



FIJI MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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**Commission on the Status of Women**

**Fifty-second Session**

**“Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and  
Peace for the Twenty-first century”**

**Statement by Dr. Lepani Waqatakirewa  
Permanent Secretary  
Health, Women and Social Welfare**

**New York  
28 February 2008**

Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving me the floor

The delegation of the Fiji Islands is thankful for this opportunity to address this august forum of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission on Women.

At the outset, my delegation aligns itself to the statement delivered by the honorable delegate of Tonga on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum Group yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Chairman,

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action calls on Governments, funding agencies and development partners to mobilize resources for the financing and implementation of the Platform for Action

Other international conferences have also addressed the challenges faced by Governments and Institutions in the implementation of policies that addresses gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Mr. Chairman,

In Fiji, the government machinery for Women has recently been merged with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and we believe this merger will bring about the much needed integration of gender equality perspectives in all spheres of health, development and management.

It also means that the Department of Women will have more access to additional resources and the wider network of health and related infrastructure and processes available as a platform for gender equality and women's empowerment.

We in Fiji recognize the pivotal role women play in the family, community and nation building and has been party to the United Nations Convention to the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Furthermore the Government of Fiji has a policy on women contained in the 'Women's Plan of Action 1998-2008 which provides for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in all processes of Government.

Mr. Chairman,

Gender policies are in place and Fiji like many other developing countries has found it a great challenge to implement the agenda for gender equality and the empowerment of women for various reasons.

However, I would like to highlight some activities already implemented in this area;

1. The Ministry of Women with the technical assistance of the Asian Development Bank, conducted a gender audit in the Ministries of Agriculture and Health in 2002. The implementation of recommendations from this audit is already part of the plan of work of the Ministries
2. Gender budgeting is a strategy contained in the Women Plan of Action and in 2000, the Ministry of Finance with the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat and with support from the Ministry of Women started a project to include a gender focus in the national budget process. The project is ongoing and will require additional resource allocation and technical expertise in gender budgeting.

Mr. Chairman,

Government is presently reviewing the Fiji Women's Plan of Action and it is our belief that the inclusion of gender as a variable for analysis in all government planning, policy and programme processes will bring about gender equality for the empowerment of women as a whole of Government responsibility. We believe that the provision of technical and financial assistance in gender budgeting for Fiji will provide the impetus for closing the gender gap and achieving gender equality and the advancement of women.

Mr. Chairman,

Fiji in the recent past has suffered from severe natural disasters and we are happy that the Commission has included 'Gender perspectives on climate change' as an emerging issue. Fiji like all small islands states is concerned that the undesirable effects of our global climate change will see us suffering from hurricanes, cyclones, rising sea levels and flooding. Hurricane Gene that struck our islands earlier this month destroyed our homes, gardens and worst of all took the lives of 9 men and 6 women.

Mr. Chairman,

Climate change is a real threat to our small islands and we agree that the equal participation of men and women in this discussion will mean real changes in the way we address these issue. We wish to call upon the international community to consider technical and technological assistance which include education and training for expertise in this area to small island states like Fiji.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, my delegation urges the UN machinery, Funding Agencies and Development Partners to be more diligent in incorporating gender equality and women's empowerment agenda in all areas of work.

We also take this opportunity to thank the UN agencies especially UNFAP, UNIFEM, our own regional bodies, development partners and the women's organization in Fiji for their support and tirelessly work for women in Fiji.

Indeed the implementation of Beijing Platform of Action, the Beijing Plus Five Outcomes Document and CEDAW will go a long way in the achievement of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium Development Goal of Gender equality and empowerment of women.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.