Fiji National Statement

Seventh Asia and Pacific Population Conference

Bangkok, Thailand

(3 Minutes)

Review of progress made towards the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, as well as of the PoA of the ICPD (International Conference on Population Development)

Chair, Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates

(Only if Cook Islands has already delivered regional statement) Chair, Fiji aligns itself with the statement delivered by Cook Islands earlier for the Pacific Island countries and territories.

The 2050 Blue Strategy for the Pacific calls for the region to move beyond business as usual by strengthening inclusion and leave no one behind for inclusive participation, equal access to rights & justice and resources.

Climate change is the Pacific’s single greatest threat to our livelihoods, security, social development and wellbeing. In addition to the devastating impacts of COVID-19 which we are still recovering from, our island communities stand on the front line battling the impact of climate change, every day.
The Pacific community is resilient in nature; however, the enormity of this challenge threatens our security and livelihoods, and the traditional social norms and systems that bind us.

Chair. for Fiji, implementing the Programme of Action is a priority, to ensure that our development is inclusive and ‘people-centred’.

It is on this principle that Fiji is developing its National Population Policy; one that is people-centred, rights based, multi-sectoral and forward looking.

This work is carried out concurrently with the review of social policies and Social Assistance Programs and legislations – these documents and policies need to be more relevant to reflect current trends and needs in society. We continue to suffer from diseconomies of scale in production and exchange of goods and services, remoteness from export markets, high vulnerability to external market shocks and increasing susceptibility to natural disasters and climate change.

Fiji’s National Employment Policy of 2018 was launched to especially cater for the nation’s young growing labour force; which coincided with the establishment of the National Coordinating Body for Poverty Alleviation.

Furthermore, Fiji places great importance on collaborating more with the private sector, CSOs, development partners and engages consistently with the Pacific Disability Forum to advance the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

We recognize that in times of crisis, the burden often falls disproportionately on women and people with disabilities. We are fortunate that our UN partners are focusing on their inclusion, aiming not
only to protect their livelihoods but also to promote gender equality and social inclusion.

**ESSENCE OF DATA**

*Chair,* essentially data and information carry powerful and convincing justifications to make real change in the lives of every Fijian.

We need to bring data into evidence-based policy making and development planning. Good administrative records and vital statistics will produce data that can be analysed and used to formulate policies and track the success of development initiatives. Furthermore, access to relevant socio-demographic information at decentralized levels, takes us a step closer to impacting the lives of those in the communities and far to reach areas.

Technology for geo-referenced information systems and planning human resources for managing these data systems and the understanding of population dynamics are determinants of the scale, evolution, and spatial distribution of the demand for social services and humanitarian response efforts.

Fiji’s 2013 Constitution stipulate rights to education, access to health care, housing and sanitation, reasonable access to transportation, food security and safe water, and social security schemes. It also articulates specific rights to persons with disabilities and to all children. It provides for greater civil and political rights to youths by reducing the voting age from 21 to 18 years; ensuring they have a say in Fiji’s political life. Furthermore, it outlaws any form of discrimination based on sex and gender.
Fiji’s Coalition Government came into power in December 2022 and since then has been committed to ensuring that Fijians are provided with all the necessary tools to combat Climate Change and natural disasters, easily access education, health care and ensure that the rights of all individuals despite their sex, race and religion are protected.

Fiji is committed to regional solidarity because we need a united Pacific to address new challenges in the region such as geo strategic competition, climate change and solutions to our unique challenges of smallness, geographical distance from major markets and narrow economic base.

More than ever, the value of national population policies is imminent to tailor strategic policy responses to these persistent and emerging population & development challenges.

*Chair,* as we move forward, we call upon global leaders, development partners and donors - let us work together to create economic conditions in which everyone has a chance to thrive and realize their potential. Fiji is proud to be a part of this noble mission, and we look forward to the positive change that lies ahead.

I thank you Chair.