



STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE

Review Report of the Committee on the Ministry Of Foreign Affairs And International Co-operation 2013 Annual Report



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
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22nd September, 2016

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Chairs' Foreword

I am pleased to present the review Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence on the Ministry Of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation 2013 Annual Report.

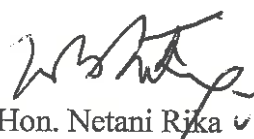
The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence is a standing committee established under Section 109(2)(e) of the Standing Orders (SO) of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji. The Committee is mandated to examine matters related to Fiji's relations with other countries, development aid, foreign direct investment, oversight of the military and relations with multi-lateral organisations.

The purpose of the review was to scrutinize the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation 2013 Annual Report specifically on the area of administration, legislation, budget, organization structure, functions, policies and programs of the year.

The findings of the review and the recommendations put forward by the Committee are intended to assist the Ministry's service delivery in the future and especially in meeting Fiji's international obligations to international laws, treaties and conventions and managing and maximizing Fiji's foreign policy at the regional and international diplomatic levels.

The review exercise was possible after a round of consultations with the Ministry. The Committee had identified areas of concern that needs addressing to ensure the Ministry effectively achieves its goals. I wish to extend my thanks to the Honourable Members and the Secretariat who were involved in the production of this bipartisan report: my Committee colleagues Hon. Ratu Isoa Tikoca MP (Deputy Chairperson), Hon. Mataiasi Niumataiwalu MP (Member) and Hon. Jilila Kumar MP (Member).

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I commend this report to the Parliament.



Hon. Netani Rika
Chairperson

List of Recommendations

Recommendation One:

That the Government request the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation undertake a cost benefit analysis of its overseas missions.

Recommendation Two:

That the Government undertake a maintenance assessment of government-owned overseas properties, and address any maintenance issues.

Recommendation Three:

That the Government consider revising the Foreign Service Regulations (FOSR) for children of diplomats.

Recommendation Four:

That the Government encourage the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation to retain experienced diplomats at its headquarters, to build capacity at the ministry in pushing forward Fiji's Foreign Policy for the present demands and future trends.

Recommendation Five:

That the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-Operation increase the cost of living and associated expenses of Fiji's diplomats and families working and living overseas where appropriate.

Background

Cost benefit analysis

We are interested in understanding the “all of government” return on investment of the various overseas missions supported by the Ministry of foreign Affairs and International Co-Operation.

Mission properties owned by the Fijian Government

We are aware that the Government owns properties in Brussels, Canberra, London, and Wellington. The Ministry of Public Enterprises is responsible for the maintenance of these properties, and is allocated an annual sum of \$300,000 for this purpose. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-Operation is working to produce a maintenance plan for these properties.

Retention policy of returning diplomats

Previously, returning diplomats would take up posts at their grade or above upon returning from overseas postings. With the introduction of the Open Merit Recruitment and Selection guideline, this may no longer be the case, and returning diplomats may have to apply for vacancies, and if they are unsuccessful, then their experience and knowledge may be lost to the ministry. We are

aware that the ministry has commissioned a review of the effects of this policy on the ministry, and we are interested in the result of this analysis.

Foreign service regulations and implications of Fiji's foreign policy

The Foreign Service Regulations (FOSR) outlines the responsibilities of all diplomats to respect the national laws of their host country, and to not exploit their diplomatic privileges. The regulations are currently under review as Fiji has undergone major development in its international engagement. The review is ongoing.

Introduction

This report examines the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation 2013 Annual Report which was tabled in Parliament on 9th February, 2015.

The Committee had gone through the Annual Report and identified key areas that need to be assessed. This included the Ministry's budgetary allocation, policies, programs and projects of 2013, staffing issues, high cost of living experienced by Fijian diplomats in overseas missions and the overall administration.

On 15th September 2016, the Committee resolved to summon the Ministry's executives on 20th September 2016 to provide a brief to the Committee on the overall performance of the Ministry in 2013.

The review involved the collection and sighting of available information and documents from the Ministry. This was important to allow the Standing Committee to fully understand its operations and performance.

In summary, the information for this report was obtained through:

1. A thorough assessment by the Standing Committee on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation 2013 Annual Report;
2. An oral presentation by the Ministry's executive management; and
3. Face-to-face interviews with the Ministry's Deputy Secretary, Mr Esala Nayasi and his team.

The mandated functions of the Ministry are listed below which the Committee used as the basis of the review:

- 1) Introduction;
- 2) Ministry Achievements for 2013;
- 3) Challenges;
- 4) Financial and Budgetary Constraints; and
- 5) Strategic Direction and the Way Forward.

The Report is divided into three:

- I. **Chapter One** covers the Committee recommendations to Parliament;
- II. **Chapter Two** focuses on the Findings of the report; and
- III. **Chapter Three** covers the Conclusion.

Findings

The Committee's findings were established after thoroughly scrutinizing the Ministry's 2013 Annual Report and acquiring additional information and clarifications from the consultations with the Ministry's senior officials.

The objectives of the assessment were to:

- scrutinize the Ministry's 2013 administration, budget, functions, organization structure and policies that were in place;
- understand the projects/programs of the Ministry in 2013; and
- make recommendations to Parliament on the overall performance of the Ministry in 2013 with regards to its mandated functions.

The **key findings** from the Committee's assessment and consultation process are:

- The Ministry had limited capacity to coordinate and drive its Human Resource Management System to achieve its intended targets for 2013 and beyond;
- The Ministry's administration and operations were constrained in capacities at various levels in Missions and Headquarters (numbers and competency);
- The Ministry had difficulty developing and retaining experienced staff due the salary scale and its non-commensurability with the high cost of living in overseas missions. The better salaries and working conditions offered by the private sector, United Nations and accredited agencies, regional/international donor agencies are luring Fiji's experienced diplomats.
- The Ministry is unable to provide incentives to support new work culture
- Legislation Review
- FOSR provisions
- Information Communications Technology (ICT)
- Jurisdictional differences in laws

Financial Competency in Missions Analysis

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation was constrained in its ability to meet the real time needs of diplomats and their families serving in foreign missions. The financial and budgetary constraints of the Ministry are listed as follows:

- Need for the Fiji Government to acquire its own land for its Embassies overseas (Office space/diplomat's accommodation).
- Delays in reports and acquittals
- Delay in BOS
- Incomplete reconciliation (variation in exchange rates)
- Cost of living adjustments (high cost of living in Port Moresby, Brussels, Geneva, New York, and Rio de Janeiro).
- Increased cost of education and rent

Conclusion

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence has fulfilled its mandate approved by Parliament which was to examine the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation's 2013 Annual Report. The Committee had conducted its review and formulated the findings with regard to the Ministry's performance in 2013.

