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# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE**

## **Consolidated Review Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Annual Reports 2017-2018 and 2018-2019**



**PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI  
Parliamentary Paper No. 60 of 2021**

*September 2021*

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## Chairperson’s Foreword

I am pleased to present the Consolidated Review Report on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Annual (MFA) Reports 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.

The Committee when reviewing the Reports, received oral virtual and written submissions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry was represented by the Deputy Secretary and officials. The Committee could not meet the ministry officials face to face due to COVID-19 safety protocols.

In summary the two (2) reporting periods covered the following:

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Organisational Structure;
- The Seven (7) Divisional Key Performance Indicators;
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Achievements and Results aligned to the Corporate Plan for 2017-2018 and the Operational Plan for 2018-2019; and
- The Ministry’s audited financial statements for the reporting periods.

The Annual Reports captures Fiji’s global leadership at various multilateral platforms including Fiji’s successful leadership on oceans and climate change. This was reflected through its co-presidency with Sweden on the 1<sup>st</sup> UN Oceans Conference in New York and also at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP 23). Fiji created history in becoming the first Small Islands Developing State to preside over these two important Forums.

During Fiji’s presidency, effective initiatives such as the Talanoa Dialogue facilitated an inclusive dialogue process that encouraged countries to collectively raise ambition of 1.5 degrees celcius. In addition, Fiji’s successful leadership of the UN climate change COP 23 paved the way for Fiji to strategically position its Foreign Policy towards regional and global leadership and re-asserted her regional hub status.

Also the Ministry undertook Restructure and achieved the following outcomes:

- Implementation of Government Reforms – Job Evaluation Review (JER), Open Merit Recruitment Selection (OMRS), Performance Management Framework (PMF)
- Establishment of Oceania Bureau to oversee regional relations

While applauding the achievements of the Ministry, the Committee had identified some opportunities for improvements. The reporting periods beginning 2014 were significant since after a lapse of eight years, Fiji’s return to parliamentary democracy under the new Constitution enabled Fiji to sign and ratify several important treaties and conventions that were long overdue. The Committee notes the extensive rehabilitation works after TC Winston in 2016 was enabled through several MOAs and MOUs with bilateral partners and international

NGOs.

The Committee recommends that:

- The Ministry include reports and communiques of meetings attended abroad;
- The Ministry in future, to report on outcomes and highlights achieved during the reporting period aligned to the operational and the annual operational plan; and
- The Ministry is to provide timely updates to Parliament on the re-alignment of its ministerial assignments.

The Committee therefore recommends that Parliament considers the merits of this report without delay.

The Committee commends the contributions by stakeholders that assisted in the preparation of this report.

I take this opportunity to thank members of my Committee and the Secretariat for compiling this bipartisan report.

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



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**Hon. Alexander O'Connor**  
**Chairperson**

## Acronyms

<b>BBNT</b>	Bio-diversity Beyond National Jurisdiction
<b>CAPP</b>	Climate Action Pacific Partnership
<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>DINFO</b>	Department of Information
<b>FFA</b>	Forum Fisheries Agencies
<b>FSO</b>	Foreign Service Officer
<b>FOSR</b>	Fiji Overseas Service Regulations
<b>FMIS</b>	Financial Management Information System
<b>FVS</b>	Fiji Volunteer Services
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>ISA</b>	International Seabed Authority
<b>JER</b>	Job Evaluation Review
<b>MACC</b>	Maritime Affairs Coordination Committee
<b>MFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>MOAs</b>	Memorandum of Agreement
<b>MOUs</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MS Teams</b>	Microsoft Office 365 Teams Application
<b>NDNO</b>	National Disaster Management Office
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>ODA</b>	Overseas Development Assistance
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>OMRS</b>	Open Merit Recruitment and Selection
<b>PMF</b>	Performance Management Framework
<b>PNG</b>	Papua New Guinea
<b>PSIDS</b>	Pacific Small Islands Developing States
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals

<b>SGs Office</b>	Office of the Solicitor General
<b>SO</b>	Standing Orders
<b>SPC</b>	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
<b>UNECA</b>	UN Economic Commission in Africa
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Cooperation on Climate Change
<b>UNHCR</b>	The United Nations Human Rights Council
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Program

## Recommendations

The Committee recommends that:

1. The Ministry (MFA) to include reports and communiques of meetings attended abroad;
2. The Ministry in future, to report on outcomes and highlights achieved during the reporting period aligned to the operational plan and highlight both Diplomatic and High Level Visits to Fiji for presentation of credentials, cross-accreditation, signing of MOUs and MOAs;
3. The Ministry to provide timely updates to Parliament on the above Climate Change Adaptation Outcomes for vulnerable communities Fiji wide; and
4. The Ministry to provide timely updates to Parliament on the alignment of line ministries to the outcomes of Fiji's ratification of Treaties as measured by the Treaties Division/AG's Chambers and MFA in achievement of the relevant ministry specific NDPs and SDGs.

## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background and Terms of Reference**

The Committee had its first meeting on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 to review report on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Annual Reports 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. On Monday 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2021 the Ministry made virtual online submissions on the MS Office Teams application in Suva.

The Report is divided into three parts:

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

### **1.2 Committee Remit and Composition**

Pursuant to Standing Orders 109(2) (e), the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence is mandated to look into matters related to Fiji's relations with other countries, development aid, foreign direct investment, oversight of the military and relations with multi-lateral organisation.

The members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence are as follows:

- 1.2.1 Hon. Alexander O'Connor - Chairperson
- 1.2.2 Hon. Dr. Salik Govind - Deputy Chairperson
- 1.2.3 Hon. Selai Adimaitoga - Member
- 1.2.4 Hon. Pio Tikoduadua - Member
- 1.2.5 Hon. Adi Litia Qionibaravi - Member

### **1.3 Procedure and Program**

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence conducted its deliberation from the 21<sup>st</sup> June until 10<sup>th</sup> August 2021 using the online MS Office Teams, also received written and oral submissions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

## 2.0 Committee Deliberation and Analysis

### 2.1 Committee Findings

The Committee observed the following activities from the reports of the two (2) reporting periods (2017-2018 & 2018-2019):

#### High Level Meetings

- **Fiji and Argentina signed Diplomatic Visa Waiver Agreements**

Fiji and Argentina have enjoyed 46 years of diplomatic relations. Cooperation has mostly been undertaken at the multilateral level. Signed on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2017, by our Prime Minister and Argentina's Foreign Affairs Minister Hon. Jorge Faurie, this Visa Agreement is the first step towards creating opportunities for mutual cooperation in expanding business and trade to South America. This will also encourage visits by sporting teams and tourism activities between both countries thus, solidifying cultural and people-to-people relationship.

Fijian nationals holding an ordinary or official passport will no longer require a visa when entering Argentina following the formalisation of this visa waiver Agreement which came into effect on 10 January 2018. This agreement will facilitate movement of people and enhance our current areas of cooperation in capacity development and training. Fijians have undertaken short term courses in Argentina over the years.

- **The Honourable Prime Minister held bilateral dialogue with Canadian Prime Minister Mr. Justin Trudeau**, his Minister for Climate Change Hon. Catherine McKenna and a number of officials of the Canadian Government on the margins of the Climate Action Meeting in Montreal, Canada, from the 12<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> August, 2017. During that meeting, Canada assured:

- (i) Its support towards Fiji's Presidency of COP 23;
- (ii) Its support towards Fiji's candidature for the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Presidency.

- **Hon. Prime Minister held bilateral dialogue with His Royal Highness, Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, on the margins of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Session of the International Sugar Organisation (ISO) in the United Kingdom, in December 2017.**

Topics of interest was Fiji's growing engagement with the Commonwealth, new opportunities for cooperation between Fiji and the United Kingdom and reinforcing historical ties between the Fijian and British peoples.

