Chair,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

The covid19 pandemic has triggered a global crisis leading to the deepest global recession since the Second World War. This has not only placed enormous fiscal distress on the developing countries but has reversed decades of development progress as well. This setback is quite evident within the Asia Pacific region, and in particular, Pacific Small Island Developing States including Fiji.

Economic recovery, for Fiji and the Pacific will be prolonged as new variants of the virus emerges and vaccines become a highly sought-after commodity. Given the global restrictions on movement, it is anticipated that for the tourism and the service sector - full recovery is years away. Thus, we will require highly concessional financing to
maintain social protection; and protect our vulnerable to prevent further backsliding on our development agenda.

Global supply chains were halted by the pandemic, and further exacerbate the shortage of foreign exchange and high procurement costs of foreign medical supplies and other commercial goods. This shortage of goods and the subsequent high cost of living is acutely felt in the Pacific. Our health systems deal with health challenges arising from climate induced natural disasters and are stretched to capacity - it is these same health systems that are also responding to the covid19 pandemic.

Although Fiji and the Pacific has taken proactive national responses to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and prevent community transmission, our global interconnectedness means that we are not immune to exposure to the pandemic. Vaccine equity is key to reopening our economies and eventual path to recovery.

The ongoing climate crisis is wreaking havoc and devastation on our infrastructure connectivity. Road networks, jetties and wharves that connect our islands, have been damaged from increased rains and more frequent flooding associated with the rapid onset of climate change. This is a crisis within a crisis, as Pacific states must ensure that
housing infrastructure including homes, health and schools are strengthened to be able to withstand stronger category five winds.

Chair,

Recovery – and not just recovery but a sustainable one, is one in which we must ensure progress, particularly in this last decade of sustainable development. Discussions at the 8th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (8APFSD) convened last month has shown that the region is very much at risk of not fully realizing the 2030 Agenda. This must change, as we resolve to work together to recover sustainably as a region, leaving no one behind.

It is important to have a forward leaning look on an inclusive and broad based economy; building on sustainable blue and green economic models; using nature based technologies and solutions and accelerating the move to net zero carbon emissions. The path to net zero should be a job creating one.

Hope prevails, that with this crisis, a new and stronger frontier of multilateralism and international cooperation will be forged ensuring that we all emerge from this crises stronger and better prepared, and most importantly – together, with no one left behind.

I thank you Chair