The Committee report is a bi-partisan one and both sides have contributions to the final report which is closely supported by the Secretariat.

The response and the input from the Ministry was overwhelming which contributed a lot in the compilation of this report. The Committee has assembled a few recommendations to Parliament on the result of the review that was undertaken with regard to the Ministry's mandated responsibilities with its performance in 2013.

The recommendations highlighted two key areas of concern which included the Ministry's budgetary allocation, the capacity and the capability of the Ministry in carrying out its mission of meeting Fiji's foreign policy needs.

Overall, the key areas highlighted by the Committee in its findings would boost the overall performance of the Ministry in the future.

APPENDICES

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
ANNUAL REPORT 2013**

TUESDAY 20th SEPTEMBER 2010

- Introduction
- 2013 Achievements
- Challenges
- Financial and Budgetary Constraints
- Strategic Direction
- Way Forward

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graph TD
    Minister[Minister] --> PS[PS]
    PS --> Legal[Legal Department]
    PS --> Relations[Head of Mission]
    Legal --> DirectorPolitical[Director Political/Treaties & Climate Change]
    Legal --> DirectorInternational[Director International Cooperation]
    Relations --> ChiefProtocol[Chief of Protocol]
    Relations --> DirectorCorporate[Director Corporate Services]
  
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The organizational chart of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia is structured as follows:

- Minister** (Yellow box)
 - PS** (Blue box)
 - Legal Department** (Green box)
 - Director Political/Treaties & Climate Change** (Orange box)
 - Director International Cooperation** (Orange box)
 - Head of Mission** (Blue box)
 - Chief of Protocol** (Orange box)
 - Director Corporate Services** (Orange box)

OUR FOOTPRINT

HE Solo Mara

HE Filimone Kau

HE Isileli Matulaga

HE Peter Voces

HE Tugesh Karan

HE Ratu Mali Bainimarama

HE Ekele Teleni

HE Winston Thompson

HE Ratu Talu Caruaiti

HE Ben Salacaku

HE Peter Thompson

HE Robyn Hair

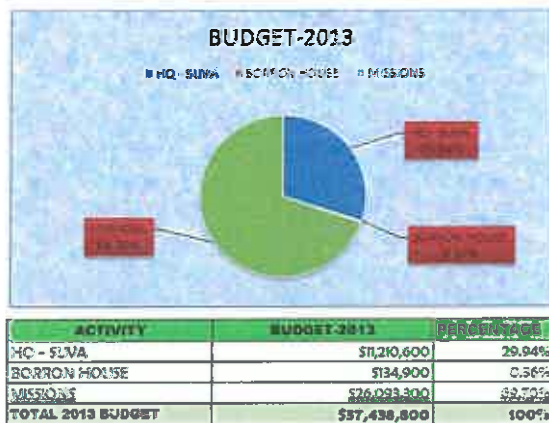
HE Rohanu Thistakoa

Vacant

MPA - POLYVALENT MANPOWER ASSOCIATION



2013 BUDGET DISTRIBUTION



HIGHLIGHTS

International

- Chairmanship of G77 + China,
- Formal Diplomatic Relations [FDR] – 13 [149]
- UN Climate Change Negotiations [Chair of SBI]
- Deepening of existing relations
- **State Visits – (i) PNG**
- \$50 million for the General Elections
- Establishment of Fiji/PNG Business Council
- Offer of 15 Tourism Scholarships to PNG students to study in Fiji.

HIGHLIGHTS Cont...

(n) **Russia**

- Military equipment
- Visa exemption

(m) **China**

- Agreement on Economic & Technical Cooperation
- 4 MOUs on Defence Cooperation, provision of goods to address climate change, Visa exemption and Establishment of a Chinese Cultural Centre in Fiji

HIGHLIGHTS Cont...

- High level Visits/Engagements by MFA – 17 Regional & International engagements
- Presentation of Credentials to Fiji – 19 [International organizations & bilateral partners
- MOUs and MOAs signed with Development partners - 18

HIGHLIGHTS Cont...

Regional

- Establishment of PIDF,
- Chairmanship of MSG,
- Hosting of SPC Conference and CRGA 43.
- Pacific SIDS Preparatory Meeting,

HIGHLIGHTS Cont...

Climate Change

- UN Climate Change Negotiations [Chair of SBI]
- National Climate Change Summit
- Vulnerability Assessment
- Relocation Guideline

CHALLENGES

- Human Resource Management System
- Capacity in Missions and HQ (numbers and competency)
- Retention of staff
- Lack of incentives to support new work culture
- Legislation Review
- FOSR provisions
- ICT
- Jurisdictional differences in laws

FINANCIAL & BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS

1. **Financial competency in Missions;**
 - delay in reports and acquittals
 - delay in BOS
 - Incomplete reconciliation [variation in exchange rate]
2. **Cost of living adjustments**
 - Exchange rate
3. **Increased costs**
 - Education and rent

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Premier Ministry by 2015

- “Friend to all, enemy to none” – foreign policy approach;
- Increase global footprints – establish new missions, FDR, accreditation and appointment of Honorary Consuls;
- Establish new relations and deepen existing ones
- Ministry’s Strategic Plan – 2016-2020
- New Regional Architecture - strengthen PIDF as Fiji’s vessel for regional engagement;

WAY FORWARD

Institutional capacity strengthening

- Bureau configuration;
- PSC Reform
- Competency Review
- Policy Review – FOSR, Finance Manual
- New Policies – support Constitutional authority of the Permanent Secretary;
- New Mission - Geneva

CONCLUSION

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step”

Lao Tzu

VINAKA VAKALEVU

APPENDIX 2:

**BRIEF OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARY MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS AMBASSADOR RAVINDRAN ROBIN NAIR DATED 28th
SEPTEMBER,2016**



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Telephone: (679) 330 9645
Facsimile : (679) 3317580

Levels 1 & 2, South Wing, iTaukei Trust Fund Complex, 87 Queen Elizabeth Drive,
Nasele, Post Office Box 2220, Government Buildings, Suva, Republic of Fiji

<http://www.foreignaffairs.gov.fj>

28th September, 2016

Hon. Mr Netani Rika,
Chairman,
Parliament Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence,
Parliament of the Republic of Fiji.

