

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF PREPAREDNESS
FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS (PP NO. 63 OF 2019)**

Verbatim Report
Ministry of Economy

MONDAY, 3RD FEBRUARY, 2020

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS HELD AT THE BIG COMMITTEE ROOM (WEST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS ON MONDAY, 3RD FEBRUARY, 2020 AT 1.00 P.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: Ministry of Economy

In Attendance:

1. Mr. Nilesh Prakash - Head of Climate Change and International Cooperation
2. Mr. Isoa Talemaibua - Head of Budget & Planning
3. Mr. Kamal Goundar - Manager/Coordinator for the Infrastructure Sector
4. Ms. Mere Cakaunitabua - Budget & Planning Officer
5. Mr. Atin V. Chand - Manager Financial Operations
6. Mr. Simon Singh - Manager Financial Reporting
7. Mr. Lorima Bulamainavalu - Financial Reporting Officer

Office of the Auditor-General:

1. Mr. Kuruwara Tunisalevu – Audit Director
2. Ms. Unaisi Namositava – Audit Manager
3. Ms. Alanieta Nasilivata – Senior Auditor

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Good afternoon everyone. Before we go into submission proper, just a few housekeeping matters. Please ensure that everyone's mobile phone is on silent and there is no use of mobile phones while the submission is taking place. There needs to be no movement in the room. Just for the information of everyone present, today is the first day that we are going live on television. Whenever you are speaking, please ensure that the microphone is on so that there is a proper audio recording on the televisions for our viewers who are viewing this particular session from the comfort of their homes. Thank you very much.

Honourable Members, officials from the Ministry of Economy, officials from the Office of the Auditor-General, the Secretariat team, dear viewers, ladies and gentlemen, a very good afternoon to you all. It is a pleasure for me to welcome everyone especially the viewers who are watching this session.

It is a mark in an era for a Fijian Parliament to introduce its video live broadcast system. As the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I am fortunate and glad to be given this opportunity to have the first Committee submission of the Fijian Parliament to be aired live this afternoon since the Honourable Speaker, His Excellency Ratu Epeli Nailatikau launched this system late last year. Everyone sitting here is part of the history-making to partake in this first-ever live session of Parliamentary Committee meeting.

First, I would like to introduce the members of the Committee and the role of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Our mandate is established in Section 70 of the Constitution and clearly outlined in Section 109 (2) (d) of the Standing Orders of the Fijian Parliament. It is specifically stated that the Public Accounts Committee is mandated to, including examining the accounts of the Government of the Republic of Fiji in respect of

each financial year and reports of the Auditor-General, and for any other matters relating to the expenditures of the Government of the Republic of Fiji or any related body or activity that the Committee deems fit to review. The Committee must only examine how public money has been dealt with and accounted for in accordance with the written law and must not examine the merits of underlying policies that involves public spending.

In accordance with Section 74 of the Constitution and any other written law governing Parliament, the Standing Committee has the powers to summon any person to appear before it to give evidence or provide information and (b) compel the production of documents or other materials or information as required for proceedings and deliberation by the Committee. For the purpose of sub-sections (a) and (b), it is vital for all stakeholders to note that the Standing Committee has the same powers as that of a High Court. However, in terms of PAC mandate, we are responsible to scrutinise and investigate findings identified in the OAG Reports and this is done through the calling of respective Government agencies to explain any irregularities identified and reported by the OAG. PAC also uses the information in the OAG Reports as a basis of aligning and revamping priorities to ensure proper usage of public resources. The OAG is the producer of Audit Reports whereas PAC is the principal user of those reports; to scrutinise public spending.

A huge content of the work of PAC depends largely on what is received from the OAG. PAC enquiries are directed to all the Government ministries and departments in relation to spending as per budgeted for and as per the planned programmes. Also, PAC throws its line of questions on financial reporting standards, assets, liabilities, loans, revenues and expenditures and how approved processes and systems and the reporting standard as legislated are being effectively implemented by Government agencies.

The Committee supports the UN resolution which acknowledges the role of supreme audit institutes which is the OAG in enforcing Government accountability for the use of resources and their performance in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal under SDG 16 to promote peaceful and inclusive society for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

In this context, the OAG also plays a critical role in ensuring efficient and transparent use of resources and the achievement of SDG target 16.6 which is to effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

With those words, I will now move on to the Audit Report that is in front of us which will be deliberated this afternoon. But before we do that I request the Honourable Members if they can introduce themselves to the officials of the Ministry of Economy.

(Introduction of Committee Members and Secretariat)

Please ensure that anything said in this particular meeting becomes a public document and it will be available to the public at any time.

Before I introduce the report to the viewers, can we have the team from the Auditor-General's Office introduce themselves followed by officials from the Ministry of Economy, please?

(Introduction of representatives from OAG and MoF)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you for that wonderful introduction. Now I would like to introduce the report that is before the Committee to our viewers so that they have a clear understanding on which particular report we are collecting submissions on and what is the background of that particular report.

Performance Audit of Preparedness for Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (Parliamentary Paper No. 63 of 2019). The SDGs are a universal call to action, to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The Fijian Government has endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals which aims to ensure that no one is left behind and endeavour to reach the furthest behind first. The Auditor-General carried out this audit to ascertain the preparedness of the Government in implementing the Sustainable Development Goal Agenda 2030. This Performance Audit was undertaken under Section 6 (a) of the Audit Act 1969. It is expected that the findings from the report will be used by the Ministry of Economy for monitoring and evaluation with the focus on implementing finding as required under the National Development Plan.

The Audit was conducted using the Whole of Government Approach, the Auditor-General has assessed the action undertaken by the Government since the signing of the SDGs in September 2015 in preparedness of the implementation of the 2030 agenda by determining:

- (1) The extent to which the Government of Fiji had adopted the 2030 Agenda into the 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan;
- (2) Where the Government of Fiji has identified and secured resources and capacities needed to implement the 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan; and
- (3) The mechanisms established by the Government of Fiji to monitor, follow-up, review and report on the progress towards the implementation of the 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan.

Therefore the main finding of this Performance Audit is focused on the integration of the 2030 agenda, resources and capacities of implementing the SDGs and monitoring and reporting framework. The Fijian Government has begun efforts to prepare for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development by the SDGs into a 20-Year National Development Plan and supported with strategies for an immediate 5-year term.

There have also been efforts made in reviewing legislations, policies, strategies and identifying funding, sources for implementation of strategies and the creating of awareness of SDGs. It is also noted that a monitoring and reporting mechanism however are still at an early stage as the National Development Plan is in its first year of implementation. So, that is basically the gist of the report.

Now, we will go into submission proper. I believe we have certain questions and I will allow the Honourable Members to ask question and then we will have the Ministry officials respond to those questions. If there is any supplementary question, the Honourable Members shall ask those supplementary questions through me.

So, we will request Honourable Vijendra Prakash to start with Question 1 please.

HON. V. PRAKASH.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, to the team from the Ministry of Economy, please explain to the Committee why OAG conducted an audit on the National Development Plan Report which was not launched by the Government in Parliament? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much Mr. Chairman and firstly apologies from the Permanent Secretary for Economy. She has got another engagement at this hour so hence the team from the Ministry is here to represent her. In response to that question on why the OAG had conducted an audit of the National Development Plan. In fact the OAG did not audit the National Development Plan rather the Performance Audit was carried out on the preparedness of the implementation of the SDGs.

The fact that Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) have an important role in the implementation of the SDGs, the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) in its 2016 Congress confirmed the avid interest of SAIs in carrying out audits and reviews with regard to SDGs via the following approaches. One of course is the preparedness study which has been carried out and this is what we are considering here. So, since the Congress of over 100 members of SAIs have shown concrete interest in carrying out SDG related audits, the INTOSAI is therefore intensively concerning itself with the implementation of the SDGs from the viewpoints of auditors.

In doing so, it also takes into account the need for a comprehensive audit approach and the inclusion of external stakeholders in audits. This also includes providing a stimulus for the implementation of SDGs through audits or the application of indicators. Coordinated audits are also valuable inputs for the mutual exchange of knowledge and experience.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Any follow up question?.

HON. V. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman, we would like to also know who are these external stakeholders who are assisting the audit? You said that there is the inclusion of external stakeholders. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. If I could respond to that question, so in terms of external stakeholders, obviously the Office of the Auditor-General had undertaken this audit and so this then means that they have undertaken an institutional review in terms of how the Government has prepared itself for the implementation of the SDGs. So obviously, it includes all the Government agencies and where the implementation happens and of course it includes the private sector and the other stakeholders, NGOs for example, the UN institutions, the multi-lateral agencies, how they are all involved and in fact working with Government to advance the national development priority.

In having said that, what is important to consider is that the SDGs have been mainstreamed into the national planning processes and that is the core thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you for that response. We will ask Honourable Nand to ask the second question, please.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, through you, this is with reference to page 1 of the report, and it says there are some companies listed there. Can you please

provide an update that needs to be undertaken in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and reporting process in the implementation of the SDGs? Can you please further explain?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much Honourable Member for that question. In terms of the activities listed on page 1, for example on building awareness. Fiji presented its first Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the SDGs last year and this was done at the high level political forum in New York where we actually presented. This was a national report and we presented a progress in terms of how we fared in terms of the implementation of the various Sustainable Development Goals; there are 17 of them. So we took a very targeted approach looking at sectorial implementation which is obviously captured in the National Development Planning processes.

