

Distinguished Colleagues across the Pacific

Development Partners

Ladies and Gentlemen

Bula Vinaka to you all.

Fiji, along with our Pacific neighbors, is all too familiar with sudden and slow onsets of climate change that have continued to threaten our development agenda in catastrophic synergy with growing global greenhouse gas emissions. Fiji currently is in its recovery stage after experiencing two tropical cyclones that occurred 6-7 weeks apart from each other. The first of which was Tropical Cyclone Yasa, a Category 5 cyclone that occurred in late December 2020 and then followed by Tropical Cyclone Ana, a category 1 cyclone that occurred in late January 2021. Both cyclones brought disastrous winds and flooding that caused substantial damage to infrastructure and the agricultural sector. The more frequent occurrence and increased intensity of tropical cyclones has resulted in a number of communities and families being displaced from the impacts of storm surges, strong winds, landslides, flash flooding, and so forth. This is linked to the fact that 27% of the Fijian population live within 1 kilometer of the coastline while 76% within just 5 kilometers.

As a result, internal displacement is fast becoming a critical issue that demands greater resource mobilization; improved enabling environment through targeted legislature and policies; and strong institutional and governance arrangements.

Fiji's best practices on displacement and planned relocation starts with the political will and priority of the government and how far we have elevated the cause of climate change and its impacts on the people at a national level. Fiji continues to lead in the advocacy of climate change both regionally and internationally to which it strives on practicing what we preach.

Since 2011, Fiji has relocated 6 communities at a cost of FJ\$3.6 million due to the urgency of their needs and ultimately their survival. This has resulted in displacement of over 390 individuals. Moreover, the Fijian Government has worked on implementing

various legislations and policies, plans and frameworks, to streamline the efforts at a national level in terms of strategic developments and coordination.

Fiji is currently at the final stages of public consultations before enacting the nations Climate Change Bill that encapsulates the wide areas associated with Climate Change and in this instance, the adaptation measures to cater for displacement and planned relocations. In addition, the Fijian Government has formulated the National Adaptation Plan which contains 160 adaptation measures, both systemic and sectoral components that will be continuously implemented in a 5 year period. In addition, relevant policies that have been recently formulated on a national level are the Planned Relocation Guidelines and Displacement Guidelines. We are currently finalising the Standard Operating Procedures for Planned Relocations to have a system in place that will allow better coordination among government agencies when dealing with the relocation of affected communities.

To cater for the relocation of communities, the Climate Relocation and Displaced Peoples Trust Fund has been established by government with the relevant checks and balances set in place in the management of the finances to cater for the relocation process. The Fijian Government will provide up to FJ \$5 million and development partners are expected to reciprocate with greater funding contributions. I take this opportunity to thank the New Zealand Government for being the first development partner to financially support this innovative financing mechanism.

Furthermore, a current need is the lack of reliable data collated in a Centralised Data System that would be effectively used in the decision making processes when dealing with planned relocation and displacement. Data will help us focus our actions and we are happy to have embarked on a project with IDMC that will look into our needs as a nation dealing with climate-induced migration.

I believe we all will also agree that climate change is just one of the many drivers of displacement. Others may include lack of livelihoods, general poverty and conflict, that in combination, may be pushing people away. Therefore, developing a better understanding of these interlinked drivers is crucial for us in managing displacement and planned relocation.

Noting that most disasters that could happen have not happened yet, our National Climate Change Policy calls for development of risk assessments and forecast models

that will help us prepare for and if possible, prevent, future displacement and planned relocation – support in this area is highly crucial.

Lastly, support can be provided through the gaps that exist in the technical expertise that cannot be accessed locally. Fiji consistently requires expertise or technical support to address human rights issues, social, psychological, cultural and emotional losses faced by displaced communities that are displaced and relocated. Providing relevant expertise and also training local staff to cater for this need will benefit the ongoing efforts currently underway.

Being in the decade of action to achieve our Sustainable Development Goals, the Pacific does not have time to spare in lengthy discussions. Fiji urges partners in this space to help operationalize transformative on ground actions that create tangible benefits for our people.

I thank you all for your attention.

Vinaka.