This meeting was an opportunity to highlight mutual areas of cooperation for Fiji and the Commonwealth. Fiji hosted the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in 2019, for the first time. Prince Harry expressed his appreciation for the major contributions made by Fijians in the British Army, many of whom he served alongside during his own military service, including a deployment in Afghanistan. His Royal Highness congratulated Fiji for winning the Gold medal in Rugby Sevens at the 2016 Olympic Games. He said he was a keen follower of Fijian rugby and passionate about watching Fiji play.

Prince Harry also reiterated Britain's support for Fiji's efforts to rebuild post TC Winston, and Fiji for its efforts in environmental sustainability and food security.

In recent years, we have seen how UK is using the Commonwealth and by extension the Royal family to deepen its engagement globally, especially in Commonwealth countries. This approach has led to the establishment of more UK embassies globally including the Pacific. In Fiji, they have expanded its office in Suva both in terms of staff, areas of cooperation and also funding support. The visit by the Duke of Sussex is a diplomatic reassurance or confirmation of UK's interest and commitment in Fiji and the region towards political and economic relations.

- **Presentation of Credentials to African Union by Fiji's Permanent Representative to the African Union, Ambassador Brigadier-General (ret'd) Mosese Tikoitoga to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on the 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2018.**

The African Union remains a Strategic engagement partner for Fiji. Previously, the Fiji Mission in Addis Ababa was accredited to the AU. Our engagement with the AU is mostly at the multilateral level, as they form a key negotiating group at the UN General Assembly.

The African Union is one of the biggest political bloc in the world. In any multilateral fora, Africa is very influential and they move consensus. For Fiji to be able to attain and maintain its global leadership status, it needs the support of its allies in Africa and the African bloc. Fiji's achievements as President of the G77, President of the UN General Assembly, membership and President of the UN Human Rights Council and President of COP 23 was only possible with the support of developing countries (G77) in which the African bloc holds the majority vote.

This fulfilled a long-standing desire to ensure Fiji's footprint is visible on the African continent. This milestone also underscored the importance of Africa to Fiji and the international community at large.

- **Hon. PM Bainimarama’s visit to Beijing, PRC**

The inauguration of the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) from 14 – 15 May, 2017 was held under the theme of “Belt and Road: Cooperation for Common Prosperity”, with the aim of discussing avenues to boost and build cooperation platforms. He was accompanied by the Minister for Trade and Senior Officials.

The Forum was conducted, in accordance with the key strategic outcomes of the Belt Road Initiative, expanding consensus on how to promote international cooperation; emphasising practical cooperation in key strategic areas including policy coordination, developing infrastructure, promoting trade, strengthening financial integration, promoting people-to-people exchanges and setting a vision for long-term cooperation.

- **Bilateral Discussions:**

The Honourable Prime Minister met with several world leaders on the margins of the BRF. These included President Joko Widodo of Indonesia, President Vladimir Putin of Russia and Madam Christie Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund.

At the conclusion of the BRF, the Honourable Prime Minister met with the President of the World Bank, the President of the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank, the Chairman of the Bank of China, Chairman of China Railway Group, and the Chairman of the China Poly Group.

The Honourable Prime Minister also held bilateral discussions with Premier Li Keqiang and President Xi Jinping. The issues raised included the COP 23 presidency and the Sugar industry. China has responded positively to Fiji’s issues, stating their support for Fiji’s COP 23 presidency, and urging that our relevant officials communicate further on the issues raised at the Meetings.

Fiji and China signed three (3) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the following areas:

- ❖ Economic and Technical Cooperation – This Grant by China, provides a total of RMB Yuan 300 million to Fiji. This is equivalent to F\$91m.
- ❖ Partial Debt Exemption – China agrees to exempt Fiji’s re-payment obligations under previous loans amounting to RMB 40m equivalent to.
- ❖ Letter of Exchange on the 200 vehicles – By mutual agreement, China is providing Fiji with 200 vehicles, which consist of 20 cargo vans, 30 ambulances, 50 Police cars, 50 School Buses and 50 mini buses.

