

# **[VERBATIM REPORT]**

## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LAW & HUMAN RIGHTS VIRTUAL MEETING**

### **BILL**

**Climate Change Bill 2021 (Bill No. 31/2021)**

**SUBMITTEE: #StandwithNiko Advocacy Group**

**DATE: Thursday, 9th September, 2021**

**VERBATIM NOTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS HELD AT THE BIG COMMITTEE ROOM, PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ON 9TH SEPTEMBER, 2021, AT 9.30 A.M.**

**Interviewee/ Submitter:** #StandwithNiko Advocacy Group

In Attendance:

- |     |                           |   |                      |
|-----|---------------------------|---|----------------------|
| (1) | Honourable Niko Nawaikula | – | Member of Parliament |
| (2) | Ms. Faith Grace           | – | Group Leader         |

---

[Mr. Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and requested Committee Members to introduce themselves]

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Members for that introduction.

For the viewers who are actually watching us this morning, I would like to inform that the Bill we are going to have the submission on is the Climate Change Bill 2021, Bill No. 31 of 2021. For the purpose of the viewers who are joining us this morning, I would like to give a brief explanation on what this Bill is all about.

The Bill basically aims to legally recognise and declare that Fiji and the Earth are facing a climate emergency. Fiji is particularly vulnerable to climate emergency and there is an urgent need to enhance climate resilience in Fiji's economy, nature and build environment and people.

Fiji is already experiencing and will continue to experience the impact of climate emergency, including increasingly volatile and extreme weather events, sea level rise and increasing susceptibility to food and water-borne diseases. Therefore, the Bill is a response to the current and future risk of climate change informed by the best available science published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to date, which emphasises the urgent need to limit the global average temperature increase to 1.5 degree Celsius above pre-industrial level.

Before us, we have a few guests who are members of the public and have shown interest in presenting on the Bill, and I would like to thank our guests for taking interest in the Committee work. I now invite our guests to introduce themselves and begin their submission, after which we will have a question and answer session. But if we feel any urgency of actually asking a question, we might actually interrupt in-between and ask those questions. So, Honourable Niko Nawaikula, you have the floor now. Thank you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are two in our team this morning, just me and Ms. Grace, and in our submission, we will be dividing that. Ms. Grace will talk on the first part and I will talk on the second part which is on the technical part - going through specific provisions.

Having said that, let me say that we have emailed a copy of our submission. I hope this has been done, well, Ms. Grace will confirm that. Yes, it has been done to the secretariat so that you will have

time to scrutinise that in detail. With that said, let me invite Ms. Grace to talk on the first part of our submission, then I will join later. Thank you.

MS. F. GRACE.- Thank you, Honourable Nawaikula. I can confirm that I have emailed the report to the Committee Secretariat.

Just a brief introduction on the group that is presenting today, my name is Faith Grace and I am part of a team called #StandwithNiko and if it is alright, can I go all straight ahead and start my presentation?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Madam, yes, you can start your presentation. Just a request because you are actually live, can you actually shift your phone or laptop away from you? Yes, that would be much better.

MS. F. GRACE.- Thank you very much. Do I have the floor to start now, Sir?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, Madam. You have the floor.

MS. F. GRACE.- Thank you. *Bula vinaka*, gentlemen. Good morning, ladies of the Secretariat. The #StandwithNiko Group is very grateful for the opportunity given by this parliamentary standing committee to make submission on the Climate Change Bill 2021.

The #StandwithNiko Group is a civil non-government group formed to advocate for justice, human rights in all forms, including fundamental rights and indigenous group rights, women and children's rights as recognised by the United Nations (UN) under its many instruments.

The #StandwithNiko Team was initially formed in response to Honourable Niko Nawaikula's unfair termination from Parliament to organise his court challenge, but has grown into an advocacy group as a voice for the people of Fiji on issues directly impacting them.

I will start my presentation on the Paris Agreement, which was signed in 2015 and we are one of the signatories. It was signed by 196 countries of which Fiji was one of them.