Hon. Rika,

**Re: Parliament Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence query
to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 27th September, 2016.**

In response to your letter ref. 6/16 of 27/9/16, please find below our initial responses.

(1) Cost Benefit Analysis

Firstly, may I respectfully state at the outset that with regards to our diplomatic missions overseas, whilst the staff members are predominantly staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they are first and foremost, public servants of the Government of the Republic of Fiji. The chancery and the residence of the Head of Mission at every location is considered the territory of the sovereign state of the Republic of Fiji, under International Law, namely the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961.

Therefore, to be able to accurately capture the Cost Benefit Analysis, we would need to look holistically at an 'all of government' return on investment (ROI) by sector which would need our team to work with all the ministries, agencies of government,

the private sector and academic institutions to do justice in reflecting the work of facilitation and negotiations that our diplomats carry out on our behalf in their various locations.

Given the time limitation on our response time, please find below a table of annual costs per mission. The table contains the number of diplomatic staff and the annual budget.

Below is a table of allocations directly remitted to Missions for their operations.

No.	Mission	Staff Number	Budget {\$}
1	Canberra	4	1,198,827
2	Beijing	5	2,319,576
3	Brussels	4	3,605,402
4	New Delhi	3	1,442,890
5	Jakarta	4	1,194,708
6	Brazil	4	1,074,769
7	Addis Ababa	3	1,344,596
8	Abu Dhabi	4	2,089,034
9	Seoul	4	1,913,262
10	Geneva	4	1,857,738
11	Tokyo	4	2,154,821
12	Kuala Lumpur	4	1,101,641
13	Wellington	3	964,611
14	PNG	3	1,858,007
15	London	4	1,324,495
16	New York	5	2,136,582
17	Washington	2	1,554,203
18	Roving Ambassador	3	HQ allocation
TOTAL		67	\$29,135,162

Please find below a few major key outcomes:

- Establishment of the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF) after two successful years of Engaging With the Pacific Leaders Meetings (EWPLM).
- Our successful bid to provide a Fijian diplomat as MSG Secretary General.
- Fiji's credibility to win leadership positions on multi-lateral and international bodies.
- The successful negotiation for the release of our 44 peacekeepers captured on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights was a result of Fiji's diplomatic presence in the Middle East, the presence of skilled Fijian government diplomats and Fiji's diplomatic credibility.

- Chair of G77 & China – 2013
- President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme/ United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Special Projects 2014-2015
- President of the United Nations General Assembly 71st session 2016/2017
- Acceptance by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) consisting of 120 member states for Fijian membership.
- Foreign Direct Relations with 182 sovereign states out of the 194 UN member states.
- High level visits to Fiji and hosting of international / regional meetings
- Interest by other countries to establish missions in Fiji (for the region) and also increased number of staff
- Memorandum of Agreements and Memorandum of Understanding signed
- High level visits
- Hosting of high level meetings
- Increasing inflow of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA)
- Increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) & Trade
- Connectivity
- Tourist Arrivals
- Increasing interest by our international partners to establish missions in Fiji and increasing number of accreditations to Fiji.

(2) Mission properties owned by the Fiji government

The Fijian Government owns properties in the Brussels, Canberra, London and Wellington however, they are administered by the Ministry of Public Enterprises. The Ministry is allocated an annual sum of \$300,000 for the maintenance of these properties without any structural adjustments.

(3) Maintenance Policy and Plan

The MoFA is currently working on a Missions Properties Maintenance Policy and Plan as we are also revising our Financial Regulations. This work is being done in close consultation with the Ministry of Economy.

The Ministry also plans to undertake a stock take exercise on Mission assets in the current financial year in order to compile a 3 to 5 year maintenance plan.

(4) Retention Policy of returning Diplomats

With the introduction of the Open Merit Recruitment and Selection Guideline, the past practice whereby, returning diplomats would take up posts at their grade or above may be in contravention of this. Therefore, a recent review by a World Bank consultant in August is going to be discussed further with the Hon. Minister to provide a possible way forward under the circumstances. With the recently introduced Open Merit Recruitment and Selection Guideline, returning diplomats may have to apply for vacancies. There are inherent risks in this process that we are taking on board as part of the Institutional Review. The Ministry wishes to retain its successful returning diplomats.

(5) Foreign Service Regulations and implications on Fiji's Foreign Policy

The Foreign Service Regulations [FOSR] 2005 sets the guideline for the administration of the Missions from the recruitment of diplomats, their terms and conditions, diplomatic privileges and compliance with host country legislations. The FOSR is complemented by the Mission's Finance Manual for the management of mission finances.

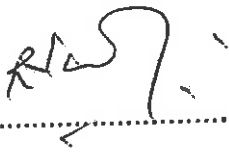
The FOSR supports the principle promoted under the Foreign Policy Statement of "Friend to all and enemy to none" and outlines the responsibilities of all diplomats to respect the national laws of their host countries and not exploit their diplomatic privileges espoused under the Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations 1961.

The Regulation is currently under review as Fiji has undergone major development in terms of its international engagement which needs to be accurately captured. The review has completed its initial stage of consultations.

The second consultation with all the Fiji Missions was completed in August and we aim to have the same with the relevant agencies here in Fiji and Office of the Solicitor General by December 2016.

My team and I look forward to discussing the above further with the distinguished committee at 1000hours on Thursday 29th September, 2016.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.Nair', written over a horizontal dotted line.

Ambassador Ravindran Robin Nair

Permanent Secretary,

Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

APPENDIX 3: VERBATIM

VERBATIM REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE HELD IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS ON TUESDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER, 2016 AT 10.30 A.M.

Submitter: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In Attendance:

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. | Ms. Litia Mawi | - | Her Excellency Roving Ambassador |
| 2. | Mr. Esala Nayasi | - | Deputy Secretary |
| 3. | Ms. Amalaini Kuruvakadua | | |
| 4. | Mr. Simione Rokolaqa | | |
| 5. | Mr. Luke Ravusoni | | |
| 6. | Ms. Ateca Mocenakete | | |
-

MR. CHAIRMAN - Honourable Members, we have the representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Corporation with us this morning. As we all aware they will be here to present to us in regards to the 2013 Annual Report and other areas they will be presenting this morning.