Fiji and China are cooperating on numerous bilateral initiatives based on bilateral cooperation and Agreements. These areas include agriculture, culture, education, energy, infrastructure, sports, and trade amongst other sectorial areas of cooperation.

However, Fiji has a wide range of new opportunities for cooperation that are accessible through the Belt Road initiative.

- **Climate Change**

In response to request formalised to President Putin by Hon. PM in the margin of the BRF, the Russian Federation donated USD800, 000 to Fiji's COP23 Presidency.

- **Hon. PM Bainimarama's visit to Astana, Kazakhstan** was at the invitation of the Prime Minister Hon. Bakytzhan Sagintayev during the Astana Expo of 2017.

Fiji and Kazakhstan highly appreciate each other's achievements and support the aspirations of both countries to move to a new level of political and economic development; vital to note that both countries see each other as reliable partners, a source of profitable opportunities and jointly work to achieve even greater results. It is this approach that will give rise to synergy as the outcomes of the bilaterals also indicated that both countries maintain full mutual understanding and respect, largely adhere to similar approaches and share positions on issues on the international and regional agendas.

Fiji and Kazakhstan are willing to further consolidate the close relationship between the two nations and the two peoples, and usher in a brighter future of the development of both countries. The two sides agreed to continue to strengthen cooperation in such fields as industrial capacity, trade, agriculture and infrastructure, and continuously improve connectivity through the tourism sector; the Astana Travels has been designated to entice tourists to Kazakhstan.

Joint efforts should also be made to foster new growth areas for cooperation in green energy with the focus of the Astana Expo as "Future Energy" where both countries can work together to achieve qualitative changes in the energy sector, primarily for the development of alternative sources of energy and new ways of transportation. Finding sustainable energy supplies is a critical and growing global concern. A grant of US\$100,000 was given by the Government of Kazakhstan to the Fijian Government to undertake research on Future Energy that was in line with the Fijian Government's priorities to promote sustainable energy, reduce carbon emissions and achieve the intended targets under the Paris Agreement.

Continued cooperation before common challenges by the two countries with each supporting the other in the multilateral forum: Fiji supporting Kazakhstan's bid to be a non-permanent member of the UNSC in 2017, and Kazakhstan supporting Fiji's bid to UNGA-71 Presidency; this also indicates the close cooperation in international and regional affairs which the two countries share to promote together peace, stability and prosperity in the world; Kazakhstan's support to Fiji's upcoming COP23 Presidency and Oceans Summit, New York was also acknowledged.

Kazakhstan has every opportunity to become a major supplier of organic food and as such has expressed interest in cooperating with the experts from the Agriculture Sector to enable companies from Fiji to export tropical fruits to Kazakhstan and vice versa.

- **Hon. PM Bainimarama's visit to Tokyo, Japan** on the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Japan and Pacific Leaders Meeting (PALM 8) on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

It was an opportunity for the Hon. Prime Minister to meet face to face with the Prime Minister of Japan and other Heads of Governments of the Pacific Island Countries to strengthen bilateral relations and advance the socio-economic development of Fiji.

Fiji attends the PALM Summit Leaders meeting every 3 years. In the 3 year period the following socio-economic development assistance has been provided to Fiji:

- i. \$100 Million for Stand-By Loan for Disaster Risk and Rehabilitation
  - ii. \$200 Million Loan for Emergency COVID-19 Response
  - iii. \$10 Million grant for the procurement of medical equipment for the Health sector
  - iv. \$17 Million worth of assistance for the procurement of Early Tsunami Warning System, Ice Plant and Dredger.
  - v. \$5 Million worth of assistance in the supply of maritime search and rescue equipment for the Fiji Police Force.
- **H.E. The President Major General (Ret'd) Jioji Konusi Konrote visited Australia to attend the Opening Ceremony of the Commonwealth Games from 4<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018 on the Gold Coast.**

H.E. met with Australian dignitaries and strengthened ties with Australia and members of the Commonwealth and a rare opportunity to meet with most Commonwealth Leaders during the margins of the Games and advocate on critical issues such as Climate Change.