The key points of the Paris Agreement, if you will look at that presentation in front of you, I am going to concentrate on ...(technical glitch)... so it will be easier for you to follow. There were 196 countries that have adopted the Agreement. According to the Agreement signed in 2015, from last year(2020) all ...(technical glitch)... this Agreement has now come into force. It has come into force. It was done to officially recognise the human influence of ...

(Technical glitch).....The Agreement is now enforced from 2020 and the main goal is to reach climate neutrality by 2050. The Agreement aims to keep the average global temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius, to keep it at that or to try and reduce it even to 1.5 degree Celsius.

How do we recognise how much influence we have on the climate? The only way we can do that is by collecting data from the various sectors – from the public sector, from different communities

in Fiji, the Muslims, the Hindus, the indigenous Fijians, the Part-Europeans, and we collect data from them to be able to see how climate change (even for villages) is affecting them.

The data gives us a baseline to help us identify how much human influence and the amount of carbon footprint we have. That is the baseline we want to start with. We want to know how big is the carbon footprint that we have and what we will do. From that data, we will be able to formulate policies to then reduce that carbon footprint. To help us formulate a plan to reduce that carbon footprint.

According to the Climate Agreement, every five years there is going to be a review. The first review is coming up, Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members, in two years' time, that is, in 2023. That is the first world review where all the countries that had signed the Agreement will have to give a report on the plans that they had submitted to commit on and how they are going about it.

[Technical glitch from virtual connection]

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Ms. Grace, I apologise, I have to interrupt you. Your internet quality is very bad. Honourable Nawaikula, if you can actually ring her up. I do not think she can actually hear us. We barely can actually hear anything or what she is actually presenting, and for some reason, I think her speaker is mute as well.

[Technical glitch from virtual connection]

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I think we will go to Honourable Nawaikula and then we can come back to Ms. Grace once her network is up and running.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to talk about the Bill proper. I am basically speaking from our submission and you can read this clearly. First, as a background to the Bill, so far as we know, the Climate Change Bill 2021 has its origins in the general concern for the environment and for Mother Earth.

That concern developed worldwide, beginning from the Rio Declaration. We all know that, and that happened in 1992. After that, we all know Agenda 21. So, all those developed, and developed and developed until we now have consolidated 7 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We are familiar with that. The SDGs are all aimed at preserving our common home or our Mother Earth.

Now, this particular Bill is directly linked to Goal No. 13, and if I can read that put. Goal No. 13 says that we are to 'take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts'. So Bill No. 31 is directly linked to Goal No. 13.

However (and this also clear), there are some very related SDG goals as well to that and one of those is Goal No. 12, which says, we are to 'ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns'. So that addresses manufacturing, we have to be responsible in the exploitation of our resources, so that is also related to this one.

It is also related to Goal No. 14, which says that we are to 'conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources'. Having said that, let me say that this Bill also covers a bit of Goal

No. 15 because the end provision covers the care for the oceans.

Even Goal 15 of the SDGs, has close relation to this. Goal 15 says that we are to 'protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, forests and combat desertification. So, the point that I want to say is that, if you look at the SDGs, Goals 12, 13, 14 and 15 are very closely related to the care for the environment and for what we may call 'our common home'.

Mr. Chairman, SDG 13 in particular, which this Bill relates to, is for the combat of climate change. Now, from that arises our first concern. Our first concern is that, because this is generally referring to the care of the Mother Earth and the care for our common home, we feel that all these priorities must be addressed together, which is SDGs 12, 13, 14 and 15.

Here, we are only putting a lot of emphasis on Goal No. 13. Well, possibly because the scientists say that because of the greenhouse, there is an ozone layer there but we feel, if we look at the totality of the need to protect Mother Earth and the common home, we have to address them equally, but more especially Goal No. 12 which refers to our responsibility to stop the exploitation of our natural resources, so if that can be noted.