I take this opportunity to welcome the team from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Corporation. I can see we have Her Excellency, the Roving Ambassador with us this morning, and also the Deputy Secretary, Mr Esala Nayasi. We have Ms. Amalaini Kuruvakadua, Mr. Simione Rokolaqa, Mr. Luke Ravusoni and Ms. Ateca Mocenakete with us. Good morning to you all and the Honourable Members of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Standing Committee are looking forward to your presentation this morning. After your presentation there will be questions and answers session and probably, have a cup of tea before you leave us this morning.

With no further ado, I will now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary, I believe, we will be having a PowerPoint presentation this morning.

MR. E. NAYASI - Mr. Chair and Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. Firstly, I wish to take this time on behalf of our Honourable Minister and also the Permanent Secretary, to thank the Committee for its invitation and for giving us this opportunity to come and present to you on our 2013 Annual Report.

I wish to begin by saying that 2013 had been a very exciting year for our Ministry, exciting in a sense that it was at a time when we saw the change in terms of our strategic approach, particularly in the conduct of our foreign relations.

As you know Honourable Members, after 2007, the Ministry have had the task of defending the position that the Government had taken. In 2009, we were suspended from various forums, including in the region, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and also the Commonwealth. So, the Ministry have been taking a very defensive approach, if I may put it.

In 2009, it was a turning point in terms of our foreign relations in which we changed the strategic direction, we changed the way we approach diplomacy. Not until 2013, when we changed our approach in a sense that we put in place a more offensive approach because of the promulgation of our Constitution and that, to us, is a change which is really welcomed by the Ministry and you will see in our report and also in the presentations that I will make that there have been lot of things that we did in 2013 which is pro-engagement in partnership with international community at large

Mr. Chair, your letter to our Permanent Secretary, Sir, had asked that we present on a number of issues pertaining to the report, as follows:

- 1) challenges;
- 2) financial and budgetary constraints that the Ministry faced in that year;
- 3) strategic directions; and
- 4) on the way forward

Before going on to those issues, I wish to take some time just to make a short introduction and also highlight some of our achievements in 2013 which may be important for me to make, so that we can contextualise some of the issues that we will want to discuss, given the opportunity that we have at the moment.

The overview of my introduction had been shown in the previous slides, by way of introduction, I wish to start by looking at the structure that we have. Back then in 2013, it was a small ministry. At that time I was the Director for Political and Treaties. I was in charge of two Divisions which after 2014, had been divided into two separate divisions and that is, Political and Treaties and also Climate Change.

We only had four Directors at that time, only one Deputy Secretary, the Permanent Secretary and, of course, the Minister. The organogram as we see today has changed drastically given the need and also the strategic direction that Government had taken which necessitates the increase in our staffing establishment.

This is the footprints that we had in 2013, particularly in relation to the Missions wherever we were at, at that time and also our Heads of Missions that you will see had been projected on the screen. You will find that in 2013, we had established new Missions. In 2011 and 2012 we established new Missions in Jakarta, Korea, South Africa and Brazil. So, by 2013 we were represented in all the continents and all the regions of the world and that, to us, is a milestone and also an achievement for the Ministry and also for Government and Fiji as a whole.

Our establishment in terms of number of staffing, Headquarters we only had 66 at that time here in Suva. At our Missions we had 100 staff. We will look at this also when we look at the constraints or challenges that we have. It might be timely for me just to highlight that there was a study that was done by Ambassador Robin Yarrow back in 2005, in which he had recommended that the ideal ratio for the Ministry in order for it to operate effectively and it is also benchmarking on other countries is that, for every diplomat that is abroad there has to be two staff in Fiji that support their particular diplomat. You would see in the 2013 establishment

this is more or less the other way round. There are only 66 staff here and there were 100 officers that were abroad at that time.

In terms of our operations, if you look at it in terms of the distribution of staff, you will see the number of staff that we have in headquarters, particularly those that are on policy issues and those that are abroad in our Missions. In Asia alone, given the prominence that Asia has got, particularly in terms of our foreign relations and our strategy, there are 33 staff in all the Missions in Asia. The Division that looks after Asia which is the reconfiguration that we had last year, has only seven staff looking after 33 officers that are based all over Asia in our Missions. You will see in London and Brussels we have six, in Abu Dhabi that looks after the Middle East, three diplomats; in South Africa at that time in Pretoria, there were two and this is the Mission that we have now moved to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia; Brazil that looks after the whole Latin American Continent, we had two at that time, now it has moved up to four and in Washington and New York, it was six at that time but now we have moved it up, given the re-engagement of our relations with US and also within the United Nations.

Mr. Chair and Honourable Members, on the budget in 2013, in terms of our total budget it was \$37,438,800. This has moved up over the years, given the need that we have in the Ministry, both in terms of staffing and also in terms of resources. If we look at it in terms of percentage, for the Missions, their allocation is more or less 70 per cent of our total budget. For headquarters it is only 29.94 per cent and 0.36 percent is for Borron House.

In terms of the highlights for us in 2013, if you look at it in terms of the achievements in the international global arena, in 2013 we were the chair of the Group of 77 (G77) in China which is the biggest negotiating block within the United Nations. It is probably the biggest instrument that we had in the United Nations, apart from what we have achieved just a few months ago on the presidency of the General Assembly for which our Ambassador in New York has taken up the post earlier last week.

Former diplomatic relations; in 2009, given the challenges that we had in terms of the conduct of our international relations, Government in its wisdom had approved the proposal that we had for us to establish diplomatic relations with all members of the United Nations. In 2013, we managed to sign diplomatic relations with 173 countries which brought up the total of diplomatic relations that we have to 149 out of 192 other countries. This is still work in progress but in terms of an update, as of now we have signed with 173 countries and only have about 20 countries left for which we need to sign with, most of which are in Africa.

We also had an achievement in terms the climate change negotiations. Fiji, through our Permanent Secretary at that time, Mr. Yauvoli, was the Chair of one of biggest sub-committees on the negotiations and we led negotiations until the Paris Agreement was signed last year.

In terms of the approach that we took in all our Missions and also in HQ, we deepened existing relations and also we look to establish new relations, not only with bilateral partners but also with international and regional organisations for which we are accredited to or for which we saw the need for us to relate with.