In terms of fostering inclusive stakeholder participations, we did this through the SDGs taskforce. In fact, if you look at the work of the taskforce, previously it was called the “MDGs taskforce”, so now in 2015 when we moved onto the Sustainable Development Goals, the terms of reference for that Committee was obviously revised to include much more broader goals which is a departure from the eight goals previously under the MDG to now the 17 SDG. So the SDG’s taskforce has been the vehicle for undertaking inclusive and very participatory approach in terms of monitoring progress.

A, aligning the national and sub-national plans and targets to the SDGs, we all understand the sustainable development principles underpinning the SDGs have long been the underlying principles for Fiji’s national development.

So in implementing the SDGs, Fiji has adopted a Whole of Government Approach and has utilised the National Development Planning as a primary instrument to drive SDGs implementation. So in 2017 we launched the NDP for Fiji, this is the 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Planning Document. If you look at the National Development Plan, all the 17 SDGs in fact, 15 SDGs have been specifically integrated into the corresponding 29 strategic priorities of the NDP while SDG 10 which is on reduced inequality, SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production and SDG 13 on climate action. These are treated as cross cutting issues across the National Plan.

In terms of assigning responsibilities and ensuring accountability, at the sector level, SDGs have already been integrated into sectorial strategic plans and policies and many of the sectors including but not limited to education, health and agriculture. Fiji also recognises that while the Government holds the important responsibility for achieving the SDGs, it is in everyone’s interest and everyone’s responsibility including the private individuals, private enterprises, NGOs and CSOs to advance the sustainable development agenda.

Working with these multiple stakeholders, the Fijian Government is helping advance socio-economic development and empowerment of all Fijians. Also the SDGs have been integrated into the various socio-economic development activities in the NDP and entities assigned for their implementation.

In terms of establishing relevant programmes, of course, the Fijian Government has embarked on a wide array of social, economic and infrastructure development programmes and we do cover this in quite detail later in our presentation.

In terms of allocating sufficient resources and capacities, this is again considered in the Annual National Budgeting setting processes where the funding required to implement Government's policies for ministries and departments are identified and these are undertaken through consultations and ultimately the Parliament approves the national budget.

Again, I think, an important point to consider is that, SDG priorities are considered from the national development lens because it is mainstreamed into the NDP processes.

Finally, in terms of establishing appropriate baselines and reliably measuring and monitoring report on the progress on the achievements, I think this is something which we did in 2019 and this is a report which is available on the Ministry of Economy's website, so you can see the report which provides a very comprehensive overview on the progress across the 17 SDGs. Various baselines have been established and it was again done through a very robust concerted process. Before we actually launched the report, Cabinet ratified the report. We had started off the process of data collection way before this. Multiple agencies in Government were involved and of course the UN had provided us technical support to get a data repository in place so that we could inform the VNR and of course our NDP processes.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you Mr. Nilesh for that response. Any supplementary question? Yes, Honourable Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, through you. This portion of what you said on assigning responsibilities and ensuring accountability, you mentioned something about including private individuals, private enterprises, NGOs and CSOs. How are they going to be involved? In what way is the Ministry of Economy going to ensure that they participate on the ground level in terms of implementing these SDGs? Can we have some clarifications on that, please?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much for that question. I think that is again a very important consideration. If we look at our central agency role and fundamentally what we do is, of course, provide policy coordination and provide that overall planning and policy foresight, so within that mandate, I think the work of the SDGs Taskforce here is very relevant. This is something which we had of course set up in MDGs era, but have in fact carried that over, now that we have SDGs in place. So, this taskforce again is comprised of many stakeholders. It includes CSOs, NGOs and private sector people. So if you look at the various thematic areas under the SDGs, again the composition of the SDGs Taskforce actually reflects the various areas; you talk about forestry, fishing and access to justice.

So with the SDGs Taskforce, the membership actually comprise of various groups of people and I think that is one vehicle we have to actually get all these various stakeholders on board and keep them informed. Of course, because I said, and this is what the SDG agenda is all about, this is something which is, although championed by Government, but it actually is everyone's responsibility. So this is a vehicle. When you come to think of it, the role of the private sector, I think my colleagues when they talk about the various projects that Government is driving, that is where we can see how communities are participating and how the private sector gets involved. To answer your question, Honourable Member, the SDGs Taskforce is a great avenue and we need to continue to bolster their work of the SDGs Taskforce by continually revising their terms of reference and of course, getting them to meet occasionally to see the progress we are making in terms of SDG implementation.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you Honourable Leawere and Nilesh for that comprehensive answer. I believe you spoke about stakeholders. Can you inform the Committee how many stakeholders were involved in preparing the National Development Plan and how many consultations you took before you implemented SDGs into our 5-Year and 20-Year NDP, please?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. This is a well-known number, we had about 800-plus nationwide consultations to inform the NDP, so it is again a 5-Year and 20-Year development framework for Fiji. We had these processes and in fact we started this soon after the 2014 General Elections, that we needed to chart a long term development pathway for Fiji. That process started in late 2014 and the entire 2015 and 2016 we had in fact invested ourselves in nationwide consultations and this included public gathering, which included focused discussions and of course discussions, for example, with the private sector and the civil society groups. There were in total 800 plus nationwide consultations.

Having done that exercise, we had then looked at specific issues, for example, gender mainstreaming, disability and SDGs because these are cross cutting issues and this is something which needs to be really embedded into the national planning processes because the point is, we do not want to create multiples sort of governance structures in Government. We need to have one standard process which is the national planning processes and that is how we monitor the SDGs as well. So to answer your question it is 800 plus nationwide consultations.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa, if you can ask Question 3.1, please.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- This is on 3.1: The Integration of the SDGs International Planning which you have just outlined very clearly.

International planning strategies, policies and processes, my question is, can you please explain to our Committee the Key Performance Indicators from 2015-2021 as tabulated on Page 8, Figure 3.2 if you do not mind.

MR. K. GOUNDAR.- Thank you Honourable Member. I will answer that question. In terms of the table that is there, Figure 3.2, this is related to the water and sanitation chapter on the National Development Plan and the table outlines the KPIs for the water and sanitation sector and its corresponding SDG.

This is called mapping of the SDGs with the National Development Plan. These are targets that will be monitored by the Ministry of Economy with respect to water and sanitation sector through the mid-term review and other assessments. So if you look at the table, it basically tells you in terms of the access to clean and safe drinking water both in urban and rural areas. So each of those targets specify in terms of what is our 5-year targets. Also there are other targets like in terms of:

- leak detection;
- reduction in the amount of water;
- unaccounted water;

- connection to new metre connections;
- replacement of metre connections; and
- distribution of water tanks across.

So these are basically in terms of giving people access to clean and safe drinking water. If you look at the target, the first target top three targets are related to SDG 6.1 which is access to clean and safe drinking water.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you Mr. Kamal for that explanation. Would you be able to explain how these Sustainable Goals were prioritised when it came to NDP?

MR. K. GOUNDAR.- Thank you Mr. Chairman. NDP is the outcome of a nationwide consultation process that involves the private sector, civil society, community groups, Government and the general public reflecting the aspirations of the Fijian people and their Government's commitment to build a more prosperous and inclusive Fiji. Mr. Chairman, 15 SDGs are explicitly integrated into the corresponding 29 strategic priorities of the NDP while SDG 10 which is on reduction in inequalities, SDG 12 which is responsible for consumption and production and SDG13 which is on climate action are treated as the cross cutting issues as Nilesh has mentioned across the NDP. The SDG implementation and its monitoring hinge on the NDP processes including the overall monitoring and evaluation.

HON. V. PRAKASH.- Through you Mr. Chairman, one supplementary question.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, Honourable Prakash.

HON. V. PRAKASH.- Thank you Mr. Chairman. We are really proud to see SDG 6.1 on Table 3.2, the targets indicated there especially in the urban center.

It is indicated that by the year 2021, there will be 100 percent safe and clean water and 90 percent to 92 percent in the rural areas. It is a very proud thing for the nation. Will we meet this deadline and the percentage as is indicated on the table?

MR. K. GOUNDAR.- In terms of the urban area on the targets set out, in this year's Budget and last year's Budget, we have a list of projects listed in terms of meeting these targets.

So for the urban area, I think the challenge for us is in terms of meeting those informal settlements and those that are far from the waterlines. Those are the ones that we are currently facing challenges with in terms of getting access but through the Master Plans that has been developed by Water Authority of Fiji, we think that the 100 percent target may be achievable till 2021.

In terms of rural areas, the target is around 90 percent. I think most of the challenges in the rural areas is having access to boreholes in terms of water quality. There has been ongoing projects through the Department of Mineral Resources and Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) in terms of getting the right source for the rural areas to get connected to these people. In terms of the target itself, I think with the projects listed through the National Budget and the targets, we may be able to meet but I think in some rural areas it may be a little bit challenging because of the access issues.