Our first concern about this Bill is that, in that way, we feel it is incomplete and any measure to address the need to preserve our common home must fully and comprehensively address the other needs, which we say are contained in SDGs 12, 14 and 15, including 13. We wish, Mr. Chairman, if you can note that down, that that is our concern. This one is incomplete. We must give equal priority and most of all, our responsibility to cut down on excessive exploitation.

I hope we all have a copy of the Bill and now we are going to go through the Bill proper. Having said that, our second concern is that, noting that there are 15 Parts, this Bill is too big, too comprehensive and too cumbersome to understand, bearing in mind the fact that all that we are doing here is, we are trying to reduce greenhouse gas emission. A very simple thing! We do not need to have a big Bill.

Given that Fiji's contribution to greenhouse is less than, I think, 0.03 percent, therefore, we need a law that is simple, that is comprehensive and not cumbersome. So, the Committee is reminded, if that point can be taken back to the draftsmen. Why is this Bill too big, when you are only talking about the need to reduce greenhouse gas emission? So, that is our second point. Make it simple so that the person on the street can read it!

Mr. Chairman, if you go further, looking through the Bill proper, the purpose is expressed on page 5 with big words - one, two, three, four, five. Can the drafters, please, simplify that? Can the drafters, please, link that to SDG 13?

In our submission, we have given an example. So you can simply say, "This Act is for an Act to combat climate change..." If they can use that term, "combat climate change" because that is the term that is used in SDG 13. So, we feel it is important for us to also use that term. "...combat climate change by simply reduction, regulation, governance and monitoring of greenhouse emission and for related matters."

Mr. Chairman, that is our third point. Please, simplify that. We do not need those big things,

especially if they use the word that is used in SDG 13. The term they used there is “combat climate change”, so if we can also use that term here. What we are doing here is, we combat climate change by reducing, monitoring and regulating greenhouse emission. Very simple! But this one here is one, two, three, four and five big lines which people can hardly read. I think that is our third point in relation to that.

If we can go further now to the content of the Bill. If you look at the Bill, we feel that there is a lot of space within the proposed legislation that is unnecessarily taken by administrative matters, not the law. This is my humble opinion, I am not a lawmaker, I do not study legal drafting, but when you make the law, you create a right or you create a responsibility and you enforce it. However, if you look at this one, there are a lot of administration matters, so can I just illustrate that by some examples.

If you look at Clause 4 of the Bill which is the objective of this Act, it covers about one, two, three, four, five, nearly 18 points which are all to be regarded as part of the objectives. We feel that some of those things there can be compiled or put separately in a schedule or be part of the subsidiary legislation, instead of unnecessarily filling up the law which should be limited to the enabling provision- the vesting of rights or vesting of responsibilities and the enforcement. So, that is our fourth point. I have given an example of Clause 4. There are 18 in total and if the drafters can be asked, if those 18 items can be placed in a schedule to the Act or within the subsidiary legislation.

Similarly, if you go to principles, Clause 5 says the principles upon which this Act is done, and it outlines about 13 items. Similarly, if the drafters can be asked if this can be scheduled away somewhere or included in subsidiary legislations. I have given two examples there but if you go through the whole totality of this law, there are a lot of administrative matters that should not be here. It should be taken away.

Mr. Chairman, if I go to Clause 6 - Declaration of Climate Emergency, we want to raise the point that we find this very unusual and needs a lot of tidying up.

Clause 6(1) declares Fiji is facing a climate change emergency but then when you go to Clause 6 (2), it goes on to say, “This Act is a response to the current and future risks...” So, tidy this up, please. If the drafters can be asked to tidy this up. If we are taking about declaration of emergency, we just talk about declaration. Do not include in that the fact that we are facing future risks. Well, declaration means we are facing a risk. So, that is the next point that we want to raise, which is in relation to the declaration of emergency.

Accordingly, we are asking the Committee if you can, please, refer our comment to the draftsmen. Well, I am saying here, poor legal drafting, but I do not study legal drafting so I put it to them. They can come back and say, “Oh, Niko, you are totally wrong. This is how we put the laws nowadays.” Well, they are the experts but we just want to raise this and if it can be referred to them and they can answer us in the way that they know best because they are the professionals. They write the laws, they draft our laws as the drafters but we just want to raise that up.

