



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
REPORT ON 133RD INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION
(IPU) CONFERENCE - GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

*15TH TO 21ST
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1.0 BACKGROUND

The Fijian Parliament on Tuesday 12th May 2015 unanimously moved a motion tabled by the Hon Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji to re-join the Inter-Parliamentary Union ((IPU).

The request for re-affiliation to the IPU was examined by the Governing Council at the 197th session of the assembly held in Geneva on 18th October 2015. The Governing Council decided to readmit the Parliament of Fiji as the 167th Member of the IPU, after it was determined by the Executive Committee that Fiji had fulfilled the conditions for membership of the IPU.

Refer to **Annex A**.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

An invitation was received by the Speaker of the Fiji Parliament to attend with a Fiji delegation, the 133rd IPU Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, on October 2016. This was especially important for Fiji since its re-affiliation to the organisation would be formalised at this event with the Fiji Parliament re-engaging once more with Parliament democracies after a lapse of eight years.

The delegation to the Assembly was led by the Speaker of the Fiji Parliament, the Hon Dr Jiko Luveni and made up of the Deputy Speaker, the Hon Ruveni Nadalo and the Secretary General to Parliament, Viniana Namosimalua. The Fiji Parliament was being represented at this level to express its commitment to engage with the IPU as a world parliamentary body that supports democratic principles and governance.

In addition, there was relevance in re-establishing this relationship to enhance further partnerships and inter-parliamentary alliances for the benefit of attaining parliamentary progress.

The 133rd assembly opened on 18th October 2015 at the Centre international de Conférences de Geneve (CICG). 134 Member Parliaments were represented at the assembly. There were 1399 delegates with 647 Members of Parliament including 41 Presiding Officers, 50 Deputy Presiding Officers and 210 women.

The Fiji delegation Meeting Schedule to the 133rd IPU General Assembly was prepared by the Inter-parliamentary Unit of the Fiji Parliament in consultation with Madam Speaker, the Secretary General and the office of the Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva (PRUNOG).



Madam Speaker Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni and Deputy Speaker Hon Ruveni Nadalo with Madam Shameem PRUNOG and Secretary General to Parliament Viniana Namosimalua at the opening of the 133rd IPU Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland.

3.0 BRIEFING WITH PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN GENEVA

The delegation's very first meeting was held with Madam Shameem PRUNOG. Madam Speaker expressed the view that it was important for the Fijian Parliament to have relevance through significant engagement and participation in developmental agendas common to most parliamentary democracies.

The Speaker in her discussions with the Permanent Representation raised that while the delegation was present to formalise Fiji's re-affiliation with the IPU at this Geneva assembly, what was even more important was to ensure that the Parliament capitalised on such events in terms of assistance to the Fiji Parliament.

The Speaker also raised that in view of the Sustainable Development Goals being adopted at the General Assembly of the United Nations in August 2015, it was important to ensure that there were existing mechanisms for the implementation of the goals. Assistance can be sought from the IPU for building capacity towards that end. The Speaker's meeting with the Secretary General of the IPU later in the week would detail what this entailed.

4.0 MEETING WITH DIRECTOR FOR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENTS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The Fiji delegation met with the Director for Members of Parliaments Ambassador Anda Filip on Saturday 17th October to discuss proceedings on Fiji's re-affiliation to be held the next day. Madam Speaker would address the Assembly and was briefed on the proceedings. The delegation and the Ambassador also discussed other administrative issues and confirmation of the Speaker's request to meet the Secretary General to the IPU Mr Martin Chunggong later in the week.

5.0 RELEVANT REMARKS FROM OPENING OF THE ASSEMBLY

Mr Chowdhury of Bangladesh President of the IPU chaired the proceedings and was assisted by several vice presidents. He acknowledged that Members of Parliament from the previous IPU assembly held in Hanoi, Vietnam and the Women Speakers conference held in August, had agreed that parliaments had an important role to play in the implementation of the Strategic Development Goals (SDGs), adopted at the UN general assembly in New York. The IPU was ready to help define the main components of parliamentary action and provide the relevant assistance.

The basis for parliamentary work would be to work on:

- (i) Sustainable Development Goals;
- (ii) Disaster Rehabilitation; and
- (iii) Climate Change.

These were processes which were covered under the post 2015 developmental agenda.

6.0 IPU GOVERNING COUNCIL – FIJI FORMAL REAFFILIATION WITH IPU

The Assembly officially opened on Sunday 18th October. The PRUNOG and the 1st Secretary joined the Fiji delegation at the opening. An important item on the agenda was Fiji's re-affiliation with the IPU. The Speaker addressed the Assembly thanking the Governing Council for its acceptance of Fiji into the IPU family. An important point of her address were plans in place for the establishment of an SDG Committee in the Fiji Parliament to ensure mainstreaming of the SDG into national programs of the Executive with parliamentary monitoring tools.

The Fiji Parliament looked to access technical and advisory assistance offered by the IPU to parliaments affiliated to it.

A copy of the press release on the item is attached as **Annex B**.



Madam Speaker Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni delivering her Acceptance Speech

7.0 PRESENTATION OF REPORT OF WOMEN SPEAKERS – MADAM SPEAKER

The Speaker was given the honour to present the Report of the 10th meeting of the Women Speakers held in New York from the 29th to 30th August. In this report Madam Speaker

highlighted that Gender Equality was discussed as a critical component of the democratic process. The focus of the topic was specifically *'innovating for gender equality'* with a view to identifying key strategies and action to step up progress.

A copy of the press release on this item is attached as **Annex C**.



