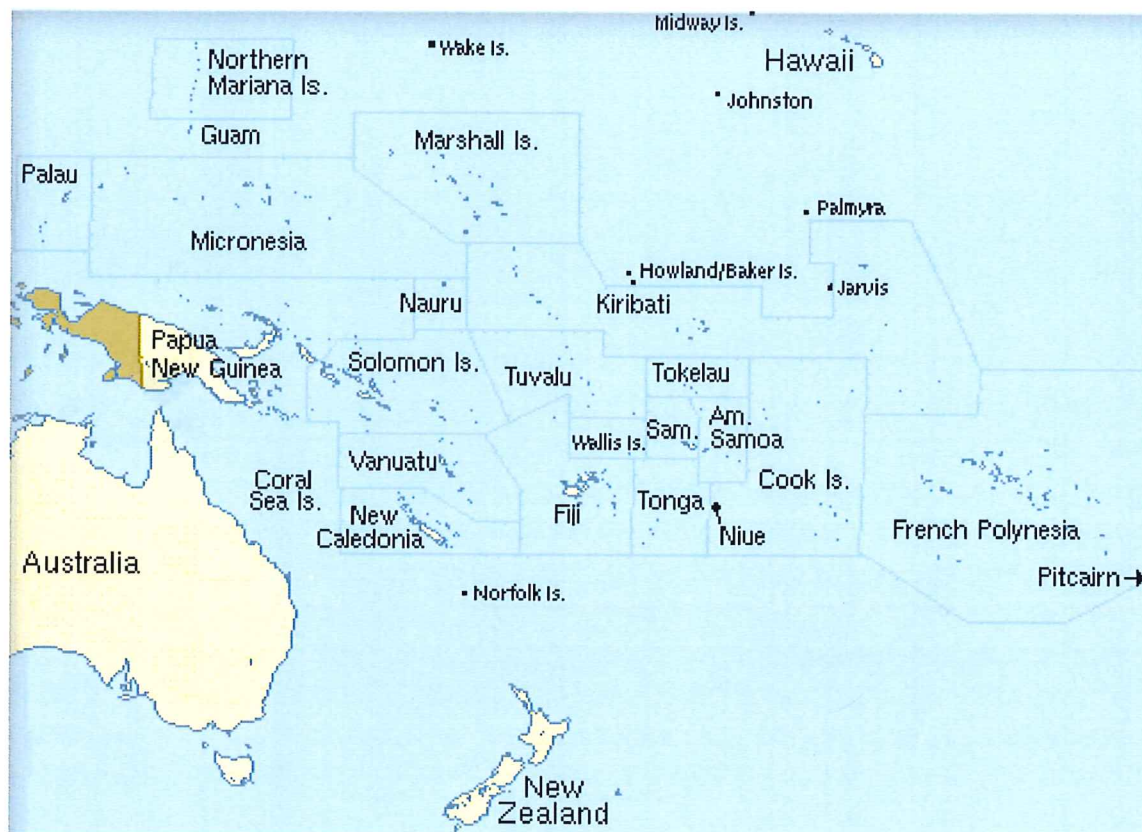


**Statement by High Commissioner Mr. Kolinio Takali at the UN
South-South Cooperation Day, Bangkok, 12 September 2018**

**Defining Fiji's Role in South-South (and Triangular) Cooperation amongst
PSIDS: strengthening Fiji's Paradigm in Pacific Diplomacy**



Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I want to congratulate the Government of Thailand, ESCAP and the United Nations South-South Cooperation Office for organising today's South-South Cooperation (SSC) day for our region. It is timely as prepare for the 40th anniversary of BAPA: we take stock of the achievements since 1978 and look ahead to how SSC can help achieve our global mandate of "Leaving No One Behind" under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, I want to share Fiji's experience with SSC and how we are using it as a development tool to prosper our Pacific neighbours.

Background

2. Fiji has benefitted from development aid and progressed in leaps and bounds since independence in 1970 that she now is in a better position to share the benefits of her progress with developing island countries of the Pacific region. A cornerstone of Fiji's Pacific Strategy is the need to optimise its strategic position as the hub of the Pacific to assist, where appropriate, her Pacific Island neighbours through South-South Cooperation. In this regard, Fiji continues to be well-placed as the centre of connectivity for the Pacific.