- **Official Visit by the Hon Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea Hon. Peter O'Neill from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> June 2018.**

Cooperation and leadership between Fiji and PNG is vital to advancing the interests and concerns of the South Pacific as a whole. The visit by the Prime Minister of PNG had been a significant step in the warming of relations between the two countries. Relations between Fiji and PNG have gone through testing times over the years. In 2013, Hon. Prime Minister made his first state visit to PNG during which he expressed appreciation and affirmed to the future of the Fiji-PNG relations remaining solid and promising. Furthermore as the two of the larger Pacific Island countries, Fiji and PNG have an essential role in providing leadership and solidarity on the region's essential concerns, and enhancing the region's cooperative architecture. Fiji's relation with PNG is not only

bilateral and regional but also sub-regional through the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) given that PNG is currently chair of MSG.

During this visit Fiji and PNG reaffirmed their commitment to enhance their bilateral relations and take it to greater heights through the following:

- i. Approval for an MSG Observer group to Fiji's General Elections in 2018.
- ii. PNG confirmed its support towards Fiji's candidature for the UNHRC Presidency.
- iii. Confirmation of support from PNG on Fiji's COP 23 presidency.
- iv. PNG confirmed its support for PIDF.
- v. PM O'Neil briefed on their preparation for APEC and confirmation on the participation of the Fiji Police Force under the MSG Police Agreement to provide support to the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary during APEC.
- vi. Finalise negotiation on a Defence Cooperation with PNG.
- vii. Approval for a PNG Trade Office in Fiji.
- viii. PNG's accession to the new Melanesian Free Trade Agreement (MFTA) 3 and Technical Officials final negotiations on trade pathways for new products.
- ix. MSG Skills Migration Scheme and offer our Fiji Volunteer scheme especially retired Nurses and Teachers.
- x. Discussion on offer for the PNG Chancery at the MSG diplomatic sites in Muanikau, Suva.
- xi. PNG to become full member of the USP.

- **Official Visit of the H.R.H Crown Prince Haakon of Norway from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> April 2019.**

*This first-ever visit to Fiji by the Crown Prince is a sign of the soaring partnership between Norway and Fiji. As nations with historic and present ties to oceans and marine resources, Fiji and Norway share a commitment to the protection of our oceans and seas. The visit is anticipated to advance Fiji and Norway's bilateral interests and explore cooperation on issues relating to sustainable development.*

His visit to USP aimed to strengthen co-operations between Pacific Islands to battle mutual challenges on ensuring healthy oceans and fighting climate change.

The effects of climate change are felt in the Southern Hemisphere and in the Northern Hemisphere. Sea levels are rising and cyclones are occurring in the Pacific Islands more frequently than before, more coral reefs are dying. In the North, winters are getting shorter than before and glaciers are getting smaller. The ice in the North is melting which means it leads to the ocean coming up or the ocean rising all over the world.

Norway is a critical partner for Fiji and PSIDS on Oceans. This visit was significant for Fiji as it solidified our on-going cooperation.

Norway-Pacific Oceans-Climate Partnership Science and education partnership between USP and University of Bergen. 24 fully funded PhD scholarships to students from all 12 member nations of the USP, as well as Palau, Federated States of Micronesia and Papua New Guinea.

“This partnership aims to develop world class talent within the PSIDS region. From the platform of a partnership between the best of knowledge, science and technology available at the University of Bergen to great research, analytic and scientific capabilities at the University of the South Pacific; PSIDS Governments look to the emergence of a new world class cohort of Pacific climate and oceans experts”.

Fiji and Norway are 2 of the 14 countries that have established the High Level Panel on Sustainable Oceans Economy. The Panel has outlined its commitments for this last decade leading up to 2030. Five critical areas: ocean wealth, ocean health, ocean equity, ocean knowledge and ocean finance. The Ocean Panel commits to deliver on these actions by 2030 or sooner.