Mr. Chairman, in terms indicators for us if we are to look at the success for 2013 the first is the State visits by the Honourable Prime Minister, who made three State visits in that year to Papua New Guinea which is the biggest the country in the Pacific. It is a probably the biggest bilateral partner that we would want to engage with outside of Australia and New Zealand. It was in that visit where they promised to give us \$50 million for the General Elections and they had provided \$25 million to assist us in our preparations for the General Elections in 2014. Also at that meeting, we had established business councils and also other opportunities in terms of scholarships.

The State visit to Russia, the outcomes of that was the finalisation of the military equipment for which established our co-operations with Russia which was worth some millions and also visa exemption. So, it was at that year, we were allowed to go to Russia without any visa requirements. That, to us, is also a big achievement. The Honourable Prime Minister also visited China and those were the list of MOUs and MOEs that were signed during the visit.

You will see, Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members, we had taken a real strategic approach in terms of these visits. As I have said, 2013 had been a very important year through the transition of our Government from 2007 to what we are in now because of the promulgation of our Constitution and you would see that the State visits were already strategic for us in terms of strengthening our relations within the region, not only bilaterally with Papua New Guinea but also the region as a whole, given our leadership position and also that we are a hub of the Pacific, and also with our strategic partners like Russia and China which are two of the of biggest superpowers in the world.

In terms of the next indicator, the high level visits and engagements by our Honourable Minister, there were 17 regional international engagements that we had in that year.

Presentation of credentials to Fiji by international organisations and bilateral partners, there were 19, some of these Heads of missions are based in Canberra. At the moment, as we

speak, 45 countries whose Missions are based in Canberra are also accredited to Fiji. We have also heard confirmation that Cuba will be establishing a Mission here very shortly and also Turkey will follow suit, after which there has also been intention by Brazil to establish a Mission here as well.

The MOUs and MOEs that were signed with our development partners in that year, a total of 18 and it encompasses different areas - economic, political, social and also environmental, most of which are with our bilateral partners.

In terms of the region, in that year, we established the Pacific Island Development Forum (PIDF), we also chaired the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). We hosted the South Pacific Commission Conference here which was a ministerial meeting and we also hosted the Pacific SIDS Preparatory Meeting and this is preparatory meeting leading up to the Samoa SIDS Meeting that was held in 2014.

In the area of climate change, Honourable Members, as I alluded we were leading the negotiations in the UN on climate change and which led to the Paris Agreement. We also established the National Climate Change Summit which brought together all the actors in Fiji on climate change.

We started the Vulnerability Assessment and this is something that the Ministry of Economy has taken up, particularly in area of relocation where we looked at all the different communities that we have, access their level of vulnerabilities and come up with plans, both at the community level and also at divisional level on the adaptation and mitigation areas that they would require. Also, you may have heard that during that year, we had also put in a Relocation Guideline to guide Government and all the actors, both in Government and non-State actors on relocation of communities. This is something that is also an achievement for the Ministry in that year.

Honourable Members, if you are to look at the challenges that the Ministry face, which is a question that you have wanted us to address, we would say that in 2013, one of the biggest challenge for us was human resource management and to us, it was putting in place a system that enables us to plan our human resources, particularly given the uniqueness of our Ministry. We are a big Ministry, in the fact that we have 26 Divisions, and they are located in all the regions of the world. So managing human resource and managing resources, finance, it is a challenge in itself and in 2013, that is something that we have seen and it is something that we continue to work on to improve the way we manage our resources, both human and also finance.

Capacity in Missions and Headquarters, this is a point that I had eluded to, not only in terms of numbers but also level of competency. It is a problem that we continue to face given that it is just

not competitive enough for some of our nationals that would work in the Ministry because competitively if we are to compare the salary scale in the work of one of our Ministry staff as compared to other regional international organisations, you could say, even for a Director who is only paid 50,000 in the Ministry, in a regional organisation such as PIFS, the base salary is 120,000. So you see, it is hard for us to attract good and the right people because of the competitiveness and also the level of salaries that we offer.

Retention of staff, it is also an issue for us, given the incentives that others offer in regional and international organisations. There is the view that many would opt for other organisations rather than government, even the Ministry in particular.

Also, one of the challenges for us was the legislation. We have a regulation which we call the Diplomatic Services Regulations and that is a PSC regulation, which basically regulates the conduct of Diplomats abroad. It was supposed to have been reviewed, it is also work in progress for us, we are almost finalising the review process of this particular regulation to make it updated.

ICT, it is also an issue, given the context of our operation where we have most of our divisions abroad. Communications is an issue and it is something that we would want to address in the near future.

There is jurisdictional differences in laws, as one would expect, different countries they have their different laws, they have their different policies, whether it is on human resource, whether it is on finance and the various areas and it is something that we often are challenged with, given that our policies here in Fiji would require something, whereas other countries may differ in terms of their requirements and some of the times there are conflicts in terms of laws and policies in terms of its application, and we continue to address it through the various policies that we are putting in place.

On the second point, Mr. Chairman, on financial and budgetary constraints, for us it is clear that budget is always an issue, given our areas of operations and also the context of our operations. I can give you an example, last year in Geneva, within a week we were told that the cost of living had increased by 30 percent, which meant that we had to pay them 30 percent extra throughout the year, and that is not budgeted for. The economic challenges in some countries, for example in Papua New Guinea, given the recent boom in their economy, it had moved up ranks by almost 200 percent and that, to us, affected the planning and the management of resources from Fiji.

The cost of living adjustments, as I have said, education, in recent past we have seen that even education cost in many countries have really gone up. If I give an example, in Brazil, for example, if you send one of the children of our diplomats to an international school which is what is recommended based on our regulations, it would cost US\$48,000 a year. So, if we are to send diplomats with children, if they have five children, we are talking about US\$250,000 US a year, so there is a balancing act that we need to do. We do not want to be discriminatory against those who have children, not to the sense that we do not encourage our diplomats to have children, but I guess the bottom line is that, it also boils down to affordability, whether Government is able to afford. And that could also add to the point that I have made earlier about human resource management.

Exchange rates, as I have said in Geneva, last year it went up by 30 percent within a week. Increased cost was something that I have alluded to.