HON. V. PRAKASH.- Thank you, Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you for that explanation, Mr. Goundar. Can we have Question 6 asked by Honourable Kepa, please?

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Can you please explain the sustainable goals prioritised in the National Development Plan and how were they selected? You mentioned over 800 stakeholder consultations that were made. Were any of them ...

MR. K. GOUNDAR.- Sorry, Chair. I think that has been answered.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes. If we can go to Part C of the question.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- I wanted to ask you a question on the rural area, anyway.

MR. K. GOUNDAR.- Please, if you want, you can.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- My question on that as a follow-up to your explanation, were any of the rural groups part of the stakeholder consultations because we are getting complaints from the rural areas especially in the Central Division, you are telling us about the target, where they do not have water during the day and very little at night. How would you be meeting your goals, your targeted areas that you are speaking about, in terms of these areas that are at the moment not getting a proper supply of water especially during the day and very little at night? Can you just explain that in terms of the rural consultations that you did?

MR. K. GOUNDAR.- Thank you, Honourable Member.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Sorry, this is not a trick question. I just want you to answer that.

MR. K. GOUNDAR.- Through you, Chair. Yes, in terms of consultations with rural areas as Nilesh has said there were more than 800 consultations held. People from the rural areas were invited through advisory counsellors and *turaga ni koro*, so they were aware. Consultations did happen with people from the rural areas. If you refer to the last target on the table itself in terms of the number of rural water schemes implemented, based on the submissions received through the NDP, we actually put down the list of projects that needs to be carried out each year based on meeting the targets. We actually planned it out in terms of those people that do not have access to water, so the priority was for those people. We then linked it to in terms of percentage, when we carry a number of these rural water schemes, what percentage will be achieved through the implementation of these projects. I think, as I mentioned as per the earlier question, I think for rural areas the issue is always access in terms of getting quality water for the people. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you for that response. Are you satisfied, Madam? Can we have Part (c) of the question from you as well?

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Could you explain the status of the key thematic areas under the three (3) pillars of environment, social and economic that you see there on Page 10? Can you just briefly explain that, Sir?

MR. K. GOUNDAR.- Thank you, Honourable Member. All three sustainable development pillars (environment, social and economic) are of the Green Growth Framework have been mainstreamed into the 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan. If you look at these thematic areas that were done under the Green Growth Framework, they are all mainstreamed into the specific chapters of the NDP. In particular most of the Green Growth Framework KPIs have become sectorial KPIs in the NDP which is now undergoing a mid-term review which is led by the Ministry of Economy.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Any supplementary questions?

Honourable Leawere, can you ask the question on Theme 2, please - Alignment of Budget Policies and Programmes to SDGs?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question is about the recommendation on Page 12. Please explain whether the recommendation on Page 12 has been implemented and also complied with by the ministries? There is a one-line of recommendation at the bottom of the page 12. Can we have some explanations on that? Thank you.

MR. I. TALEMAIBUA.- Thank you, Honourable Leawere. Yes, it is mandatory for ministries and departments to submit their Strategic and Cost Operations Plans with their budget submissions. The Strategic Plan details how the agency will contribute to achieving the goals and priorities stated in the Fijian Government National Development Plan and Fiji's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. The plan outlines the strategic level priorities and key performance indicators for the next three to five years. On the other hand, the Cost Operations Plans are yearly plans prepared which details the major activities and budget requirements for the next financial year. *Vinaka*.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Mr. Chairman, just a bit of clarification from the Ministry of Economy in terms of these implementations by the ministries. Do you have any obstacles or shortfalls from Ministries which made them unable to carryout especially in the accommodation as you had alluded to in your response? Thank you.

MR. I. TALEMAIBUA.- *Vinaka*, Honourable Leawere. Yes, in the first year of its implementation, it was a little bit hard for ministries to comply with what we require but then after some training and awareness with ministries and departments as it is mandatory for them to submit their budget requirements plus these two specific documents such as the Cost Operations Plan and the Strategic Plan. In the current financial year, we are happy to announce that all the ministries have submitted both these documents to us. *Vinaka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you for the response. We will move forward to Theme 3 – Policy Integration and Coordination. We will request Honourable Prakash if he can ask that question? Thank you.

HON. V. PRAKASH.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, through you. Has the Ministry of Economy implemented the recommendations listed in Page 16?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman, through you, if I may respond to that question on the two recommendations that are listed on page 16 of the Report. So in my response I would say that lead agencies who were actually responsible for implementing the SDGs. They need to actually ensure that the sector strategies, policies and plans are reviewed, harmonised and in line with the SDGs. So effort should be made to ensure that there is an enabling environment which is of course the legislations, they either need to review the existing ones or put into place new ones if necessary and of course all the other related policies and arrangements to increase their achievement of the targets relating to the SDGs.

Through the national budget formulation process, all government agencies are required to clearly inform how their projects and programme requests for National Budget Funding is aligned to the SDGs, national policies and ultimately their institutional mandates. This encourages Government agencies to mainstream SDGs into their Strategic Plans and Annual Corporate Plans.

Further to this recommendation, the recommendation by OAG rightly states the need to set legislative, policy and institutional foundations for national SDG implementation. In Fiji, the SDGs have a distinct hierarchy. We have no choice but to consider the state of the present and our future through the lens of SDG 13 which is on climate action. Any progress that we make across the socio economic pillars and across the remaining 15 goals under the SDGs will be undermined if we are unable to effectively manage and reduce the impact of a changing climate. As we all know and agree climate action inaction is a raging issue that stifles development progress, seeding inequality, and of course it breeds insecurity as well. So, in this regard and this is just a work that the Ministry of Economy has championed, we have come up with a number of National Policies, say for example, the National Adaptation Plan, we have come up with the Relocation Guidelines, we have come with the Displacement Guidelines, in the climate mitigation space, we have come up with an NDC Implementation Roadmap and of course a 2050 plan which is called the Low Emission Development Strategy. All these policy frameworks are actually going to advance climate action in Fiji and by doing that we will be able to sustainably progress all other areas of the SDGs.

We also recognise that developing policies is not the only ultimatum. I think we need to be able inculcate the culture and we need to ensure that there are robust legislations in place and so in this regard based on all the work that we have done in the climate change space, the various policies we have developed, we want to anchor this in a climate legislation and we have come up with a Climate Change Bill and the consultations for that ended on 31st December, 2019. We are now finalizing the document with all the inputs we have received from the various stakeholders.

So, again I think it is very important to consider that this is just in the climate change space but there are a number of other agencies like education, health, social services, infrastructure sector where they will need to continually sort of tune their own legislations and come up with institutional frameworks.

One thing that I would like to mention is that, in terms of the management of our ocean and the marine space, we are now coming up with a National Ocean Policy as well.

So, this is again directly in response to SDG 14 which is Life Below Water. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Any supplementary questions? If no, Honourable Prakash if you can ask Question B, please.

HON. V. PRAKASH.- Thank you Mr. Chairman. What challenges does the Ministry face with respect to ensuring coherence among public policies, so that actions and specific objectives of the interventions undertaken by various entities are aligned?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much Mr. Chairman, if I may, so in terms of the challenges, I will elaborate on two challenges here:

1. Striking that balancing between the socio-economic development and the 3rd Pillar which is on environmental concerns.

The SDGs represent a complex set of development aspirations that demand absolute synergy between the state and non-state agencies. Fiji is a small Island developing State with ambitious development aspirations and of course very limited resources. So, we need to sustain strong socio-economic development which is currently being enjoyed by the nation. This is, of course very important but we need to critically ensure that in doing so we protect and preserve our pristine environment.

This requires striking a unique balance between conservation, prosperity and economic balance. So, it is challenging to ensure that government agencies understand how to translate this balance into sustainable projects and programmes and this requires technical expertise, it requires technical know-how and many at times requires training and if mastered this will ensure that government agencies will come up with projects and programmes which are truly aligned to the SDGs.

In terms of the other major challenge, this is really on:

2. Adequate, Sustainable and Predictable Resource Mobilisation

Like many other developing states, Fiji's fiscal space and the limited market maturity does not allow for incremental cost of infusing the sustainable development priorities into conventional development. For example, the Climate Vulnerability Assessment that we have done, states of the nation actually requires FJ \$9.3 billion over the next 10 years to fortify Fiji's development aspirations against the impacts of climate change.

We require an additional FJ \$6 billion to transition our economy towards low carbon future in line with our mitigation commitment under the PARIS Agreement. This will, of course, require substantial resource mobilization both from the public and private sources but again we need to be able to be very creative in this space and therefore the limited development and climate finance space, the limited technology and capacity building space; I think these are some of the major constraints we have when it comes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Supplementary question Mr. Chairman, through you, indeed these challenges really require commitment and financial assistance. So far you have reached quite a lot as far as what you have achieved and we know that where there is a will there is a way and you will be able to meet those challenges. But how about the public and private sectors response of the policies that you have implemented so far; their cooperation and other things?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much Honourable Member and through you, Mr. Chairman, I will respond from the perspective of the Ministry of Economy and at least the policies that we have put into place, say for example the National Development Plan.