Norway has led the world in the establishment of PROBLU – the first dedicated multilateral financing instrument for the development of sustainable blue economy”.

- **During Fiji’s presidency, effective initiatives such as the Talanoa Dialogue facilitated an inclusive dialogue process that encouraged countries to collectively raise ambition on climate change.**

Collectively raising ambition on climate change - Global climate change has become the collective action problem of our era. In light of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on climate scenarios, UN Climate Change has made it clear that the 1.5 degree scenario cannot be achieved without ‘raising ambition’ at different levels of development through joining forces and building consensus at strategic and operational levels, from international to local communities.

Implementation of the Paris Agreement requires economic and social transformation, based on the best available science. The Paris Agreement works on a 5- year cycle of increasingly ambitious climate action carried out by countries. By 2020, countries submit their plans for climate action known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

In their NDCs, countries communicate actions they will take to reduce their Greenhouse Gas emissions in order to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement. Countries also communicate in the NDCs actions they will take to build resilience to adapt to the impacts of rising temperatures.

Fiji's Talanoa Dialogue is bringing everyone together to a common space and urging into action a Grand Coalition of nations, regions, cities and towns, civil society, labour, the private sector, women and youth and communities of all kinds to work together.

Climate change action needs to be massively increased to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. More and more countries, regions, cities and companies are establishing carbon neutrality targets. Zero-carbon solutions are becoming competitive across economic sectors representing 25% of emissions. This trend is most noticeable in the power and transport sectors and has created many new business opportunities for early movers. By 2030, zero-carbon solutions could be competitive in sectors representing over 70% of global emissions.

#### **Collectively raising ambition as a region -**

- i. Fiji has provided leadership amongst the Pacific SIDS through the CAPP process. Fiji has hosted the Climate Action Pacific Partnership (CAPP) Conference prior to the COP 23 in 2017 and thereafter in 2018, 2019. This is an avenue to raise ambition within the Pacific SIDS group.
- ii. Through the NDC Regional Hub, there is a support mechanism for the implementation of NDCs in the Pacific. The Regional Pacific NDC Hub is based in Suva, Fiji, and will provide expertise for developing regional solutions to mitigate global warming and enhance efforts by Pacific islands to adapt to climate change.
- iii. The PSIDS are collectively working together to have a stronger voice at large multilateral platforms. There are initiatives that are undertaken with the assistance of the relevant donor partners e.g. Norway – PSIDS partnership, Ireland – PSIDS scholarship, Commonwealth Blue Charter (Action group on Plastics), Oceans-Pathway Dialogue, etc.

- **Fiji's membership of the Human Rights Council**

*The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 States responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe. Fiji became the first Pacific Island Developing State (PSIDS) to not only become a member of the Human Rights Council (HRC), the world's foremost body in protecting and promoting human right, but also secured the HRC Vice Presidency on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2018.*

Fiji assumed the seat on the back of a proud 40-year legacy of UN Peacekeeping, the ratification of seven of the core human rights conventions and major positions of global leadership.

These include the presidency of COP23, the co-host of the first ever UN Conference on Oceans, Chair of the G77 Plus China, president of the UN General Assembly and, most recently, the chair of the World Bank Small States Forum.

During the tenure of membership for the term 2019 – 2021, Fiji resolved to voice human rights priorities on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the context of challenges unique to the region.

### **Treaties**

Fiji ratified, signed and acceded to the following treaties and conventions:

- i. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities(CRPD) 7/6/2017;
- ii. United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods 7/6/2017;
- iii. United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts 7/6/2017;
- iv. United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 19/09/2017;
- v. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 19/9/2017;
- vi. Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime 19/09/2017;
- vii. Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 19/09/2017;
- viii. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons 20/09/2017;
- ix. Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol 19/9/2017;
- x. Amendment of the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property 01/05/2017; and;
- xi. Protocol of Amendment to insert the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement into Annex of the WTO Agreement 01/05/2017.