Alternative Diplomacy

3. When Fiji was suspended from the PIFS in 2009, it capitalized on her detachment from traditional friends to venture into new turf through her 'Look and Engage North' Policy; strengthening ties with the 'BRICS' countries; and new accreditations to ASEAN, NAM and other international networks where there are no political conditionality's, shared values in sovereign equality of states and there is mutual respect for domestic jurisdiction within such states.

Engaging the Pacific: 2010-2012

4. Fiji now views the Pacific as distinctly different from what has gradually but eventually distorted the world's understanding of the voice of the PSIDS as sovereign nations whose views should not be overwritten by external lenses unwilling to align to Pacific aspirations and self-determined priorities.

5. Fiji hosted meetings since 2010 in her commitment to remain productively engaged in the Pacific. Fiji fully contributes to development initiatives and aspirations through targeted Development Cooperation that is customized to the felt and expressed needs of her neighbouring Pacific **Small Island Developing States (PSIDS)**.

2013 – Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF)

6. The Pacific Island Development Forum was established in 2013 providing a unique platform that brings together leaders from the public, private and civil society to address regional development challenges through mutually beneficial innovative partnerships.

South-South Dialogue and Cooperation

7. Under the South-South development philosophy Fiji's contribution over the past six years to the Pacific spirit of "collective self-reliance as an engine of growth". Under the theme of Strengthening Partnerships amongst PSIDS, Fiji's focus is in priority areas for SIDS in all the Oceanic Regions of the world such as the Caribbean, Atlantic, Indian, Mediterranean and the South China Seas.

Building a Resilient Pacific Community

8. Any specificity for individual PSIDS under the standard MOUs are facilitated under separate Memorandum of Agreements (MOA) e.g. Fiji Volunteer Scheme and other emerging modes of Technical Assistance on Human Resources Capacity Building towards building a resilient Pacific Community.

Fiji as Development Partner (Technical Assistance)

9. Since 2010, Fiji has signed MOUs with seven PSIDS, namely Kiribati, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Nauru, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Vanuatu, for three years with options to extend. These MOUs highlight the replicability of development experiences amongst PSIDS in solidarity for self-reliance rather than the archaic notion of aid.

10. Additionally, Fiji has entered in Agreements with 6 PSIDS for the provision of volunteers from Fiji to assist in technical and capacity developments. The countries include Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Republic of Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Fiji's vehicle to drive its focus on being the Hub of the Pacific – pursuing South-South cooperation through the PIDF

11. Fiji's current drive and focus in the Pacific Ocean scape – Regional Cooperation through PIDF as the focal point in the region for the UN Office for South-South Cooperation. The first platform in the Pacific focusing specifically on green economies/sustainable development in the series of Rio+20 Global Agenda on Sustainable Development. Inclusion of the private sector and civil society in the PIDF dialogue guarantees explicit commitment and civic ownership to green economic growth in PSIDS.

12. Strengthening **Pacific Partnerships for Development** - The “perfect fit” of Fiji's skills and technologies in these PSIDS arises from a number of reasons including the lower costs and greater appropriateness of skills and expertise available in Fiji compared to neighbouring locations e.g. a capacity building program for PSIDS officials conducted in Suva or Nadi would be far more cost effective than if conducted in Tokyo, Sydney or Auckland.

13. **South-South and Triangular Cooperation** - Newer modes of partnership where existing Development Partners of PSIDS become the Triangular/Trilateral Partner to initial Bilateral Partnerships between Fiji and the smaller PSIDS, particularly in the areas of Human Resources and Institutional Capacity-building in

the sectors of Agriculture, Fisheries and Tourism, these being the three sectors any PSIDS, that are capable of producing tradable, exportable commodities, as well as the enabling sectors of transport (both sea and air) and energy.

Pacific Regional Frameworks for PSIDS Triangular Cooperation

14. The following are in place:-

- (i) Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) – Fiji, PNG, Solomon Is, Vanuatu, and 2 observers Timor Leste and Kanaks of New Caledonia
- (ii) Pacific Plan – New Pacific Framework for Regionalism - PIFS driven – possibility of ANZ being Triangular Partners to PSIDS Sth-Sth Partnerships
- (iii) PIANGO – Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organizations cascading to National levels (TANGO, KANGO)
- (iv) UNDP Regional Programme for Asia and the Pacific: 2014-2017 (since A-P became an official grouping at the UN in 2012) – successor arrangement
- (v) UN Development Assistance Framework for the Pacific : 2013 – 2017 – successor arrangement

Regional Partners for PSIDS Triangular Cooperation

15. Apart from the Established Development Partners in the Pacific, there is the Council for Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP Agencies):