There has been widespread buying of the National Development Plans (NDP). The number is 800, these many consultations, but I think specifically in the National Climate Adaptation Space, for example, I think this is something that we have to consider that Fiji is a negligible contributor when it comes to the impacts of climate change. But we tend to suffer quite a bit in a matter of hours, when we are hit by a disaster.

The policy aspirations and the work that we have done, I think this resonates with a lot of the development partners. They are actually tailoring their work, for example, the ADB, the World Bank, the UN system. They are now all considering these policy documents, so that they can actually twig their programmes, which is, to make it more climate resilient, so that once they implement these programmes in Fiji, they address climate concerns. For example, if you look at our World Bank Funded Infrastructure project, this requires them, the funding agency to actually consider the project from a climate lens.

This is where the aspirations which we have articulated in the national policy through the National Adaptation Plan, through other climate policies, the climate change policy and of course, the upcoming climate change legislation, this is where the State is making a commitment that we are committed to ensuring that our development is sustainable and then that resonates with other development partners or whoever is funding these projects.

I think we have got widespread buying for most of the policies, if not all, that we have developed over the past few years.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, moving further on to theme 4: Creating ownership and engaging stakeholders. I will request Honourable Nand to ask the substantive questions with the follow up questions, please.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, through you. Is there any timeline for the SDGs and NDPs to be translated into the vernacular language? Has there been any progress in this so far?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you Mr. Chairman. At present, there are no specific timelines for translations of these documents into vernacular language, but certainly I think a bulk of our assistance, when it comes to SDG mainstreaming and advocacy and awareness of SDG, the UN system provides this sort of assistance. So if there is a need for us to do that in the future, I think this is something we can have a dialogue with the UN system.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Just a supplementary question, Mr. Chairman. I think this is a very important issue that we are going into, into the vernacular languages because people always ask us when we give them some information. Is this is written in the vernacular language? And this looks very good and interesting when we read through it. Can we also have it in the vernacular language so that people can actually understand rather than for us to try and explain to them what SDGs are all about and how it impacts on their lives and if this can be an issue that would be taken by the Ministry forward for funding?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman thank you very much and through you, I think this is an important consideration and like I said, if you do feel the need to really reach out to the masses and for that, if we need to take the route of the vernacular language, I think we can do so. But I think again, we will need to speak to our development partners who actually do provide us with this sort of technical assistance and something that we can consider going forward.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Leawere, supplementary question?

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Thank you Mr. Chairman. It is just an addition to probably in line with what you said in terms of training and technical expertise. Probably this is where you will be coming in because this awareness is supposed to reach the people in terms of ownership so that people know by 2030, as you had mentioned, embedded into the NDP and all the strategic plans of the respective Ministries. I think the onus lies on the Ministry to go right down and get these organised in terms of these questions and in terms of vernacular so that the people understand more.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- That is well noted, Honourable Leawere. Follow up question, 3.4 (b), Honourable Nand, please?

HON. J.N. NAND.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, through you. I just want to know how effective are the implementers in facilitating and coordinating with the relevant stakeholder agencies?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman, this question from the PAC Secretariat was actually unclear to us, but what we have made out of that question was in terms of the relationship between various implementing agencies in Government and the Ministry of Economy as a lead coordinating agency. So all implementing agencies are actually responsible for coordination with the sector specific stakeholders and they are very effective, I must admit, in delivering services to the general populous.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Question (c), Honourable Nand?

HON. J.N. NAND.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Is there any plan to include businesses in the implementation of SDGs and what are those plans?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I believe this question is coming from if most of the SDGs are implemented by Government agencies, so what the Committee would like to know whether there is input from private agencies as well or not?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Again it is a very important question the involvement of the private sector. The Fijian Government in fact plans to use the vehicle we have in place which is the National SDG Taskforce, much more frequently to spur the collaboration between State and Non-State sectors for SDG implementation. So the taskforce, as I had alluded to earlier is mandated to guide Fiji's progress towards SDGs, and through it, the involvement of the private sector is extremely important to not only mobilise financial and technical resources, but to also engage innovative Public Private Partnerships (PPP) such as the Fiji Rural Electrification which is helping addressing SDG 7, which is on renewable energy.

Another great example, and here I am really talking through, an example is the involvement of the private sector including businesses in sustainable development, is the development of climate and disaster risk parametric insurance for low income households and the small and medium enterprises and partnership with a domestic private insurance sector. The likes of FijiCare and Tower Insurance, for example, are seeing a business sense and they are actually coming on board and want to work with the Government in the development of such a product which would serve the general public. So such a collaboration is expected to greatly address or rather aid towards the achievement of SDG 1- No Poverty, SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities, SDG 11-Sustainable Cities and Communities and of course SDG13 - Climate Action.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

HON. RO T.V. KEPHA.- Supplementary question. Does this plan also include SMEs and what type of training will they be giving in terms of this plan? Thank you.

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much, Honourable Member. I think we were taking a very inclusive approach and of course the MSME sector is a fundamental sector in Fiji and something that we cannot ignore in any of our policy space or consultation for that matter. Naturally, I think we will need to look at MSMEs, what sector do they represent and I think that is something we will need to consider and again consider their representation, those who represent MSME sector across the various thematic areas in the SDGs Taskforce and of course, specific programmes that Government will implement. Those MSMEs, for example, in the agricultural sector, they will obviously have a space there. Those who are actually involved in the IT sector, they will definitely be part of it. So, I think that is a consideration and the approach we need to understand is very and we do not want to exclude any of these important segments.

HON. RO T.V. KEPHA.- What type of training are you thinking of giving this as part of your plan? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. N. PRAKASH.- I think inasfar as the role of the Ministry of Economy is concerned, Mr. Chairman, I think the kind of training that we can give, to put to the various stakeholders out there including those from the MSME sector is actually, maybe if you like, a crash course in SDGs and I think making the various stakeholders understand what are other stakes commitment when it comes to the SDGs. And I think important to understand is that when we look at the SDGs, we have got to look at in its entirety and see the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development agenda. If you look at zero down and look at the various sort of targets and indicators, I think we have got to see the relevance of this. SDGs is something

which is applied to everyone in every country in the world, whether you are a developing country or developed nation, it applies to everyone. So I think this is a consideration that we need to have and apply it accordingly.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Mr. Nilesh, with that context I believe there was some discussion with MITT to provide mentorship for all the SMEs especially with the grants, et cetera. If you are aware, can you elaborate on that as well because it is part of the training as well - providing mentorship.

MR. I. TALEMAIBUA.- Yes, Mr. Chairman that is correct. We have given grants to MITT through the MSBG programme. They can go out and train the SMEs in all areas of business.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Nand , question (e) , please.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Thank you Mr. Chairman. This is with regards to developing communication guidelines. Is there any plan to develop communication guidelines to assist implementers in deciding the strategic priorities for public engagements and in addressing challenges for engagement with citizens? And also can you further elaborate if there are any challenges that have been identified? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much Mr. Chairman and through you, I think this is a very important consideration when it comes to looking at the communication side of the SDGs and how we are doing that through the Government processes.

So I think this aspect of developing communication guidelines and various other advocacy and awareness materials. We would like to get into this space once we have actually undertaken a mid-term review of the National Development Plan and this exercise is currently being carried out by the Ministry of Economy in participation with the various line agencies in Government. So I think really understanding how various agencies in Government, the challenges they have acquired, I think this is something we will be able to establish once we conclude that exercise. Once we conclude that exercise, we should then be able to understand what the challenges are and what can be done about addressing these challenges.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you for that response. Moving further onto Theme 5 - Inclusiveness and leaving no one behind. While we are talking about leaving no one behind, would you be able to tell us what is the current population of Fiji?

MR. I. TALEMAIBUA.- Mr. Chairman as per the 2017 Census Report it is around 884,887.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Okay, that is very good to know before I ask my other question. Can the Ministry enlighten the Committee on whether the 2019-2020 National Budget is gender based budgeting? If so, please explain and if not then why not?

MR. I. TALEMAIBUA.- Thank you Mr. Chairman. We always take into account gender in all our budget assessments, but, not to the extent to the level required by our

international partners. For example, we have infrastructure development projects that have been assessed based on gender impact analysis.

As such in realising the gender based budgeting which allows Government to recognise and address the needs of both men and women, the Fijian Government has already taken some steps to introduce gender budgeting in Fiji. The initiative began in 2017 when gender budget started through a bilateral cooperation between the Indonesian Government and the Fijian Government through the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation. The programme is currently underway looking at GRB legislations, policies and social obligations and one of the important measures taken is that Parliament has already endorsed a standing order on gender scrutiny of legislations that requires a gender-based analysis to be used by Parliamentary Committees when scrutinising legislations or undertaking their oversight functions.

Further progress has also been made through the involvement of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to undertake a Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessment of gender responsive budget against the PEFA/GRB Framework.

