



**PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF FIJI**

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**140<sup>TH</sup> IPU ASSEMBLY & RELATED MEETINGS  
SHERATON CONVENTION CENTER  
DOHA, QATAR  
MONDAY 08 APRIL 2019**

**HONOURABLE SPEAKERS SPEECH:  
GENERAL DEBATE – PARLIAMENTS AS  
PLATFORMS TO ENHANCE EDUCATION FOR  
PEACE, SECURITY AND THE RULE OF LAW**

**HE Speaker of the Shura Council Ahmed bin Abdullah bin  
Zaid al-Mahmoud**

**HE Ms Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President of the Inter-  
Parliamentary Union**

**HE Mr Martin Chungong, Secretary-General of the Inter-  
Parliamentary Union**

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!**

A very good morning to you all. I bring you warm greetings from the Parliament and the people of Fiji.

I am accompanied by a bipartisan delegation which is representative of the only three (3) parties that make up our

Parliament, and who were elected in the 2018 November general elections.

I take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to the Speaker of the Shura Council and the people of Qatar for their warm welcome and kind hospitality.

Your Excellencies, a brief departure from the subject matter of our current general debate. On behalf of the Government, the people and the Fijian delegation to this meeting, I thank the IPU Assembly and its Executive Committee for the warm tribute paid to my predecessor, the late Dr. Jiko Luveni, in the Inaugural Ceremony of the 140<sup>th</sup> Assembly of IPU on Saturday, 06 April. Fiji was not represented at that ceremony because we were still on our way as our last session of Parliament only ended the afternoon of Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> April and it takes us more than 20 flying hours to get here.

It is humbling to receive such an acknowledgement from this august Assembly for one of Fiji's distinguished and respected woman which reflects the close working relationship that the IPU had with our Parliament and the late Speaker.

Because of her status as the first woman Speaker of Fiji and a strong and respected voice for women, the IPU and the Fijian Parliament had an extraordinary opportunity to promote the ideals of parliamentary democracy, the sustainable development goals, community engagement and particularly, encouraging more women to enter politics in Fiji.

This legacy will no doubt live on and be a source of inspiration for many young women in Fiji.

Your Excellencies, I take this opportunity to congratulate the Assembly for the successful vote last evening on the proposal from the Netherlands for urgent international action to support Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe which were greatly devastated by Cyclone Idai.

I believe that yesterday's decision was one of those rare occasions in recent years that a two thirds majority had been reached for an emergency item resolution.

It was only last year that such a unique moment took place in the history of the IPU when a resolution was tabled by our late Speaker, on behalf of the delegations of Seychelles, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa and Tonga which was successful.

That resolution requested the inclusion in the agenda of the 139th Assembly of an emergency item entitled: "Climate change – let us not cross the line".

Therefore, with the successful vote on the Netherlands proposal yesterday, not only was this a victory for humanity, it was also a victory for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) as the resolution refers to climate change and the measures to be taken by all parties to the Paris Agreement to achieve its goals, to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Your Excellencies, now to the Fijian Parliament's efforts in promoting education in and out of school to provide continuous learning opportunities for people of all ages.

As Members of the Parliament of Fiji, we need to continuously ask ourselves what difference our work and actions make for the people.

The day-to-day concerns of Fijians, such as jobs, education and healthcare are all related to the SDGs; making progress towards achieving the SDGs translate directly to the improvement of the lives of Fijians.

In the 2018/2019 budget, a substantial sum was set aside for the education sector, which was a substantial portion of the total budget expenditure.

Approximately half had been directly allocated to the Ministry of Education with the intention to undertake restructures, reviews and achieve efficiencies in the education sector.

During the budget approval process, Parliament was encouraged to engage on how government funds are being allocated to nationally defined SDGs in our National Development Plan (NDP), including whether sufficient funds are reaching the most vulnerable.

Additionally, successfully implementing the SDGs meant maximizing all available resources to achieve the best possible results.

In that regard, we are currently in the process developing a Guidance Note to assist the Standing Committees of the Parliament of Fiji with monitoring and oversight of the implementation of the SDGs, including by focusing on SDG indicators in connection with the NDP indicators to measure progress in achieving the SDGs and the national development goals.

Parliaments must ensure that fiscal and other economic policies set through the budget process are aligned to the national SDG plan including oversight of budget expenditure.

Our new Parliament had its first session in December of last year so the Committees will benefit from this guidance to engage in oversight of tracking the SDG progress and contributing to SDG attainment over the next four years and beyond.

This guidance is particularly timely considering that this year Fiji is carrying out a national voluntary review for the 2030 Agenda High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development – the Parliament will be called upon to play a key role in this regard.

To complement the work of the Committees, through our Civic Education and Media Team of the Fijian Parliament had been hard at work so that Parliament is well placed to champion the rule of law. This is greatly aided through a number of activities which had been initiated by my predecessor such as:

- (i) The Speaker's Debate – we have so far conducted several such debates on a theme from the SDGs. The debate is an opportunity for Ministers to update citizens on the progress made on the theme as well as to receive the views of the Opposition and relevant stakeholders. A noteworthy feature in this event is the essential inclusion of women in all the panels;
- (ii) Meet the Speaker programme - In this programme, the Speaker takes Parliament to the communities and schools to convince the people that Parliament belongs to the people and they should know the rules and procedures of Parliament and how they the people could continue to effectively play a role in the parliamentary process. An important part of the Q & A session is the clarification of Parliament proceedings and the debate process;
- (iii) Parliament Bus - When the Speaker is not available, the Parliament secretariat team conduct visits to communities and schools. These events include historical photo displays and the distribution of Parliament educational materials. More than 250 such visits have been made so far and we continue to receive invitations on a daily basis for more such visits;
- (iv) Parliament Education Resources – in March 2017, Parliament marked another milestone with the launch of the Parliament educational resources to maximise Parliament's reach to students and youth all over Fiji.

With the funding from donor partners, all secondary and primary schools received educational materials which contain good, easy to understand information about Parliament which can also be read by anyone who wants to learn more about the Fijian Parliament.

Your Excellencies, the Sustainable Development Agenda articulates a vision for developing and developed countries, recognising that we do not all start from the same point and taking into account different national realities, capacities and priorities, cultures and traditions.

As lawmakers and the legitimate representatives of the people and their interests, we can provide the platform to translate the SDGs into enforceable national laws that respond to specific development priorities, monitor their implementation and ensure that we account to the people for national progress on the SDGs and NDP. In this regard, Parliament, through its various functions and powers, provides the ideal framework through which we can enhance education for peace, security and the rule of law.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on a concluding note while we reflect on enhancing education for peace, security and the rule of law, let us not forget the pandemic that more than ever still greatly affect the lives of the population of all our countries which over the 35 to 40 years of its history still has no cure – HIV/AIDS. In keeping with the spirit and focus of the SDGs let us renew our advocacy on HIV/AIDS. The pattern is the same for all our countries – HIV/AIDS has affected and disrupted the lives of our youths, especially the 19 to 29 age groups. Let us up the anti

and redouble our advocacy for the practice of safe sex and the use of condoms – to save lives.

The global advocacy that is required now more than ever demands the leadership of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and all of us here – the PARLIMENTARIANS.

Thank you.