If you are to look at the strategic direction, Honourable Members, for us in 2013, we had aimed to be the premier Ministry by 2015. We identified some of the gaps that we had, we tried to plug those gaps. We continued to work on the various policies that we have, both in strengthening international and regional relations and also internally, within our Ministry. Within the Ministry, this is something that we have done, last year. This is the plan that we had, and I can assure you that that it is something that we have achieved probably by 90 percent, and I can assure you, Honourable Members, that we are on the right track in terms of achieving what we have targeted for.

In terms of the foreign policy aspects of our work, for the first time in our history as a ministry, we have now established a Foreign Policy Statement, which puts in place a vision for the Ministry, and we are now working on the Ministry's Strategic Plan which we hope to put in place after the adoption of a National Development Plan. In fact, we are just waiting for the National Development Plan before we can finalise our Strategic Plan.

In the region, there has been a lot of discussions in the region. You would have heard last week the Honourable Prime Minister speaking to the Australian and New Zealand Business Councils about our relations in the region. We always say that we are a leader in the Pacific and we are a hub in the Pacific, but there is a lot of work that needs to be done, particularly in carrying out the responsibilities on that leadership role that we espouse to take. Well, that it is something we are working on now, particularly in the reconfiguration of our regional architecture, strengthening our Pacific Islands Development Forum, now that we have also gone back to being a member of the Pacific Islands Forum. So it is something, that we are working on, a policy paper and the review of our regional architecture which would clearly articulate what is the direction for us in the region, not only in terms of the regional organisation that we serve, but also bilaterally with all the countries in the region, including Australia and New Zealand.

For us as a Ministry, we know that there is a lot of work that needs to be done with a lot of reforms that are being put in place by PSC, by Finance and also the Central Agencies and it is something that we are taking up as a Ministry to improve our systems and processes, and also in the carriage of our work and the conduct of foreign relations and improvement of our Foreign Policy documents for the year.

That to us, Sir, is the way forward as we see in 2013. I can tell you for this year we have carried out most of those work that we have envisioned back in 2013. So that concludes the presentation that we have, Honourable Members, I thank you again for the opportunity and I leave you with Lao Tzu's statement "that a journey of a thousand miles begin with one step."

MR. CHAIRMAN - *Vinaka vakalevu*, Deputy Secretary, thank you very much for the very informative and honest presentation this morning. We now have come to the question session, Honourable Members, if you have any question to pose, we will keep the questions within the boundary of this report and within the presentation we were given this morning, so we will stay on that. For DS and your team you are given the opportunity to answer questions but if you

view that questions posed are probably political inclined, then you may not answer. However, you're given the choice to answer or not. So, Honourable Members, the floor is open for question!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA - Thank you very much for the fine briefing this morning. I have a few questions but before I raise my question, I would like to have some knowledge first on issues of export and import. I raise all those three or four points and then I will submit my question, then I will continue after.

My questions are as follows:

1. What is the total export earning for year 2014 and 2015?
2. What is the total import for year 2014 and 2015?
3. Your deployment abroad must be based on reducing the deficit, failing that you would be contributing to a nation that is too dependent on foreign earning, hence a huge rise on Government debt which are taxpayers are faced to pay now and one or two generations to come. Do you have an answer to increasing exports and reducing imports?
- 4.

MR. E. NAYASI - Mr. Chair, if I may thank the Honourable Ratu Tikoca for his questions, I will not be able to comprehensively respond to the questions, given the nature in which it was posed. It is just we do not have those information with us. Probably if we are given time, we will be able to provide that this morning or today.

MR. CHAIRMAN - Thank you.

MR. E. NAYASI - Just on the part on the deficit and what we are doing as a Ministry, firstly, for us from last year we have been trying to strengthen our relations in terms of inter-Ministry with the Minister of Industry and Trade and also with Investment Fiji in identifying countries in which we can really co-operate in terms of the different level of partnership that you can put in place, particularly in Asia.

Someone had asked me about the reason for the establishment of our mission in Brazil and this is a good example that we have in terms of trying to bridge the gaps. Brazil is also accredited to Peru. Peru, as one would know is a big potato exporters and they are well known

internationally for that. It is something that Fiji had gained through our establishment in Brazil. I know there have been some initiatives that had been carried out in the past years, particularly in trying to build in self-sufficiency as a nation.

Similarly, in countries like Korea, it is something that we are trying to develop, having industries here trying to bring in investments into Fiji so that we can be self-sufficient. Then we do not need to be importing goods and also services. It is one of the core output for our Ministry - trade facilitation and investments. As the Honourable Deputy Chair would know after having served in Papua New Guinea, it is also one of the areas that we see in Papua New Guinea is really growing and we want to take advantage of the boom in their economy in the various areas, particularly in exports.

Over the years since the visit by the Honourable Prime Minister in 2013 we have seen the increase in numbers of investments and exports in Papua New Guinea. That, to us, shows the level of engagement that we have had. I think with all our mission you would have heard the Honourable Prime Minister when he delivered his remarks last week that we are now looking at all our Missions having the trade component as part of their planning and also their Strategic Plan and it is something that we would insist they would have in place through a collaboration with the Ministry of Trade. It is something that is work in progress, we are hoping that with the National Development Plan in place, it is part and parcel of what we are discussing with Trade in terms of our work in as far as foreign affairs is concerned.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA - How often does the Ministry liaise with export agencies in Fiji and actually educate and try to get into the various Ministries to create a growth of export? Do you have a line connection in an ensuring that your market ability in terms of increasing export has also connections to those people who can actually increase export through the Ministries and especially over broad, you may have to know and understand what Singapore is all about? It is just a little island but it grow to a very fully developed nation because of the innovation of producing manufactured things and computerization, et cetera. What can we do to actually expand the same sort of initiatives in increasing our export and reducing too much of an import that is creating this huge debt?

MR. E. NAYASI - Thank you, Mr. Chairman, it is probably a question that may be important for the Ministry of Trade and Industry to respond. In as far as our output is concerned, it is only on trade facilitation, meaning that our Missions will be guided by the Ministry of Trade and Industry in terms of their strategy and plans.

MR. CHAIRMAN - Thank you.