The GRB will be piloted in two (2) ministries which are the Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism (MITT) in the new financial year. The focus is to integrate gender perspectives into the governance process to overcome differences or gaps in access and participation of development for both women and men. This will also aim towards realising a more equitable budget by addressing issues of gender inequality.

In recognising the progress towards implementing GRB in Fiji, the Ministry of Economy in conjunction with the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation will be incorporating GRB component into the existing budget submission template which is expected to be introduced in the 2020-2021 financial year budget process. We have the budget submission template here with us. In the new financial year, we have introduced a new section (Section D) which is under GRB, aligning ourselves to the policy of no one to be left behind.

In this regard, then we will issue the budget strategy circular incorporating the methodology for budget submissions in line with GRB principles that require budget submissions. While it will be compulsory for the two pilot ministries to fill in the GRB section of the budget template, this will not be the case for the other ministries and departments, however, we will encourage them to fill this section if they wish to do so. *Vinaka.*

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you for that response. What is the strategy of inclusiveness in economic participation and contribution to the economy?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much, Chair. Sir, I am referring to chapter 1.1 of the NDP which highlights the overalls strategies and initiatives for inclusive socio-economic development. Inclusive participation, as we know is essential to further improve the living standards of all Fijians, sustained economic expansion supported by private sector investment and trade and the enhanced provision of social services and public goods will be paramount. A wide range of sector policies and programmes have been identified with detailed plans of implementation to achieve these goals and targets and the successful

implementation of the overall strategy (which is Government strategy) will support the realisation of the various SDGs. Thank you, Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you for that response. Now we do understand that our basic needs are changing. Previously, it used to be three but now I believe with this changing world, electricity is becoming a major need whereby people cannot actually survive if they do not have electricity. With regards to that, can you specify the plans for all Fijians to have safe and clean drinking water by 2031 and access to electricity by 2021? Thank you.

MR. K. GOUNDER.- Thank you for that question. On the safe and clean drinking water by 2031, chapter 3.1.1 of the NDP states the programmes and projects targeted to achieve this goal. If you go to that specific chapter on water and sanitation, you will see the list of projects that are there for us to meet this target. The goals, policies and strategies for clean and safe water in adequate quantities is also articulated in this chapter. The Government will undertake major investments to cater for the long-term water supply needs. Resources are being allocated for construction of new water treatment plants. For example, there is a project in Viria, Naitasiri, 40 megalitres of new treatment plant which will supply water to the greater Suva area including Korovou, Tailevu. Reticulation systems and reservoirs to increase supply capacity and aggressive leakage detection programmes to eliminate water loss is being pursued. As we are aware, our water infrastructure is very old so we need to replace it. I think along most of the roads, you will see a burst going on so there is an aggressive leakage detection programme going on. Also, the WAF is exploring options for other new dam sites such as the Waibogi in the upper reaches of Navua and the upper Waimanu River as well as in the Western Division. I think one of the challenges is meeting the demand in the greater Nadi and Lautoka areas because apart from the Vaturu source, there is no big source available – that is one of the challenges that has to be looked into.

Options of enhanced rainwater harvesting and storage, industrial recycling, storm water management, aquifer management and the use of renewable energy technologies for desalination plants especially in the remote locations are being explored on a continuing basis and implemented where feasible.

With regards to chapter 3.1.2 which is on electricity or energy. The National Development Plan articulates the goals and strategies for access to electricity by 2021 for every Fijian household. With substantial investments in electrification initiatives over the years, the Government has been spending more than around \$50 million in terms of electrification projects annually to meet about 90 percent of the population which has now access to electricity. If you look at the last two or three years, the figure has now around 94 percent to 95 percent population now have access to electricity. That is very good news for us.

Lack of access in the unserved rural and maritime areas will be addressed in the coming years, I think that is where in terms of accessibility lies. To achieve the remaining percentage of population which is around 5 percent to 6 percent through grid extension projects will be accelerated in Viti Levu, Vanua Levu, Ovalau and Taveuni. Government is also continuing with the policy to fully fund rural electrification projects. Mr. Chairman, back in 2017 there was a policy of 10 percent contribution from communities and we had always issues in terms of say, for example, if there are 20 households, 10 will contribute and 10 will not contribute and the project will not start. So the Government made a decision back in

2017 that Government will now fully pay the 100 percent towards the rural electrification programmes. Also further investments in renewable energy are being explored and undertaken to achieve a rate of about 80 percent of renewable energy generated from electricity by 2021. Concessional financing and grants for these projects are being accessed under Green Climate Funds. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you for that comprehensive answer. Any supplementary questions? Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Mr. Chairman, my question is not on that particular explanation but on the population that was given earlier which was 885,000. My question is on the poverty level, what percentage have you calculated to be on the poverty line and below the poverty line? If you can just answer that in terms of SDGs that we are looking at and also what is the percentage of households that are headed by women? Because we know that a lot of the poverty areas, the households are headed by women. So if you can just give us a short response to that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Since that question is asking for statistics and if you do not have that with you, you can actually provide it to the Public Accounts Committee at a later stage.

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman, we welcome that and in fact the other issue that the Honourable Member raised in terms of the women-headed households, I think this is something that we will need to quickly establish with the Fiji Bureau of Statistics in terms of women-headed households. So the response will come from whether it is the Household Income and Expenditure Survey or the National Census. Thank you and we are happy to report back to the Committee once we obtain these numbers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- The poverty levels, Mr. Chairman?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman, poverty rate which is a percent of population in 2013 stands at (this is the national poverty rate) 28.10 percent in 2013. That was the last time when we had the Household Income and Expenditure Survey carried out.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Prakash, your supplementary question, please?

HON. V. PRAKASH.- Thank you, through you Mr. Chairman, we are very thankful for rural electrification. I think most parts of our country, especially in the rural sector we have this electricity and the total contribution by the Government in Fiji Electricity Authority, before we used to pay 10 percent. My question is regarding the Viria Water Scheme which is a very important scheme currently going on. We have an explanation that this will supply water to the urban centres, in the Central Division up to Korovou. I am concerned about the areas nearby, that is the Lomaivuna settlement right up to Nabaitavo and those areas where there is no water supply. I think people were excited that this water scheme once completed will also be able to serve the people on the upper stream rather than coming right down. So, can we have some clarification on this, Mr. Chairman? Thank you.

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman, I do not have the specific details with me but I think through you we can provide it to the Committee. But in terms of the project itself, this is one of the bigger infrastructure projects that we are undertaking right now and at the

moment at the treatment plant we are constructing 40 mega litre and there is an option of doing another 40 mega litre in the future because we cannot do the 80 mega litre because of the costing issues right now. I think this is one of the projects that we look at because we are also getting a Green Climate Fund (GCF) grant of around \$US30 million and this is one of the first projects in the Pacific that we are able to access the GCF grant.

So, in terms of specifics, from the knowledge that we have, the project will cater for the demand because at the moment we have issues in terms of getting water from the Waila and Tamavua Treatment Plants so it will supply the needs that are there for the greater Suva area including taking water to areas like Korovou. However, in terms of your specific question, I think those areas we can get back to you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- That is well noted. Moving further. On Objective No. 2 – Resources and Capacities for Implementing the 2030 Agenda. Theme 1 – Identification of needs and of the required resources and capacities for implementing of SDGs. We will request Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa to ask the substantive question. Thank you.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Please advise whether the budget allocation from each Ministry provided in Table 4.1 is sufficient to complete those SDG-related programmes. Thank you, Sir.

MR. I. TALEMAIBUA.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Mr Chairman, the Government Budget is prepared on a yearly basis and funding is allocated in line with the NDP targets. Government is committed by ensuring that sufficient funding is provided for the achievement of the relevant SDG targets and funding for these targets are phased out over a period of time. *Vinaka*.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Supplementary question, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that response. My question is, when you have these budget allocations, we know that climate change is a big issue, we have already had one cyclone this year and April is supposed to be the end of the cyclone season. How do you prioritize your budget, for example, after *TC Winston* we still have some schools that are not rebuild in terms of climate and SDGs?

MR. I. TALEMAIBUA.- Thank you Honourable Member. Mr. Chairman, through you, for the *TC Winston* case, yes we have a budget that is allocated for the completion of the construction of *TC Winston*-related infrastructures. We are hoping that relevant ministries can complete that work either in this financial year or the years to come. In terms of prioritizing the budget when disaster strikes, yes. The last disaster, *TC Sarai* and *TC Tino*, we asked the relevant ministries to look within their budgets, immediate relief that is required. For example, for agriculture they just need to look within their budget and fund the immediate relief requirements. *Vinaka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Kepa, question (b), please.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Mr. Chairman, for those new and ongoing initiatives, is there a completion date for these infrastructural projects or will it be an ongoing exercise? Can you just briefly explain that?

MR. I. TALEMAIBAU.- Thank you Honourable Member, Mr. Chairman, through you, yes, there are completion dates for infrastructure projects. These are for specific projects but for programmes like maintenance and road renewals, these are ongoing projects on a year by year basis. *Vinaka.*

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, question (c), please.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Is there a planned estimated cost for implementing the first five years of the NDP? If yes, how is the cost divided or distributed?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. For this question, yes, there is a cost plan and this is articulated in the financing plan for the NDP and the costs are derived from master plans and strategic plans for each sector.