Madam Speaker Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni presenting to the IPU Assembly in Geneva

8.0 REGIONAL MEETING OF DELEGATIONS – PACIFIC INCLUDING AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

The Fiji delegation attended a meeting of the Pacific regional delegation which included representatives of the Parliaments of Australia and New Zealand. The purpose of the meeting was to allow representatives to meet and to discuss common issues of importance in the region, to be brought to the agenda of the assembly for debate as an emergency item. This

was also to discuss Item 2 of the Agenda of the Assembly which looked at consideration of requests for the inclusion of an emergency item for debate. In view of this the New Zealand delegation raised that Climate Change was of importance in the region given that many of the island nations were vulnerable and were already being severely affected. The delegation had sought the region's support for *'The role of Parliaments in taking urgent action to protect the climate'*. As members were to vote on this proposal, it was especially important that members were of one voice in supporting the motion that Climate Change be considered for inclusion as an emergency item for debate. The proposal however was defeated as the assembly held a roll-call vote on four proposals and the one jointly put in by the United Arab Emirates and Sudan on *'The Role of the IPU parliamentarians, parliaments and international/regional organisations in providing necessary protection and urgent support to those who have become refugees through war, internal conflict and socio-economic situations according to the principles of international humanitarian law and international conventions'* was adopted and added as Agenda Item 7.

9.0 DEBATE SESSIONS

The Fiji delegation attended a number of debate sessions during the assembly and these are summarized below:

9.1 General Debate: The Imperative for Fairer, Smarter and More Humane Migration

Important points from the debate were:

- Parliamentarians had a critical role to play in holding the executive to account to ensure that migration/asylum policies comply with international human rights principles and keeping constituents informed;
- IPU had a responsibility to draw the attention of the global parliament community to the migration issue;
- Parliamentarians had a responsibility to set the tone of debates;

- They had an important role in making public discourse more balanced and evidence based; and
- Parliamentarians had a responsibility to approve and allocate resources to impact policies.

9.2 Debate and Adoption of Emergency Item on the Refugee Crisis

Sudan as proposer of the item presented the item raising that the refugee crisis needed to be addressed together with root causes and other views and approaches were provided by other Speakers from other Parliaments supporting the proposal on refugees. These amongst others included poverty, conflict and war.

The assembly referred the emergency item to a drafting committee made of 13 member parliaments and later unanimously agreed to adopt the resolution.

9.3 22nd Meeting of Women Members of Parliament

There were discussions from a gender perspective on the theme of the Assembly's General Debate on 'The imperative for fairer, smarter and more humane migration'. Factors of migrations were:

- War;
- Conflict;
- Violence; and
- Economic reasons.

Discussions also centered on the challenges and ordeals encountered by migrants a significant one being no protection from the State. Solutions were also proposed and these included:

- Ratifying international conventions and implementation; and
- Good Practice with the assistance of the IPU

The coordinating committee under this forum introduced proposals for changing the rules of the meeting of women parliamentarians. These would be submitted to the Governing Council at the next IPU Assembly to be held in Lusaka, Zambia in March 2016.

The women in this forum also discussed initiatives for actions around campaigns “I am an MP; My power for Women’s power’ where delegates were given the opportunity to talk of activities, measures they were taking at national and regional levels to respond to the call for action on Gender Equality.

9.4 CEDAW and United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 – Gender Equality as a Pre-Requisite of Sustainable Peace and Security

Discussions in the panel under this topic focused on the implementation of the UNSCR in respect of participation of women in peace and security processes. There were discussions around the promotion of Gender Equality as a significant aspect of State building.

Key priorities in the debates were:

- Strengthen representation of women in parliaments;
- Strengthen roles of parliament in implementation of UNSCR 1325 at the national level;
- Allocation of budgets for the protection of women and security; and
- Autonomy in conflict and post conflict.

10.0 MEETING WITH SECRETARY GENERAL IPU – MR MARTIN CHUNGONG

This meeting was requested by the Speaker of the Fiji Parliament to discuss areas of assistance to the Fiji Parliament.

The Speaker thanked the Secretary General for accepting Fiji’s re-affiliation to the IPU. Mr Chungong responded that the IPU welcomed this development in the Fiji Parliament’s progress in parliamentary progress and assured that it would be ready to assist it.

The Speaker submitted, that in view of the adoption of SDGs in August 2015 with sovereign states and members of the UN accepting the outcome document titled ***“Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”*** Fiji was determined to join the rest of the world in mobilizing mechanisms required for a successful and meaningful implementation.

The Speaker proposed that:

- A parliamentary committee on Sustainable Development Goals be established in the Fiji Parliament in order to improve the awareness of the Members of Parliament (MPs) on the issues of SDGs; and
- The committee provide advice on the effective monitoring of the implementation; and
- It was necessary to enhance the capacity of the MPs to advance gender equality issues in the SDGs in line with SDG 5 on Gender Equality.

The IPU’s assistance was being sought in this regard.

In view of the discussions the IPU agreed that the Fiji Parliament provide a proposal that would entail the provision of a Parliamentary Coordinator on Sustainable Development Goals. Being mindful of the participation of women in the parliamentary process, the Speaker also requested that the Coordinator also has gender equality competencies. The Parliament Secretariat would consult closely with IPU officials and Fiji’s PRUNOG on this project.



Madam Speaker with the Secretary-General of the IPU, Mr Martin Chungong (left) and Deputy Speaker, Hon. Ruveni Nadalo

11.0 CONCLUSION

The Fiji Parliament recognizes the significance of engaging with the IPU and in the process, with other parliaments that are members, because of the benefits it stands to gain as a result of assistance available through capacity building initiatives and technical assistance offered by the IPU.

As the newest member of the IPU the Fiji Parliament acknowledges this status and is committed to ensuring along with other Parliamentary democracies under the IPU of its goals of strengthening democracy, peace and cooperation both domestically and globally.
