform can be a monumental challenge, given the punitive approach, and the high levels of stigma and discrimination.

In Fiji, the government has enacted the HIV/AIDS Decree of 2011. The purpose of this decree is to provide human –rights based measures to assist in HIV prevention and in HIV/AIDS care and support and for related purposes. The decree addresses human rights violations that fuel social marginalization such as HIV related stigma and discrimination which remain as the main barriers to the HIV/AIDS response in Fiji and other Pacific Island countries. The challenge we also face, particularly as leaders, is in ensuring that HIV related laws are fully implemented and enforced. We firmly believe that legislation on AIDS should provide human rights based measures to assist in HIV prevention and in HIV/AIDS care and support. We also firmly believe that that is the way to go. We are confident that the Fiji HIV/AIDS Decree 2011, together with the revitalization of the existing networks between faith-based organizations, traditional leaders, youth leaders, government departments, the private sector in the form of Business Against HIV and AIDS [BAHA Fiji] and the civil society will produce the desired outcome.

Integral to the process, is that we must change the way we view HIV/AIDS as being only a health issue. And we must see to it that adequate resources and funding are made available to ensure universal accessibility to prevention, treatment and support; whether they be in places of learning, work, play or worship.

We are well aware in Fiji and in the Pacific Island countries that the major sources of funds to the Pacific to address HIV and other STIs are coming to an end in two years' time after an initial increase in funds since 2004. At present the major funding resources in the Pacific are through the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. Another is the response fund supported through Australia and New Zealand. Both these major sources of funding will end in 2013. Beyond 2013 there is no major identified source yet. New funding proposals and strategies will have to be developed and implemented.

The Pacific Islands HIV and STI Response Fund 2009-2015 is a multi-donor pooled funding mechanism that supports the implementation of national and regional HIV strategic plans. As of December 2009 Australia has contributed AUS\$28 million and New Zealand NZ\$7.5 million. In reality they do much more than that. There are also funding that are sourced through multi-lateral agencies such as the UN Agencies and other regional organisations. But the bottom line is that funds are needed in the future to ensure that we continue to respond positively so that eventually we will eradicate the AIDS scourge.

Mr President, the tool kit with which we diffuse the time bomb in our country is a multi-faceted approach to the eradication of AIDS that I have already outlined.

I say these words with hope and confidence, Mr President, because eradicating the scourge of HIV/AIDS is within humanity's control.

Mr. President, I commend you for bringing together this global gathering and ask that you accept Fiji's best wishes for a productive High-Level Meeting.

I thank you.