For the first five years, the cost of implementing the NDPs is around \$6 billion to \$7 billion while the 20 -year plan will cost over \$50 billion. The financing decisions will be also depending on the fiscal and the economic developments and we need to look at this in their overall planning space of the Government. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, next question please.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- How effective or how efficient is the funding release system to ensure that projects identified are implemented within the targeted timelines? Thank you, Sir.

MR. I. TALEMAIBAU.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Funds are released based on the projects and programmes performance on the ground as and when required. *Vinaka.*

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Supplementary question to that, Sir. How do you monitor and supervise this particular area that you have just responded to; the funding release system? What is the supervision and monitoring of that to ensure that the funds are going into the right targeted areas?

MR. I. TALEMAIBAU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You may recall there are provisions in the budget, allocations denoted under “R”. R means that all requisitions needs to come to the Ministry for Economy. That is one way of monitoring the programme especially for new programmes. They will bring to us their work programmes, their quarterly programmes, their procurement plans and all the necessary documents.

Apart from that, we also do site visits to physically visit the projects before funding can be expanded and we talk with the relevant stakeholders on the need to speed up the project implementations if there is a need on the ground and also the need for the implementing agency to fast track their plans in order they can bring to us the necessary funding applications for the release of funds. *Vinaka.*

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- What challenges are there in terms of resourcing on capacities in implementing the 2030 agenda and how does the Ministry plan to address these challenges?

MR. I. TALEMAIBUA.- Thank you, Honourable Member. The three main challenges we have realised:

- (i) Financial resources
- (ii) Technology
- (iii) Human resources

In terms of the financial resources, the plan is to secure innovative sources of finance especially for infrastructure projects from the Green Climate Fund.

In terms of technology, we want to map out technology needs and explore innovative approaches for technology transfer including investment by Government.

In terms of human resources, we wish to invest also in HR personnel to drive innovations and productivity. *Vinaka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Theme 2: Mobilising Partnerships. We will request Honourable Mikaele Leawere to ask those questions, please.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, through you, this is on page 23 of the report. Please advise who is or who will be responsible for monitoring and administering the partnerships between global organisations and local target groups?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much Honourable Member and Mr. Chairman. We all understand that global partnership is an essential component in enabling Fiji to fully realise the 2030 agenda, and partnership means collaboration with a private sector, non-Government organisations and other development organisations to ensure that Fiji's progress remains wide reaching and inclusive. Partnerships with global organisations entail a wide range of national objectives such as health, education, poverty alleviation, sanitation management, renewable energy development, women empowerment and many other national priorities. Engagements, monitoring and administration of partnerships with global organisations is well maintained on a project-by-project basis by each responsible line Ministry. It is the responsibility of the line agencies signing on the respective MOUs to ensure the projects are completed as defined in the underlined grant agreements.

Further, the official development assistance which is cash grants, to be received from various donor agencies are incorporated in the national budget. Once these funds are received and prior to the release of funds, the Ministry of Economy will verify and ensure that there is maximum compliance to the relevant grant agreements, policies and financial regulations that are in place. Also going forward, this practice is continued as a form of monitoring and compliance check.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Next question, please.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Just before that, Mr. Chairman. I believe that there are some projects that have not been completed and what has the Ministry done in terms of ensuring that the line Ministries complete some of these projects? Can you just elaborate on that, Sir?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman, I think there are many line agencies in Government that are actually responsible for implementation, but I think we need to understand the context of which particular project we are talking about and then I think my colleagues from Budget and Planning can in fact respond accordingly, so we would need some specific guidance in terms of what sort of projects you are looking at.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Mr. Chairman, just responding to a response as alluded to in the paper that you have presented. I am just trying to find out if there are some projects that are not completed and if there are, what has the Ministry done about them? That is the line of questioning coming from me.

MR. I. TALEMAIBUA.- Honourable Member, Mr. Chairman through you maybe I can assist. Yes, in terms of project funded through the ODA assistance, as donors send the money, and it may not be implemented if the donors are yet to send the money to the consolidated funds. Once we receive the money then Ministry needs to request, we verify, we agree and then approval is given for the Ministry to implement their projects and programmes. *Vinaka.*

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you for the response. The next question is: How many of those targeted groups have assisted communities at the grassroot level so far?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, if I may respond to that question. I think there are a number of projects and initiatives that have directly assisted various vulnerable communities. Through the partnerships with NGOs and the private sector, a number of rural villages now have access to piped water and proper sanitation management. The Rotary Pacific Water for Life Foundation has supported a number of rural communities for the construction of solar, ground water supply systems including installation of solar pump, water storage tanks, distribution channels and the construction of gender segregated sanitation facilities.

In terms of the area of access to justice, we are working with the European Union and in fact, they have under European Development Fund (EDF) -11, they have provided financial resources to the Fijian Government to improve access to Legal Aid services. Again the expansion of Legal Aid Offices in Fiji and that have been undertaken to empower vulnerable groups by ensuring they have access to justice. In terms of working with philanthropic partners and other bi-lateral donors, for example, I have an example here which is the Fiji Rural Electrification Fund, where the Government had worked with Leonardo Decaprio Foundation and of course we have grant funding from the Government of UK.

So Fiji focuses on supporting inclusive economic growth to reduce poverty through targeted investments in private sector and human development, working in partnership with the Fijian Government. Australia's assistance, for example, in the area of education and health and really looking at the disability dimension, I mean this is something which stands out because Australia is one of the biggest bilateral partners for Fiji and this is something which is very much aligned to the national development priorities. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Next question Honourable Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Thank you Mr. Chairman. On (c), please elaborate on the Green Bond Project implemented so far and advice on the role of FDB with other international organisations? Thank you.

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. So the Fijian Government issued its first ever sovereign green bond in 2017 and the sum of that bond was FJ\$100 million. We in fact have been the first developing country and the first small island developing state to issue a sovereign green bond.

The bond was issued in four tranches at a coupon rate of 4 percent for a 5-year period and 6.3 percent for a 13-year bond. There were seven projects that were actually funded from the proceeds that were raised from the green bond and of course there was Steering Committee that guided the work in terms of the selection of projects and this included the Reserve Bank of Fiji, Ministry of Economy, Solicitor-General's Office and guidance from International Finance Corporation (IFC) in terms of really coming with a framework for the Green Bond Framework.

Under the Green Bond Framework the Fijian Government is required to publish annual newsletters until the end of the bond tenure period to inform investors about how the proceeds have been used and this is something that we continue to do and you will find on the Ministry of Economy website the number of green bond impact reports and for 2019 we are currently finalising the report and it should be published online fairly soon.

In terms of the role of the Fiji Development Bank, I think this is unclear to us because they obviously did not have a role to play in the issuance of the green bond that was issued in 2017. However, in the context of the bank's role in climate change in 2017, Fiji Development Bank became the first ever nationally accredited entity to the Green Climate Fund, in other words it has become a direct access entity, so this is a national bank which has now got access to GCF resources. So this has enabled the Bank to access up to US\$10 million in funding per project from the GCF for climate related projects. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Next question Honourable Leaware.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Thank you Mr. Chairman. Can you please explain on the use and utilization of Green Climate Fund Bond especially in addressing the mitigation and preparation of infrastructure to be climate change resilient? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much, through you, Mr. Chairman. So the bond actually is not called the Green Climate Fund Bond, the official name is actually called and it is referred to as a Fiji Sovereign Green Bond.

So with that clarity, the Fiji Green Bond was issued again as I said in four tranches. By July of 2018 the \$100 million that was raised from the green bond proceeds were spent on the seven selected projects. Mr. Chairman, 90.6 percent of the proceeds were used on adaptation-centric projects and 9.4 percent was used on mitigation projects which is again a true reflection of not only Fiji's priorities, but I think the priorities of every other small state because adaptation rather than mitigation is a priority.

With the issuance of this bond, this has of course encouraged unprecedented private sector climate finance because the bond every time it was issued it was oversubscribed. Regarding mitigation three of the seven projects were on mitigation which included the installation of about 2,700 new Solar Home Systems in rural areas across the country that are not connected to grid electricity and this is expected to reduce about 1,038 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually if diesel generators were used as an alternative.

The systems will produce more than 1.39 million kilo watts of solar energy per annum benefitting around 13,000 plus people in the rural part of Fiji. The other projects that were mitigation related include the REDD+ programme which of course looks at planting of native tree species of trees. The third and final mitigation project that was funded from the green bond proceeds was the construction of the Naboro Landfill that is expected to ensure 500,000 tonnes of potential waste, the proper disposal of that benefiting more than 300,000 people in the Suva, Nausori and Lami corridors. Rebuilding damaged infrastructure and to make them better and more resilient to a changing climate is a priority area. Again this was addressed through the issuance of the green bond because a bulk of the proceeds were again used for rehabilitation and reinstating rather making the existing infrastructure much more strong. In this regard, majority of the funds that were used to rebuild more than 176 bridges, about 1,177 roads, 1 jetty, 3 kilometree of coastal protection and 1,200 kilometres of road drainage. All these infrastructure were damaged by tropical depressions, cyclones and floods. Thank you, Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you for that response. We will go to 4.3: Theme 3 - Managing Risk. We will request Honourable Prakash if he can ask those questions, please.