(Inaudible)

MR. E. NAYASI - Mr. Chairman, I would not be able provide a comprehensive report on this because it is work in progress for us. We are hoping to go to Cabinet with the Cabinet Paper on this shortly. Surely for us, we also cannot make a confirmed assessment because the UK itself is trying to also make the assessment in terms of its implications on their foreign policy in terms of their relations with us, particularly their aid programme. For us, it is our Missions in Brussels and London that are working on this but I hope that we can present this at a later time, once the time is right to this subcommittee so that we can provide you with a better understanding about the implication as we see after going through the various assessments that we need to make.

Thank you, DS. Honourable Niumataiwalu?

HON. M.A. NIUMATAWALU - Mr. Chair, I have a couple of questions, firstly, the visa for Russia so if we want to go to Russia, are we exempted? I understand that some of our people went to the World Swimming Championship but they had to send their passports to Australia to the Russian Embassy there and try and get their visas, I am just checking on that.

MR. E. NAYASI - Thank you, Honourable Member, as we understand it we have visa exemptions but we have also seen it with India and also China. With these countries, because the **bureaucracy is** just too big, it takes them time to process it from political level right down to the technical level. We saw it in these big countries, it could be an issue but I am sure that it is something that they are trying to address. One thing I can assure you today is that, the visa exemption arrangements is in place, both for them and for us. It may just be the matter of the technical people putting in place the relevant policies or regulations to effect that.

We also saw that in India, it took them a bit of time and also in China, we had to wait for a few months but for us, they have already been exempted. So, there was no need for us to come up with new laws or policies but for them, given their size and how big **their bureaucracy is, it could take time for them to ensure that, that is in place. Papua New Guinea is also a good example. We have those arrangements with them but there have been a lot of concerns by our nationals that they have been advised by their High Commission here that they still need visa prior to travelling to Papua New Guinea. The understanding at a political level and those that are doing the operations are quite different and it takes time for this to cascade down to the**

operational level. However, if you want Honourable Member, we can provide you the status quo, particularly after consulting our mission in Canberra on this.

Hon. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU - Thank you Deputy Secretary, because you know coming from a sporting background, we have got the World Cup Soccer coming up in Russia so we expect some of our people to be going and hopefully, the visa situations will be in place by then.

The other question I have, since we are involved in climate change, the Paris Agreement I saw that only 27 nations have so far signed but in terms of funding, say we are trying to get those funding that is earmarked for climate change, where does the fund come to, does it come to the Foreign Affairs or to another Ministry should we be able to get climate change funding from those overseas donors?

MR. E. NAYASI - Thank you, Honourable Member, for the question. There are various models that we can follow, particularly in relation to funding. Particularly on climate change, it is unusual for big financial agencies to be giving funding directly to Government unless we have an accredited institution that meets all the fiduciary requirements and all the other requirements that this financial institutions need for them to provide funding.

For climate change financial institutions, for them to give funding they have this regional implementing entity and the national implementing entity. For us in the region, we have UN and that is a implementing agency, we have IUCN and also SPREP which is based in Samoa which is a regional organisation on climate change. So funding goes to them and then it comes through to Fiji, and we need to partner with them. A good example is what we had managed to secure. Fiji was the first in the region to secure funding through what we call the green climate funding which is based in Korea. We secured US\$31 million for the water sanitation work. We partnered with ADB and ADB submitted the documents, so the money goes to ABD and then we work with ADB because they are an accredited agency.

For us, over the years we have been trying to meet these requirements and we are hoping that Fiji Development Bank (FDB) can be a national implementing entity in which case once they have been approved, financial institutions can give money to FDB and FDB can carry out the work for Government, particularly for projects that we have submitted. A lot of countries also have the Ministry of Finance as their accredited institutions but it is just that they need to meet these very stringent requirements, particularly on their fiduciary responsibilities and accountabilities that they need to meet before money can come through these agencies.

For us in the region, in as far as the Paris Agreement is concerned, there is a lot of focus on that Green Climate Fund. It has been established through this UN process basically to assist Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries to access funds for climate change but as one would expect, it is an onerous responsibility to be able to access these funds, given the requirements that one has to go through. For us, we were fortunate because ADB already had the project, they had been working on it since 2005, so we used that to submit to the Green Climate Fund.

Most countries in the region they do not even have the capacity to be able to come up with project proposals and that is something that we continue to see, but there is now work within the regional organisations for us to put together a proposal for the region, to make it easier for some of our countries to be able to access these funds. The funds are there but the issue is accessibility, and you would need department just on projects to be able to write and draft proposals for this.

Also the other consideration is that we have 193 countries and about 130 are developing countries, and they are going after the same pot of money and it is on a first come first basis. So, Fiji has accessed \$31 million, it will be hard for them to accept another project if there are other countries that have not had their chance to access the funds. So there is a lot of politics and there is a lot of things that are involved that we need to bear in mind but Green Climate Fund is the biggest fund now on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Of course, you have the World Bank, IMF and all the financial institutions, but they most probably just give out loans but for GCF it is grant.

HON. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU - So is this Environment Department Climate Change still under the Foreign Affairs?

MR. E. NAYASI - No, Sir, it is now with the Ministry of Economy under the Strategic Plan Department.

HON. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU - Mr. Chair, my final question; you had raised some challenges. In terms of staff retention and the pay scale, have you been able to be successful to your concerns then looking at scenario now, managed to get the retention and the funding that you wanted for those years?

MR. E. NAYASI - To some extent, Honourable Member, but if you are to look at it, as I have said, in terms of salary alone, then we cannot really compare ourselves with what other organisations are offering. There is a lot of our well-polished diplomats that have gone out to

work in these institutions just because of what they offer, the latest of which is our former Permanent Secretary in 2013 which is Mr. Yauvoli, who is now the Head of the MSG in Vanuatu. We have lots of diplomats that have now joined the UN but we are hoping that with the current work that PSC is doing, particularly benchmarking with other comparable organisations and looking at the packages and salary schemes will be able to see that we will be able to address the retention level that we need and, of course, also bearing in mind that Government only limited funds that we can afford paying for its people. Apart from that, Honourable Member, we are all passionate and patriotic, and that to us adds a lot of value.

HON. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU - Mr. Chair, may be just a last one from me; may be the Committee might want to add its voice to support the concerns raised by the Ministry in terms of looking at those pay scales and retention of staff.

MR. CHAIRMAN - Honourable Kumar.