Next, Mr. Chairman, Clause 7 - of the Paris Agreement. There is a concern that I want to put in relation to this law. The normal law that I know, they put a right or an obligation on individuals and then enforcement but in here, the main party is the government. This law is putting a lot of

responsibilities to the Minister to prepare submissions, to do monitoring and all these. So, the next question that I ask is, if we have a law that imposes all those obligations on the Minister which is basically the Government, must we also have, equally within that law, the right for an individual to enforce it? For example, if the Minister did not write his report this year as the law requires, I also want a provision there that I can take the Minister to account. So, I can go to a tribunal or somewhere and say, "Alright, Minister, that law tells you to submit this to the international community", and I can go to the local courts or domestic courts.

So, our group is asking, in relation to the implementation of the Paris Agreement, as well as the responsibilities that this law imposes which is a lot (I think it is about two-thirds of the content), on the Minister and the public officers, there must equally be a provision for those responsibilities to be enforced and for individual citizens like me, that I can take them to account if they fail in that.

I need to take a bit of time to look at what are the enforcement provisions against the Minister or the public officers who are made responsible to combat climate change here, and I cannot find it. So, maybe, if that point is taken up to the drafters and they can tell me whether I am right or I may be wrong and say, "Alright, you know there is a provision there that you overlooked, Niko", but let them tell me that.

Mr. Chairman, moving forward, we are saying that the Bill is not clear on how to enforce the Minister's obligatory responsibilities and if you can add onto that, the Minister and the public servants.

The last point that I wish to cover is in relation to placement and relocation. Placement and relocation applies to indigenous community and is a very serious concern. The reason for that is that, indigenous communities who live in villages are connected to their environment, their land and their culture. It is like a web, so you can just go and take this one out and take it out. So, there must be what we can term as a 'social impact assessment' before that is done so that all those can be addressed.

In one the dailies today, there is a community that does not want to move and one of the reasons is their location, because they are very deep-rootedly connected to that location, their source of food is coming from there, their medicine is coming from there, so you cannot just take them away and say, "You go to a higher place." You have to really take into account their custom, their responsibilities and their very close connection to their land, and those must be fully addressed.

Those, basically, Mr. Chairman, are some of the things that we managed to look up and we want to raise those to you so that you can discuss with the drafters on this Bill. Thank you very much. I am not sure how Ms. Grace is doing.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Mr. Nawaikula, for that presentation. Now, I believe we can go back to Ms. Grace. Hopefully, her network is much better now.

MS. F. GRACE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the Government of the day. #StandwithNiko would like to bring to your attention the Paris Climate Agreement. At the bottom, you will see role of forests. I believe that the Honourable Prime Minister had made the commitment for one million trees to be planted and with the data, we would be able to see the different divisions that this has been divided to, to ensure that all these plants will be grown before the time of review.

Mr. Chairman, 2023 is the first world review. All the countries will have to make a report, submit a report on exactly where we are at, so I thank the Honourable Prime Minister of Fiji for coming up with that initiative. That was his initiative and I think we have all heard of that one million trees to be grown, so I would like to thank the Government for that.

Just coming back to the clean technologies that I have been talking about, we had suggested:

- Offshore Wind Farms.
- Solar Farms in the Western Division because of the huge amount of sunlight that is there, it can be used to power businesses and even electricity needs for homes.
- Use of water-propelled turbines (rivers, sea waves to generate electricity).
- Use of fuel alternatives, in particular, the marine bunker fuel for inter-island shipping. This is especially important to me because I am from Daliconi Village in Vanuabalavu, so the boats going out there. I would suggest that the Government would look at bringing in marine bunker fuel to be used for inter-island shipping.
- Use of electric cars would be expensive but I would, perhaps, suggest alternatives, such as carpooling, walking, biking to work, school and the shop, as shown by Honourable Member of Parliament, Honourable Seruiratu, when he was in Paris.