HON. V. PRAKASH.- Thank you, Chair, through you. What is the current progress on the total value of Overseas Development Assistance to Fiji in terms of the respective multilateral development partners?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much, Chair. Multilateral development partners continue to support various development priorities of Government and again, very much mapped on to the NDP.

In the 2018-2019 financial year, a total of \$2.151 million in cash grant was received by the Fijian Government from multilateral partners such as UNDP, UNICEF, World Bank and WHO for projects such as Fiji Ridge to Reef, Cross-Cutting Capacity Building Development Projects, REDD+, Water Sanitation and Hygiene and Child Protection.

Further, funding is also provided on an ad-hoc basis usually for unbudgeted projects. In the financial year 2018/2019, total ad-hoc cash assistance received from multilateral partners for the various projects had a total of \$5.473 million. Multilateral partners such as UNICEF and the Global Green Growth Institute have also provided in-kind assistance in various aspects such as the assistance for child protection programmes, water and sanitation programmes, health nutrition, HIV and AIDS programmes and other technical advice, capacity building and renewable energy and climate resilience projects. Total aid-in-kind assistance for the year 2018/2019 from multilateral partners had a value of \$1.511 million. Thank you, Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

HON. V. PRAKASH.- Through you, Chair. Has the review of the National Disaster Risk Management Act been finalised? If not then why not?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much, Chair and through you. An update from the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) with respect to the finalisation of their legislation. The process of course, is in process and the NDMO should be presenting a revised draft of the legislation in March or sometime around that time. Thank you, Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Next question, please.

HON. V. PRAKASH.- Chair, through you. What other policies and legislations which are in the process of review in order to be in line with the achievements of the SDGs? Please provide a list of those projects.

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Chair, thank you very much. As earlier alluded to in our presentation, the Fijian Government is working on a Climate Change Bill. Again, this is a new legislation that we are looking at but in terms of those existing legislations that are under review, this includes the Forestry Act. We are in the process of getting a comprehensive list from the Office of the Solicitor-General with regard to all those various other legislations that are being reviewed. Thank you, Chair.

HON. V. PRAKASH.- A supplementary question, Chair. Once it is ready then definitely the Public Accounts Committee will be advised on the list?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Sorry, Chair. This is what I meant that we would obtain a list from the Solicitor-General's Office because they are the agency responsible for providing steer on legislative review within Government. So we will obtain a list from the SG's Office and we will furnish this to the PAC Secretariat. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, that is well noted. Moving further on - Monitoring, Follow-up, Review and Reporting on Progress of Implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Please provide an update whether the quarterly reports has been submitted by relevant Ministries to the Ministry of Economy on the implementation of NDPs at operational and national levels.

MR. K. GOUNDAR.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the question. Ministries do not submit quarterly reports on NDP however they submit quarterly reports on their budget which is aligned to the NDP.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, that the strategic plans that are developed for the Ministries, mostly all of the strategies and KPIs that are in the strategic plans are directly from the NDP which are now funded through the budget. Basically, Ministries submit the quarterly reports on the budget that are not on the NDP. Also further on, on 20th January, 2020 the Ministry of Economy had issued a circular to all Ministries and Departments to report on their progress on the 5-Year National Development Plan.

The objective of the mid-term review are in two-folds:

- (1) Assess progress made in implementing policies contained in the NDP, identify implementation constraints and modifying policy objectives and KPIs where necessary to achieve Government's objectives; and
- (2) Assess progress made in the implementation of policies announced through the annual budgets and identify constraints encountered and recommend measures to address them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Mr. Goundar for that explanation. Moving on to 5.2 – Theme 1: Responsibilities, Mechanisms and processes for monitoring, follow-up, review and reporting. We will ask Honourable Nand if he can take us from questions (a) to (b), please.

HON. J. NAND.- Thank you, Honourable Chairman, through you my question is, what action has been taken by the Ministry of Economy on those Ministries that do not submit their reports on time?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Our interpretation of this question was in terms of, really I think the prior question that was asked in terms of the quarterly reporting and in fact the mid-term review that has been already actioned by the Ministry of Economy. A course of action is yet to be determined in terms of those agencies that would not furnish us with an update report. I think this is something that we would need to consider based on who, which agencies actually do not submit reports. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. The next question, please.

HON. J. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, through you. Audit issues highlighted in the Auditor-General's Report by the Public Accounts Committee, how has the Ministry of Economy addressed this in their monitoring and evaluation process?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The Ministry of Economy has always welcomed the external advice provided by the Office of the Auditor-General and the positive discussions we have had at the Public Accounts Committee. This has assisted us in improving financial processes and monitoring and evaluation to ensure that state finances are used in an efficient and effective way and of course in a manner which is transparent.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The next question, please.

HON. J. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, through you. With the stringent process requirements for accessing the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the recurring issues of monitoring, planning, budgeting, programming highlighted in the Auditor-General's Report, how will the Ministry of Economy ensure that this fund is accessed?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Allow me to give you a quick background in terms of the work in modalities of the Green Climate Fund. As we all know that this is one of the financing mechanisms of the UN Climate Convention on climate

change and again because this is a multilateral process. There are stringent policies and procedures that each country needs to abide by in order to access GCF resources. One modality that we discussed was accreditation and we have our own nation bank, the Fiji Development Bank which is now a direct access entity of the Green Climate Fund. So at any one point in time Fiji Development Bank whether for a project or a bundle of projects they can access US\$10 million.

The other important aspect when it comes to GCF considerations is to be able to develop a country programme and this is the assistance from the Green Climate Fund so essentially through this process, every country that aspires to secure resources from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), you need to create a pipeline of projects and this will then become the basis of a particular country accessing the global public financial resources. There is of course a readiness programme in place and I am very pleased to announce that Fiji was one of those countries that secured US\$1 million last October, again to prepare ourselves as a country and as a government to access more of the GCF resources. So, this has to do with capacity building, looking at development of project pipelines and looking at various capacities within government, not only in the Ministry of Economy but of course with ministries which are dealing with large projects.

How can we build capacity so that you know that capacity will then mean that we are able to churn out very practical requests to the Green Climate Fund for funding? So, again the readiness programme is in place and that is assisting the Ministry of Economy and other government agencies including the Fiji Development Bank to access more of the resources. A step further, we are also wanting to get the Ministry of Economy accredited to the Green Climate Fund.

I think in the region Cook Islands is one of those countries which have got a government agency which is accredited to the GCF. We would also like to emulate that and we want to get the Ministry of Economy accredited to the GCF as well. Again I think this is quite a rigorous exercise that needs to be undertaken and for that we need to undertake a gap analysis. We are undertaking this exercise with the readiness funding which the GCF has given to the Fijian Government.

So, all in all this is an exciting space, there are fundamental institutional dimensions that we need to look at when it comes to GCF resources and how countries like Fiji can access more of those innovative financial resources. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Next question, please.

HON. J. N. NAND.- Mr. Chairman through you, what challenges are being faced by the Ministry in effectively carrying out its role of monitoring, follow-ups, reviews and reporting on the progress of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. In response a strengthening of the enabling environment for implementing SDGs and enhancing a dialogue among and collaboration with domestic, regional and international stakeholders in implementing SDGs is very critical. This is particularly important for mobilising finance for achieving SDGs and addressing capacity issues. It is equally important to maintain and

accelerate economic growth that is sustainable, inclusive and which generates jobs and contributes to building economic resilience. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Any supplementary questions? If not then we will proceed further.

Theme 2: Performance Indicators and Data. Can the officials explain what are the national performance indicators established and how are they linked to the strategic planning, budgeting, policy analysis, programme evaluation and decision making?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. The KPIs have been identified in specific chapters of the NDP for each of the sectors. Ministries need to use KPIs when they develop their ministry or set a strategic plans. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Is there sufficient availability of reliable and relevant data to support policy performance reports?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman, the Voluntary National Review (VNR) exercise which we undertook in 2019 revealed serious data gaps for a number of SDGs and those are SDG11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG12 on Sustainable Consumption and Production, SDG13 on Climate Action and SDG14 on Life Below Water.

So, these were a number of SDGs where we realized that we have serious lack of data and this data paucity of course affects our ability to meaningfully report on the progress across the various SDGs. Having said that, project level data is available with the Ministry of Economy and this will form the mid-term review of the National Development Plan.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Focusing on page 33 there is a recommendation and it reads and I quote, “In cases where there are multiple agencies implementing actions to achieve a SDG target, efforts should be made to assign an agency responsible for coordinating in collecting data”. Explain how the Ministry of Economy will implement the recommendation provided by the Office of the Auditor-General in this particular Audit Report?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman, I think to meaningfully answer that question and really looking at the spirit of the integrated of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, I think we have to recognise that SDGs is not only one agency’s business and therefore because this is an integrated agenda, there will be many other agencies that will perhaps look at some aspect of particular programmes and projects. I think we need to celebrate that sort of diversity, but I think bringing this back to M&E and how effectively we are able to report on this, I think this is where the Ministry of Economy exercises its central agency function.