### **Finance**

- The OAG has noted an unreconciled variance of \$3,725,421 exists between the FMIS general ledger balance of \$7,208,398 and the accumulated bank reconciliation balance of \$3,482,977.
- The Overseas Mission's bank accounts facilitated the payment for expenditures of the Mission and record the transfer of funds from Government's Consolidated Fund.
- The variance identified in the Overseas Mission's bank have been recurring for many years and continuing efforts has been undertaken by the Ministry to resolve the matter.
- This has been a longstanding unresolved audit issue for the Ministry.

- The Ministry in its effort to address the matter has introduced a new posting method which has partially addressed these variances from 2017 onwards. The unreconciled variances referred to herein has been accumulated over the years up to 2017.
- The Ministry has also made its submission to the Ministry of Economy (MoE) to make necessary General Ledger adjustments of these variances to address the issue.
- Discussion with MoE together with OAG is on-going in our effort to address the issue.
- An important point worth noting is that the matter is purely systems related and there is no loss of Government funds involved.

## **Challenges**

The following Operational and Foreign Policy challenges were noted for the reporting period:

- i. Shifting priorities, Managing change – on going reforms, Resourcing & staff turnover;
- ii. Geopolitical Shifts;
- iii. Developments in Regional and International Relations;
- iv. Managing Country to Country Relations.

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence has fulfilled its mandate approved by Parliament which was to examine the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the two reporting periods 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. The Committee has conducted its review and formulated the findings with regard to the Ministry's performance. The Committee also took the initiative and opportunity to highlight in its report to Parliament issues that currently challenge the ministry today.

## 2.2 Oral and Written Evidence Received

The Committee received oral and written submissions from stakeholders and the public as listed in *Appendix A*.

### **3.0 Gender Analysis**

The Ministry in this reporting period has aligned its recruitment and appointment of senior staff and Heads of Mission to SDG 5: Gender Equality recruitments in the Constitution and OMRS system and processes. As an Equal Opportunity Employer, MFA has given young women the opportunity in the Ministry and Foreign Service to advance their career and contribute sustainably in nation building whilst concurrently contributing to global peace and prosperity.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

The Committee has conducted its review and formulated the findings with regards to the ministry's performance. The Committee also took the initiative to highlight in its report issues that challenge the ministry today. The alignment of the Operational Plan of the Ministry to the Annual Corporate Plan, highlighting costing and key performance indicators (KPI) were major improvements in the reports.

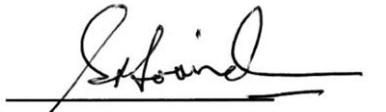
The period 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 was significant to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs because the ministry was the main driver behind the successful completion of the COP 23 Presidency. Further support to the COP 23 Presidency was provided by other government departments and development partners.

In conclusion the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has played an essential and critical role in putting Fiji at centre stage of the global effort to address issues of climate change.

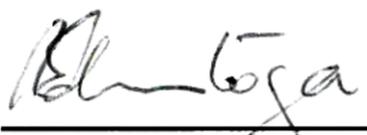
The Committee commends the report to Parliament.

## 5.0 Members' Signature

  
.....  
**Hon. Alexander O'Connor**  
**Chairperson**

  
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**Hon. Dr. Salik Govind**  
**Deputy Chairperson**

  
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**Hon. Pio Tikoduadua**  
**Member**

  
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**Hon. Selai Adimaitoga**  
**Member**

  
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**Hon. Adi Litia Qionibaravi**  
**Member**

## 6.0 Appendix A

All other written and transcribed evidences gathered during the public submissions and public consultations will be made accessible on the Parliament website on: <http://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-foreign-affairs-and-defence/>

<b>No</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Agency/Organisation</b>	<b>Written Evidence</b>	<b>Oral Evidence (Online MS Teams submission)</b>
1.	5/7/21	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	✓	✓