



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

COUNTRY STATEMENT

[Please check against delivery]

Honorable Ministers

The UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the ESCAP, Dr Shamshad Akhtar,

Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. On behalf of Fiji's Minister for Foreign Affairs, I congratulate you Excellency and the members of the Bureau on your well-earned appointments. At the outset, I would like to convey the apology of my Minister who is unable to be here today due to prior state commitments. I would also like to thank the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the ESCAP Secretariat for the excellent hosting arrangements provided for this meeting.
2. This inaugural ministerial forum on sustainable development for the Asia Pacific region could not have come at a better time. As you would be aware, UN processes are currently underway in New York to fine tune the format and structure of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) to provide, *inter alia*, political leadership and guidance as well as enhance the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.
3. Against this background, Fiji recognizes the possible parallels between the roles and functions of the HLPF at the multilateral level in New York, reporting annually to the Economic and Social Commission, and those of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development at the regional level of the ESCAP, reporting annually to the ESCAP Commission. We recommend that the two forums of the APFSD and the ESCAP Commission meetings are held back-to-back in future sessions.
4. The 21st century is, without a doubt, Asia's century. From the Pacific sub-region, we recognize the positive spin-offs that can cascade from forging closer economic

relations with Asia, particularly in the area of sustainable development at the regional level of the ESCAP, the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement, the proposed RCEP which is also open to Oceania or at the bilateral level of engagement. Through the important regional commission of ESCAP, we are optimistic that our collective sub-regional frameworks are well-positioned to become the corridors within which these untapped synergies for greater regional integration and the successful mainstreaming of sustainable development can be channeled.

5. However it needs to be underscored time and again that the Asia-Pacific governments cannot work in isolation from their non-state actors in the private sector, academia, and other major groups in the pursuit of the post-2015 development agenda. For it is the latter which provide the crucial linkages to realizing at least the first two transformative shifts in the SG's High Level Panel Report of "Leaving No One Behind" and "Putting Sustainable Development at the Core".
6. On the MDGs, while there remains a huge unfinished mandate, Fiji recognizes the important foundation that these have laid for the successful implementation of its successor post-2015 development agenda. The lessons learnt in themselves are an invaluable and priceless achievement – an MDG9 that all countries can tick, and should form as a guiding beacon in recalibrating our individual and collective efforts to eradicate extreme poverty that will lay down the foundation of a life of dignity for one and all by 2030. We are optimistic that it can and will be done.
7. *Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates:* In the Asia and Pacific region, the majority of our peoples depend on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism for their livelihood and sustenance. Fiji echoes the sentiments of other delegations at this Forum on the need to include Disaster Risk Reduction in the global conversation in New York in recognition of the need for a targeted global response to build resilience against the loss of human life and their personal property, and the hard-fought economic, social and ecological gains of every country. These are gaps that need to be addressed in an expeditious manner if we are to improve our chances in successfully achieving our time-sensitive post-2015 development agenda.
8. In conclusion, Fiji reaffirms its commitment at the highest political level towards the pursuit of the post-2015 development agenda at both the multilateral level in New York and the more elaborate processes that are being formulated and implemented at the ESCAP. We recognize the need for all UN systems to achieve a high level of

integration of all the three dimensions of sustainable development as an overarching mandate – maximizing the synergies that this will produce within and among the UN systems. The interdependence of the three pillars of sustainable development in nurturing a fragile planet from the violation of its planetary boundaries dictate that we cannot simply afford to prioritize only one of the three or permutations of two dimensions in isolation. For small island states like ours, we also acknowledge that with limited resources, the need to prioritize a few areas such as sustainable agriculture, sustainable transport and sustainable energy with climate change cross-cutting all three areas, and interfacing these with the science, technology and innovation, is a necessary compromise to expedite the process of eradicating poverty and delivering on the promise of a life of dignity for one and all by 2030.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates: I thank you.

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