Who will fund the projects for clean technologies? There is a fund that is available, given by all the rich countries and they had pledged \$100 billion. We can use that money because developing countries are allowed to apply for that funding. If we needed seawalls or wherever the government needs to put up seawalls, we can tap into that fund, but we need to be accountable and transparent with using that money and making sure that the monies are used on the projects that it was intended for.

How will we review and monitor these? Data. Again, collecting data and making it available. Who do we need for monitoring? Just as Honourable Nawaikula had said, the Minister would be ultimately responsible for reporting to Parliament but we can start right down from the *turaga-ni-koro*, who is currently being paid by the Government \$100 week as his/her allowance, so they can start off with the villages. They then report to the District Officer, who sits on a committee, who he/she then reports to, and then the Permanent Secretary reports to the Minister, the Minister then reports to Parliament.

This has to be done regularly and according to the plan. Yearly, these reports need to come in, collated and by the fifth year when we have the world review, the Minister can then take that report to the main committee. That is what we had thought to add, Mr. Chairman.

Are we ready for 2023? That is the first world review, so we need to collect all that data so that whatever we go and present is going to be honest and it is accountable. We have the money there. It is already available from last year, 2020.

Even with COVID-19 happening and everything, the money is supposed to be there. We have already signed off on that, so Governments need to provide the money, we need to get a plan, we can access that funding, use it for whatever we need in Fiji according what the Government needs and I cannot stress enough on data. We need ongoing data and reliable data to help us to continue to protect Fiji and help us to fight climate change.



Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members, that is all I have. If Honourable Nawaikula wants to add anything else to sum up, then it is over to you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Just to add on that, that rounds up our submission, covering the policy side and our comments in relation to the Bill. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Nawaikula, for that presentation. Thank you, Ms. Grace, for your presentation as well on the Climate Change Bill 2021. I think it is actually agreed that we definitely need this particular Bill – the Climate Change Bill 2021. Climate effect is an emergency so we definitely need this Bill. Everyone is agreeing to that. How it is actually presented? That is something that is already before us and the Committee is currently scrutinising and trying to collect submissions on that.

Honourable Nawaikula, I would like to ask something, especially with regards to that last statement you made about villages not willing to move. We do understand that climate change is real, climate change is here, the emergency is here, people are being affected, our coastal areas are eroding, people are actually losing land to sea and most of those villages are located at the place where it is close to the sea and during high tides, some of those villages experience that houses get submerged in seawater.

What you were actually saying with regards to their sentiments, their heritage and everything, emotions attached to that particular place, what do you suggest or how to approach that because at the end of the day we have to move them? With all due respect to the emotions attached to where they are staying and they have to be moved, what do you propose or what steps do we take in moving them from one place to the other?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Well, I just suggest. In the provision where there is a taskforce that is tasked with relocation, to also have an item within that to look at, as a point for consideration, the connection of those villages to the land. I am not saying that they should not move, but those things, their interconnectivity with the land are also addressed which means that once you move them, it is not just the physical relocation of their houses, you also have to consider their food sources.

I think that has happened to Vunidogoloa Village. They were moved far away from the sea, but the Government, in its efforts, also addressed that by constructing fishing ponds there which are for tilapia. So that, to me, is an example of looking at it in that totality, and not just the need to physically run away from the high tide. So they also get their food there, so they do not always run back to their old location. So, if a provision is inserted in the items that the taskforce is to look at that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You mean to say that the Government of the day is doing a good job in relocating those villages to higher land with actually all other considerations given to the villages and village members who are moving?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- This is one of the very exception that I have to congratulate your Government because they were able to look at that.

(Laughter)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. At least, I was able to bring this out at Committee stage and not in Parliament, but thank you. We will keep a record of this.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Well, indeed, it is on record.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much. Honourable Members, I will open the floor now, if anyone else has any question that they would like to pose to Honourable Nawaikula or Ms. Grace.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to thank Honourable Nawaikula for his submission this morning. Surely, we will consider and we will see what we can come up with in regards to your submission. Just a quick question, what do you think about the maximum fine of \$750,000?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Well, I think it is small. You know, a lot of people who are the transgressors of the emission are the big factories. These people already have their money, so you must impose an amount that will stop them. I think \$750,000 is not enough. That will not stop a big manufacturer or a big money firm. That is just petty cash.

