



**Country Statement by Dr. Jiko. F. Luveni**  
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**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Introduction**

It is my great pleasure this afternoon to join my colleagues in congratulating you Mr. Chairman on your Chairmanship of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission.

*Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,*

The 69<sup>th</sup> Session of ESCAP holds special significance for the government and the people of Fiji. Since this is the first meeting of the Commission after the Rio+20, it is encouraging to note that member countries have stepped up political commitment to effectively address challenges that comes under the three broad pillars of sustainable development.

To effectively address these challenges, Fiji has embarked on a number of initiatives to facilitate the process. These include:

- i. The implementation of a National Climate Policy which was prepared through broad-based inclusive consultation. The thrust of

the climate change policy places special emphasis on mitigation, adaptation and best practices for emergency response and rehabilitation;

- ii. Developing the necessary policy framework to address our energy needs with emphasis on cost-effective and sustainable sources of energy;
- iii. Addressing the special needs of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) through collaboration with UN DESA to facilitate the process of convening the preparatory meeting to the Third SIDS International Conference to be held in Fiji in July this year; and
- iv. On Education, Fiji’s literacy rate stands at 93.7%. Access to basic education is the right of all citizens and to support this key policy objective, education is free up to secondary level. We also provide free text book and free bus fare programmes. We believe that this targeted approach is adequate to ensure that all children have access to free and quality education.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates, while poverty in Fiji has been reduced from 39.8 percent to 35.2 percent, there remain significant income inequalities. Rural poverty has increased and income distribution has deteriorated for Fiji in aggregate terms. Madam, we now face a daunting challenge on the achievement of *MDG 1* by 2015. Obviously, reform is due:

This year, there have been major changes in the implementation of our Social Welfare Scheme in an effort to ensure effective targeting of welfare assistance to the most deserving cases. The three welfare programs include:

1. The Poverty Benefit Scheme where monthly allowances are provided to the family including people with disabilities, rather than to individuals. However, they given three years to graduate from welfare to workfare.



2. The Care and Protection Scheme targeting vulnerable children of single mothers, separated parents or for any other legitimate reason, to ensure children to not miss out on education and care. Five years are given to graduate out of welfare to workfare.
3. The Social Pension Scheme where all men and women over 70 years old and not receiving any pension qualify for pension.

Moreover, discounted bus fares are provided to all who are 60 years and over.

#### Excellencies and distinguished delegates

Fiji's efforts to promote gender equality and empowerment of women hinges, inter alia, on the elimination of violence against women and children. In this respect, Fiji has embarked on a campaign to create violence free communities. The campaign calls for strong community support led by men and other stakeholders including women and youth.

At the end of 2012, 32 communities have declared zero tolerance of violence against women and children evidenced by a Billboard erected at the entrance of the village or settlements advertising, “This is a Violence Free Community”. We aim to double this number by the end of this year with anticipated annual increases.

#### *Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,*

The recent statement made by the Chair of the G77 and China, focusing on debt sustainability is a challenge to most member countries including Fiji.

Given our narrow export base, Fiji is quite vulnerable to variations in global demand, especially for tourism and exports of minerals, agriculture, forestry and fisheries products. Our vulnerabilities are further exacerbated by size, distance and lack of access to world markets, inability to influence global

prices, limited economies of scale and heavy reliance on imported food and fuel.

Despite the negative outlook, we anticipate that a broad-based GDP growth of 2.7 percent will be achieved in 2013.

The impact of natural disasters such as flash floods and cyclones has put a lot of pressure on our *already* limited resources. In the last three years in Fiji, substantial resources have been diverted to emergency response and rehabilitation.

I am pleased to say that in April this year, we adopted the first-ever Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) framework report for the Category 4 Cyclone that ravaged the Fiji group in mid-December last year. Fortunately, no lives were lost. I can say that our investment to increase disaster preparedness and mitigation measures to pre-position and distribute relief material efficiently and to coordinate response effectively with local and international partners has been a worthwhile investment.

**To Conclude,**

*Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,*

As we continue with our deliberations on this important theme, we will embrace your guidance to foster genuine dialogue and goodwill to ensure that we achieve our region's sustainable development aspirations.

Thank you.

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