- 1. Pacific Islands Development Forum - Suva
- 2. Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) – Honiara
- 3. Pacific Islands Development Programme (PIDP) – Honolulu
- 4. Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) – Noumea
(Now includes SOPAC – Geosciences Commission of the Pacific and SPBEA – South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment)

5. Secretariat of the Regional Environmental Programme – Apia
6. South Pacific Travel/Tourism – Suva
7. University of the South Pacific – Suva
8. Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat – Suva
9. Pacific Power Association – Suva
10. Pacific Island Telecommunications Association – Suva

Fiji – PSIDS Development Cooperation

16. Since 2010, Fiji has signed MOUs on Development Cooperation with seven PSIDS, namely Kiribati, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Nauru, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Vanuatu, for three years with options to extend. These MOUs highlight the replicability of development experiences amongst PSIDS in solidarity for self-reliance rather than the archaic notion of aid. The 9 areas of development cooperation under the MOUs are:

- Bilateral Trade and Investments;
- Education, Youth and Human Resources Development;
- Labour Mobility;
- Immigration;
- Commerce, Retail and Taxation;
- Fisheries Cooperation;
- Air and Sea Transportation;
- Health and Pharmaceuticals; and
- Climate Change, Environment, Security and Energy.

17. The MOU's cascade down to Memorandum of Agreements focusing on the specific area of development cooperation that Fiji and the PIC is engaging on. So far, Fiji has entered in Agreements with 6 PSIDS for the provision of volunteers from Fiji to assist in technical and capacity developments. The countries include Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Republic of Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Some Development Cooperation Aspects

18. Kiribati, RMI, Nauru and Tuvalu the most active in the implementation of the MOUs.

19. Biggest form of assistance to PICs is Education with the international fees concessions granted to students attending FNU The PIC students pay 50% of the international rate. Full fees are 4 times the rate for locals.

20. Trade is proceeding under the ambit of the Office of the Prime Minister. Currently agricultural commodities. This service may be extended to Kiribati and ports in the North Pacific states.

21. Triangular cooperation explored to facilitate DC between Fiji and PSIDS - Japan, Indonesia, India, China, Thailand.

22. An agreement has been signed with Thailand, under the Thailand/Fiji MOU on Technical Cooperation, for a Sufficiency Economy Philosophy Project to be implemented in Fiji.

23. Air transport issues are pending with Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands on Fiji Airways Services.

24. Fiji diplomats overseas assist the PICs citizens that do not have missions in that particular country, most recent example being the repatriation of the body of a Kiribati national who passed away in Peoples Republic of China and also our diplomats at the UN facilitate payment of allowances to Kiribati students in Cuba.

Key Challenges and Way Forward

Financing

25. The undeniable challenge in South-South cooperation is financing. Like all challenges, however, it is also the greatest opportunity for exploring Triangular

Cooperation with Developed Partners – Japan (PALM 7 2015) India(Jaipur Dialogue 2015) China (PM's Visit to China 2015) President SBY visit to Fiji 2013) Indonesia.

Ownership by PSIDS

26. Needs must be Felt and Expressed by the PSIDS themselves and not perceived and assessed by Fiji or any other Development Partner.

Alignment to PSIDS Priorities

27. Priorities need to be determined by the Pacific people themselves, as at the end of the day, it is they that shall be held accountable for the impact of any development efforts that are undertaken.

Regional vs National Efforts

28. Critical choices between which efforts can be more cost-effective if they are driven at the regional level, in a whole-of-Pacific -region approach, or at a national level, in a whole-of-country approach.

29. Successful implementation, however, will still depend on individual country ownership and competence at both national and local levels. Acknowledging this reality will induce greater collaboration between national governments, their private sectors and civil societies. In this way, a major part of corporate and social accountability will be met, on the one hand, while on the other hand, the people are being empowered to take true ownership of all development outcomes.

Think Globally/Strategize Regionally/ACT Locally

Globally – To align to the visible global agendas such as the MDGs, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for SIDS, S.A.M.O.A Pathway.

Regional - Agendas such the Pacific Plan (Framework for Pacific Regionalism) all of which provide broader frameworks that extend beyond restrictive national “borders”, and within which we can pursue focused, yet boundless development outcomes for our people.

Locally - As PSIDS, as Governments, Private Sectors and Civil Societies (academia, researchers, scientists as well as the Churches, the Mosques and the Temples) converge on solutions towards sustaining livelihoods of Pacific communities, we must be mindful of “Acting Locally – yet Thinking Globally”.

I thank you.