MS. F. GRACE.- May I add something to that, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, Ms. Grace.

MS. F. GRACE.- Honourable Members of Parliament, the thing is, I will come from a point of view in not to impose fines on the people or the businesses. We know that these people are polluters. What I would suggest would be that the Government of the day and us, as a people, help reduce our carbon footprint. If they are polluting, what can they do to reduce that rather than fine them?

I mean, they are also employing the people to come and work in those businesses. If they are going to feel that the fine is too big because the Government is imposing that fine on them, then they might close up the business. That is the disadvantage on the social side for the workers as they will be unemployed. That is not what we are going for, we want them to continue with their businesses, rather than fine. We could use a certain portion of that money and help them reduce their pollution so that they are no longer big polluters. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Ms. Grace, for that. I believe there is some confusion over here with regards to the fine. There are two aspects of it. The first one is for those people who actually do not abide by this particular Bill, so they are the ones who are actually going to be fined. The companies who are actually polluting, there is this new thing coming up which is the sequestration of carbon emission, so they can actually buy the forests that are going to be reserved. It is not only for the overseas companies to actually buy it but certain companies, for example, might not be able to reduce their carbon emission, so they can actually invest in sequestration of carbon emission and they can invest in that.

What we are actually saying is that, companies have that option of investing elsewhere, for example, if a portion of mangrove needs to be removed, it is not that they cannot remove for development, it is allowed, but then they actually have to plant six times more at another place where it

is available for them to actually plant. So, it is not that development cannot take place because you have mangroves there and you cannot remove those mangroves.

The fine is definitely for those people who do not abide by the law and that is something that is not going to be fined by the officers but it is definitely going to the court and the court will decide as to which particular case, the severity of the case and then decide on the fine that is supposed to be imposed.

MS. F. GRACE.- Mr. Chairman, again, I would suggest that instead of fining the companies, we try to help them come up with solutions, rather than fining people and using the law as the means to stick out money from these companies. That is not what we are supposed to be doing. That is not what you are supposed to be doing as the Government of the day. You are supposed to come up with solutions to be able to help these companies to be able to ensure that they will not pay these fines.

However, if they continue to break the law, yes, I would agree that they be imposed but they should be given a timeframe to be able to abide, to make sure that they are within that time so that they are not continuing to increase the emission. That will, in turn, come back to the government because we need to keep emissions below two degree-Celsius. Again, please come up with solutions. That is what the government is there for, come up with solutions. No stiff or hefty fines on the people. It is too much money.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- That is exactly what I was explaining, Ms. Grace, if you actually heard me clearly. There are provisions to actually help the businesses, of those who cannot reduce their carbon emission. The provisions are there in the law, how we are actually going to give them solutions, the options and everything. Upon that if they do not follow, then we definitely need to fine them. There are times, there is a transition phase as well which is provided in the law itself.

MS. F. GRACE.- Then that is alright.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Dr. Govind, your hand is up, so over to you.

HON. DR. S.R. GOVIND.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to really understand a bit more on declaration of climate emergency at national level. My understanding is that, globally, we are in a crisis due to climate change, so this is the way forward to continue towards reducing emission and then lowering the risk further.

My understanding is that, when we want to declare an emergency, there has to be a beginning and an end date. We cannot just declare emergency and leave it, like in a state of emergency, forever. So, in our current Bill, as Honourable Nawaikula said, is the emergency powers given to the Minister to declare emergency when something will get more serious or is it like continuous, we are in a continuous emergency state once the Bill is enacted? Can someone explain this, please?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Mr. Chairman, I will just start with what I understand. My understanding is that, this law says we are in a state of emergency. It is not like, when a crisis comes up and the Minister declares that. This one, the scientific people have already seen all the risks and the law itself declares that there is a state of emergency, so it will be on your next point.