In terms of bringing all the stakeholders on board in terms of manning everything that individual agencies are doing and reflecting that in the national reporting processes, again using the vehicles of the SDG taskforce and again doing work like, for example, the voluntary national review. We would in fact be doing our next voluntary review in 2021.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Mr. Chairman, can I ask a supplementary question?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, please.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- This is in terms of collection of data. This is going to be very important when they are looking at the review process of the SDGs. I know that Auditor-General's Reports often mention lack of data from the various ministries. When you are collecting data, is this done in-house or outsourced or how is it done? This is an issue that other ministries, as I have stated OAG often refers to. How are you dealing with this because many times when we ask for data, it is very difficult to get it even in Parliament? Thank you.

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much Mr. Chairman, through you. I think a very important question on data and really the way we have done this in the past, both in the MDGs era and now with the SDGs, we have had technical support from the UN system, UNDP in particular, which had provided us with an embedded Technical Assistance to look at data processes.

But I think overtime, we have realised that a Technical Assistance can achieve only certain things. We need to in fact build our own capacity which is why if you see the Ministry of Economy's budget, we have positions which are funded to work full time on these issues including collecting data, looking at the analytical aspects of SDGs, et cetera.

So we have full time positions and these people need to be recruited to be able to provide steer on this work. Another important aspect we have to realise is that, a lot of these institutional actually data does not come into the public domain. This is just left with individual agencies in our system. We have realised that, for example, with the Ministry of Health, a lot of good data which is actually coming, generated by their own system is kept within their system. Because the National Statistics Office does not require that, it does not come into the public domain.

So I think having undertaken the Voluntary National Review (VNR) exercise in 2019 and again in our preparation for the 2021 VNR, this is an exercise we feel which is very healthy is to reach out to government agencies. Once we embark on the review exercise, we need to review and reach out to these agencies that you need to provide all that data set. Right now the data said that the Ministry of Economy has is quite comprehensive in nature. It is not a sophisticated system, it is a simple excel based system, but it addresses all the 17 SDGs and all the various targets and indicators that are applicable to Fiji. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Going further on, can the Ministry of Economy inform this Committee the progress of collection of data for SDGs indicators from the responsible agencies and whether this has been strictly compiled?

MR. N PRAKASH.- Thank you very much. In mid-2018, Fiji started a comprehensive data collection process for the support of the UNDP to establish the SDG baseline status in Fiji and a SDGs monitoring and evaluation system.

The SDGs global indicator framework was the basis of this work which was prepared by the inter-agency expert group on the SDG indicators. Obviously, this framework which

includes 232 SDG global indicators and the Pacific Indicator Framework developed by the Pacific SDGs Taskforce as part of the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development that includes 132 Pacific Sustainable Development Indicators.

Navigating these space, there was a global framework and from that global framework, we had deduced something which is much more relevant to the Pacific and that was our basis for developing the data set for Fiji. So the work on baseline data collection involved, of course, the baseline data assessment through desktop review of both qualitative and quantitative secondary data available with Government agencies. That is what I meant by reaching out to individual Government agencies and getting from them their data repositories, and of course the other NGOs, for example, they had contributed meaningfully in the data collection processes either through written submissions or through collaboration and their engagement in the SDGs Taskforce. I think a reflection of the work that we have done in the data collection process is very well reflected in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) document and we invite the Members of the Public Accounts Committee to visit the Ministry of Economy's website to have a look at the VNR which we prepared in 2019. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Moving further on: Theme 3: Communication to Stakeholders. Please advise whether the ToR for the SDG Task Force has been reviewed?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. The Terms of Reference for the SDG's Taskforce is a living document and it is reviewed from time to time to articulate the inputs that we require from the diverse taskforce. In 2018 and 2019, the Terms of Reference required the taskforce to consider the draft VNR and validate the findings of the draft report. So again, I think this is a living document, this is something based on the needs and we can accordingly twig the Terms of Reference.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Please provide a brief on the outcomes of the HLPF Meeting held in July 2019 on Fiji's National Voluntary Report on the implementation of the SDGs

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman, in 2019, 47 countries had volunteered to present their national reviews to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. We did so in July last year and the theme for that conference was, "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality." There were four SDGs which were a focus of the 2019 HLPF which is SDG 4, SDG 8, SDG10, SDG 13, SDG 16 and SDG 17. In terms of the outcomes of the HLPF, we obviously were very successful in presenting our VNR in collaboration with representatives from Fiji Disabled Society. Recognition of the mainstreaming of the SDGs into the three arms of the State: the Parliament, the Judiciary and the Executive, I think this was something which was widely recognised and the improvements and the progresses we have made in that space and including the innovation and policy and financing for addressing socio-economic development issues. I think this is based on the various sector reports that is contained within the VNR. So as a major outcome Fiji also learnt from the experiences of other countries and how they are doing and what they are doing when it comes to SDGs implementation. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. With regards to question (c), I believe we have received a comprehensive written response on that, so we will not go into that. The final

question is, what plans are there to inform Parliament on the progress of the implementation of SDGs?

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Our plan is really to engage the Parliamentarians through the Voluntary National Review processes. Like I mentioned in my presentation, the next opportunity for us to develop the VNR is 2021 and of course the processes will start this year, so again when we convene the SDGs Taskforce or if there is a regional meeting where Government is invited to present on SDG implementation, I think that will be an opportunity for us to inform not only the Parliamentarians, but every other stakeholder who wants to be involved in the SDGs processes.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much for those responses. I would to invite OAG if they have any comments or any contribution with regards to this particular submission that was done today?

AUDIT REP. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We acknowledge the deliberation that have been done today and the comments provided by the Ministry of Economy. We noted their positive responses especially in view of the recommendations included in the report.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Just a question to OAG. Since this is a 2030 Agenda and we are in 2020 - 10 years to go, will we have another follow up audit on this as well or this is a one-off audit

AUDIT REP.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This audit was on the preparedness of Government to implement the SDGs, so the next step we will be looking at is auditing the implementation of the NDP.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, any final comments? We will start from Honourable Prakash.

HON. V. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman thank you very much. I would like to endorse the welcoming comments in thanking the Speaker of Parliament and also the Secretariat for trying to bringing live coverage of this very important session which will benefit the entire nation. The people will be able to know what are the policies that the Government is formulating and what are the things that will be reaching the people of this nation. Indeed they will be able to know and I think it is also important that such briefs needs to be also reaching our schools. The younger generations are more in numbers that their percentage is very high and I think they will live longer than us, so they should also insure that the plans that we have got for this nation and whatever we are implementing they are able to know right from the beginning.

And the other comment Mr. Chairman through you, it is very important to realise that human resource development is quite important and no matter how big or small the project is, if you do not have the right people to implement that and the right people to know how to implement and how will it benefit all the nations there will be problem. That is one area and indeed it needs to be improved at all levels. I am sure Fiji will be very rich and I am very excited with the project as we have been informed today that it is one of its kind project, the first in the Pacific and I am proud that we in Fiji are able to do that and it is indeed a very big achievement for Parliament and the Government of the day to try and have ambition so that

the basic needs of the people are met. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and indeed we are very proud for the first session that we have today. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you Honourable Prakash. Honourable Leawere final comments, please.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Just very brief through you, Mr. Chairman to acknowledge the contributions made by the Ministry of Economy and also the members of his team and OAG for their participation this afternoon.

I note with the issue on disability and I am glad that it has come up because that is an important part of our community and especially for us. The women, especially in the inclusion in these SDGs, they are very important goals and our being here today is an indication that the Government is committed to these SDGs and we hope that all line Ministries will take that on board and make sure that they own these SDGs in order to make them work. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa, please final comments.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Mr. Chairman, I think the translation to the vernacular language is very important and I just like to echo what was already said because many of our people in the rural areas, they would like it in their vernacular and make it as attractive as we have here and not just in black and white. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. It is coloured as well. Honourable Nand final comments, please.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman through you, I think today is indeed a unique occasion, first time a Standing Committee is live as far as hearing and consultations is concerned. We thank the Fijian Parliament, the Speaker and Madam Secretary-General and those who are involved in bringing this day to fruition. On the same note, thank you very much for a very good deliberation and we have been informed there is certain areas such as the rural electrification scheme water projects going on. We are very happy about it and we wish you all the best for the future. Thank you so much.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Final comments from Ministry of Economy.

MR. N. PRAKASH.- Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members of the PAC Committee thank you very much for the opportunity. I think we had a very good time clarifying some of these and responding to these questions, so thank you very much again for the opportunity.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you once again. On behalf of PAC, I would like to thank the officials from the Ministry of Economy for availing themselves for this particular presentation this afternoon. Thank you very much for the responses that you have given and all the best in future.

We will now break for 15 minutes and after that the Committee will resume. Thank you.

The Committee adjourned at 3.05 p.m.