HON. J.N. KUMAR - Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you ladies and gentlemen. Actually I do not have any question to ask because some of the questions that I would like to ask, you have already answered them, particularly your Strategic Plan for 2016 to 2020. While we are still having this opportunity personally, I would like to thank the Ministry for the wonderful work that you have done so far. I am so impressed today of your vision, mission and your values. I think you are trying very hard and I could just see the deliberation that you have deliberated on, you have met most of this and you are trying harder to meet this further, and I would like to thank you for that.

I think the work that the Committee could do is to include your challenges in our report so that it can be tabled to Parliament so that we can work together to support your Ministry to achieve your dreams. With those three words ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you so much.

MR. E. NAYASI - Thank you, Madam.

HON. RATU. I.D. TIKOCA - Is the file on Christmas Island still open?

Alright, let me just give you a background on this one because when we were in Kazakhstan, representatives from the Marshall Islands was present. This is because I asked before our links specifically with Great Britain. The case on Marshall Island about the effect of nuclear blast, it has now gone to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and they are going to be reaching the second phase where we were told in general by the Marshall Islands Speaker that

it opens to all of us who had some sort of experience on the effects of nuclear blast to submit or to intervene.

Based on the intervention our case also will be heard but I am not too sure whether Ministry of Foreign Affairs is handling that. But in our report that we have yet to submit after returning from Kazakhstan is requesting Fiji to actually pursue that direction because there is a possibility of those funds that we have already paid out of our own initiative through the Honourable Prime Minister, being kind enough to pay the remaining people that are still alive and their families. Maybe we can recover that fund or had more because that is the facility that we can actually access once we intervene. I am just wanting to bring that and if our report is concluded, we would like also to present to you because you will be linking our interest over with regard to foreign affairs.

The other question that I have which sounds political a little bit but you can answer or you may not answer, and this is your relationship with Russia. Regarding your statement that your links with Russia is another success that you have achieved, you have stated that. To me, it tells us where the arms, ammunition, explosives and all those army things that we received as knowing very well that our country, you being in the Foreign Affairs and you know the links that we have in the Foreign Affairs, the security of the nation that we have no such enemies to actually build-in our arms cash's, caches, ammunitions and explosives.

That is the question that I am very concerned when you say that when we are actually achieving our relationship with Russia, I have some reservations on that because of the problem that we are facing. We have a small army and a huge deposits of ammo dumps, ammunitions and all that. You do not have to answer that but bring back to our mission in Kazakhstan, the whole world went around Kazakhstan to appreciate the initiative done by the President, I have been told by our Chairman that he has just sadly passed on, to actually put a stop to nuclear test which is about 25 years now and the amazing development that just grew out of nothing. It is such an initiative which all of us appreciated from a Russian based institution after many times governed by Russia and then the twist to create a new Kazakhstan, which is such an amazing thing.

Add on to that is our brief with the mayor of the city of Kazakhstan. She is inviting us to be part also of the big expo to be done there. There are lots of area. My initially being an old diplomatic and also being very westernised in my thoughts, I never want to associate myself with all those other countries and being a military personnel also for a long time but it was an eye opener when we see that all the religious groups in the world are groomed together and

they work. However, the Islam they do not have to wear any turbans or whatever they do wear. That is not allowed but everyone is free.

The churches are all there - the mosque, Synagogue, Catholicism, Greek Orthodox and everything, but he built a pyramid in around them, a pyramid that he only enters after every three years where he calls all the leaders of the Churches to assemble and talk for two hours, and that is it. He never goes to church, he never goes to Islam, otherwise they will blame him as an Islam or goes to Greek Orthodox and it is amazing to me, as an eye opener. I had some reservation along with Foreign Affairs when they start working with other countries until I saw that light. It is an amazing changes but what I am trying to say here, on that report too we will also submit with the approval of our Chair to send to you so that if you can prepare also one to three personnel to actually go for the expo from the Foreign Affairs. It will be an eye opener to see such a wonderful town. What do we call that city?

The city of Astana was amazing and it was designed by a Japanese and a British architect. That is the point that I think is important to raise to you and your team. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN - Thank you for the information, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Well, the Foreign Affairs policy says **'friends to all and enemy to none'**. So, we have no enemy. Just a comment, you have raised the challenges for 2013 and you have, over time, improved on those challenges but we view that the cost of living keeps on increasing. So, we will take note of that and other issues that you have raised today to be part of our report.

I thank the Honourable Members for the questions they have posed and I thank the team for responding well to the questions and also thank you for the very informative presentation. Now, we have come to the end of the session and I take this opportunity on behalf of all the Honourable Members to convey our gratitude to you all for the presentation. However, despite your busy schedule, you manage to adhere to the request of the Parliamentary Committee and presented to us this morning.

You have given us a lot of information that will greatly assist us to compile our report. Her Excellency the Roving Ambassador, the Deputy Secretary and the team, thank you and please convey our appreciation to the Permanent Secretary and the Ministry as a whole for your commitment to your mission.

With those few words, *vinaka vakalevu*. We invite you to join us for the Morning Tea.

MS. L. MAWI – If I may, not that I could resist the microphone but on behalf of the team, Honourable Chairman and Honourable Members, we thank you for your tolerance. We did not want to sound like we were bragging but it was our duty to come and if I may, for want of a better term, defend the Ministry in it's a role as Fiji's window to the world. We thank your team for having heard us out, knowing that there are many other issues that we know are underlying your thoughts but we hope that what we being able to today as your representatives abroad in all of the Missions we have and one of the lines that we like to use is, **"Fighting above our weight"**.

As you heard the Deputy Secretary outlined the battles that we have gone through over the last 10 years, in particular when virtually all the doors that mattered to us were closed on our face so thank you on behalf of the Ministry. We thank you and through you the Government for having been that powerhouse that was our refuelling source so that whenever we were out there fighting the world, we knew we had a home to come back to and we would always be welcome whatever it was. So that line of being **'friend to all and enemy to none'** was what we knew was the best stance that we could take to be acceptable to the rest of the world as Fiji's envoy across the border.

On behalf of, not only the Deputy Secretary but also the team that is here, on behalf of our Permanent Secretary who has accompanied our new Minister to UNGA71 as we would like to call it, where Fiji holds the presidency. We also like to pay tribute to the outgone Honourable Minister who is now in Ministry of Defence and we know that we are going to have to be working closely with him as we defend our border in the evolving challenges that are now besetting the global community. Once again thank you all very much for this morning.

The Committee adjourned at 11.35 a.m.