It will be an ongoing thing until we possibly reach that zero emission, or when the scientists advise us, “Alright, the ozone is closed off and we are in a safe position.” So it is an ongoing emergency and all the things we need to do in the meantime to remove that. That is my understanding.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, Honourable Nawaikula. I believe that is the reason why we have it in law, that we are going to declare an emergency because climate change is real and climate change is here. We cannot actually put a timeframe until when it is going to last, unless and until we do get some scientific proof and the countries come together and say, “Alright, we have actually reached safety, we have obtained below five percent or 2.5 percent by 2050 because the new research is stating that we might actually surpass 2.5 degree-Celsius by 2040 or 2050. Before, it was predicted to be at around 2090, so that is the reason why we are having this declaration embedded in the law, so that whenever anything needs to be done, it is already there that it is an emergency that has been declared. I hope that clarifies it, Honourable Dr. Govind.

HON. DR. S.R. GOVIND.- Yes, it does.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Any other question, Honourable Bulitavu.?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I have no questions, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Matanitobua?

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do not have any question, but would like to thank Honourable Nawaikula and Ms. Grace for their contribution today, which will also enable us in our deliberations and our decision-making. Thank you, Madam. *Vinaka va'levu*, Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- *Vinaka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. So, that basically brings us to the end of today's session. Honourable Dr. Govind, I can see your hand.

HON. DR. S.R. GOVIND.- Yes, I just wanted to clarify from Ms. Grace the #StandwithNiko, is it a CSO or is it a political organisation? Is it registered as an NGO?

MS. F. GRACE.- Yes, Sir.

HON. DR. S.R. GOVIND.- This #StandwithNiko, is it a registered charitable NGO or what is it? What is the mandate?

MS. F. GRACE.- Well, it is an advocacy group, at the moment, and we are thinking of actually registering, maybe in the future but at the moment, we are just an advocacy group, at the moment, as we speak, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Anything else, Honourable Dr. Govind?

HON. DR. S.R. GOVIND.- No, thanks. That is clarified.

MS. F. GRACE.- Thank you very much, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Members. I think that brings us to the end of our session this morning. I will request Honourable Dr. Govind to thank the submittees before we close this session.

HON. DR. S.R. GOVIND.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Honourable Members. First of all I would like to thank Honourable Nawaikula and Ms. Faith Grace for taking their time to come and present to us on the Bill which is in front of us.

I think Honourable Nawaikula has really taken up the interest in studying the Bill and coming up with his suggestions which the Committee will deliberate on, but it looks like that he is supporting the Bill, other than for those small changes that are needed, such as the linkage to SDGs, et cetera. I am sure the Committee will deliberate on this and come back to Honourable Nawaikula, if need be.

With those, Honourable Nawaikula and Ms. Grace, thank you very much and we hope that once the Bill is enacted, we will work towards the implementation together so that one day, our Fiji is safe and our people will live safely. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Yes, Ms. Grace.

MS. F. GRACE.- If I may, Honourable Nawaikula, may I thank the Committee on our behalf, on behalf of #StandwithNiko. Yes, I think he has gone somewhere, so I am just going to say thank you very much to your Committee, for allowing #StandwithNiko to make our presentation today.

We are very sorry that we had to wait until the very last day to put pressure on you to allow us to present but we thank you for giving your time to listen to our submission. As the Honourable Dr. Govind has stated that it would be good for us to work together. Fiji is all our country whether we are in government or opposition, and we need to start working together in offering solutions to help our people, our businesses and help our communities to deal with the climate change emergency that we are going through right now.

Thank you very much, again, Honourable Members of Parliament, for the opportunity.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Madam. I would like to also take this opportunity to thank all the viewers that have joined us this morning to witness this public submission by Ms. Grace and Honourable Nawaikula. Thank you everyone and we shall now end this session. *Vinaka*.

The Committee adjourned at 10.30 a.m.