STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI TO THE UNITED NATIONS - AMBASSADOR SATYENDRA PRASAD

High-level plenary meeting of the Assembly devoted to the midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024

5 December 2019

The President of the General Assembly,
Excellency’s
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Bhutan and Austria for securing consensus on the political declaration. Fiji aligns this statement with the statement delivered by the State of Palestine on behalf of the G77 & China.

The Vienna Programme of Action offers a framework to address the unique challenges faced by LLDCs. LDCs spend nearly two times more of their export earnings on transport and insurance services than developing countries. 100 million of the world’s poorest live in LDCs, 17 of the least developed countries are LDCs.

We are now at the mid-point of the decade to review progress. There has been much progress. This midterm review must be used to take bold steps towards addressing the special development needs and challenges that hold back the LDCs from realizing their full potential.

LDCs need collective commitment, strengthened cooperation and a supportive UN Development system to achieve the overarching goals of the Vienna Program of Action. Economic growth of LLDCs has declined in the last 5 years. LDCs share of world trade has reduced from 2% in 2014 to less than 1% in 2019. Barriers to trade are increasing not decreasing. All trends have to be reversed.

Mr. President,

LLDCs like the SIDS, are highly exposed to the climate crisis. The economic, social and environmental impacts of the climate crisis, the slow onset of disasters and extreme and
intense weather catastrophes constrain livelihoods in LLDCs and SIDS alike. Both desertification and cyclones harm both food security and livelihoods alike.

Fiji supports the call to build economies and societies that are resilient to external shock can respond to the adverse impacts of climate change including environmental degradation. The scale of climate finance needs to be substantially increased to give LDCs the opportunity to accelerate their adaptation.

Much like SIDS, high trade costs are a severe obstacle to enhancing trade integration and development. These transportation challenges can be reduced through smart policy; technology and finance. It is in such difficult areas, where the UN system as a whole becomes most relevant. The UN can help to bring the necessary pieces together.

It is surely our collective hope Mr. President, that LLDCs through long-term partnerships will overcome this fundamental constraint. LLDCs can pave the way for innovative trade corridors; for high speed information corridors; herald new corridors of renewable energy; and technology; and create corridors of sustainability and opportunity.

Mr President,

At the UN's 75th Anniversary; it is fitting to expect that the UN system as a whole has the capabilities to respond effectively to LDCs, especially the 100 million who live in absolute poverty.

In welcoming the political declaration, I ask us to reflect on whether the UNDS reforms go far enough in supporting LDCs. I ask, is the Finance for Development agenda innovative and responsive enough to assist LDCs to realize the VOA fully?

Mr President, I thank you for convening this mid-term review.