



**STATEMENT BY MR. LUKE DAUNIVALU, PERMANENT MISSION OF FIJI TO
THE UNITED NATIONS
AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 66th SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL
ASSEMBLY
ON AGENDA ITEM 28(A), ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
(New York, 12 October 2011)**

[Check against delivery]

Chairperson,

As we stand at the threshold of the second decade of the 21st century, it is clear that women's causes globally face both opportunities and challenges. While proper recognition has to be given to the achievements we have made thus far as a global community, we are also aware of the enormous amount of work that remains to be done to ensure that women worldwide are afforded their rightful due in every way. Tackling the challenges that hinder the advancement of women's causes requires collaborative efforts at all levels – the international, regional and national levels.

We wish to acknowledge at this juncture the good work that UN Women has been carrying out this year. Despite the many challenges it faces, we remain confident that UN Women will be at the forefront of efforts to promote international women's affairs, advance women's causes and push for greater progress and momentum in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment. To that end, Fiji endorses UN Women's priority areas of work in increasing women's voice, leadership and participation, enhancing women's economic empowerment, combating violence against women and promoting the agenda of women, peace and security. The UN Women's presence in the Pacific through its regional office based in Suva, Fiji is essential to the delivery of these priority areas to the Pacific Small Island developing States. We call for the strengthening of UN Women's regional office in the Pacific and will continue to support its work in our region.

Chairperson,

Fiji attaches great weight to the causes of women and has worked conscientiously to implement the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). The BPFA remains an essential tool in advancing the status of women and girls in Fiji. In this regard, our Women's Plan of Action is considered to have made significant progress in the area of reforms called for in the fundamental principles of the BPFA.

In recognition of the importance of international cooperation in the field of women, Fiji has made efforts to attend and participate actively in global forums addressing women's issues, such as the UN Commission on the Status of Women. The Government of Fiji has also taken steps to bring domestic laws in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. All these have brought about welcomed change.

We are experiencing increasing participation by women in local decision making bodies, thereby empowering rural women, increased enrolment of women and girls in tertiary education, gender mainstreaming within the Government system, and increased welfare assistance provision to the marginalized, including single mothers.

Fiji's domestic violence law, which came into effect last year, is being effectively implemented by the law enforcement agencies in conjunction with civil society groups. Amongst other things, this law recognizes the difficulty experienced by women and children in gaining access to the justice system, because of family, community, cultural and attitudinal barriers.

Chairperson,

The empowerment of women is closely linked to the issue of development – social, economic and political development. At the same time, we recognize that development is underpinned by education and training. Women's access to and participation in education and training, and through equal access to full employment, will ensure their empowerment and advancement in our communities.

It is only through proper and holistic education that people are enabled to make the crucial value decisions needed in our societies. In Fiji, we depend on parents as the primary nurturers and educators of children, and regard the family as the fortress from which children depart as well-grounded and responsible adults. We depend on our formal education system to provide our society with knowledgeable, informed, and skilled individuals, fully equipped to live dignified lives, and more importantly, to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of the societal ideals and principles we aspire to.

We believe this lies at the heart of economic growth and development in our global society.

Economic reforms in Fiji have encouraged women's equal access to the labour market and better and fairer employment practices, including a national policy on sexual harrasment. Fiji's implementation of its target of having 30% representation

of women in all Government appointed boards and committees is progressing smoothly, where women are now represented in all spheres of the civil service and better working conditions for all women are now guaranteed by law.

In accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, Fiji continues to value the significant contribution and the role of our women serving in UN peacekeeping missions around the world.

Chairperson,

The Government of Fiji remains committed to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women together with the international community, international organizations and civil society.

Thank you.

