Distinguished Delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Greetings/Bula Vinaka.

Before I begin, I would like to express the solidarity, on behalf of the Government of Fiji, to the people and governments of Samoa, Australia and Japan. We are deeply saddened by the loss of lives and devastation caused by the measles epidemic in Samoa, Australian bush fires and Typhoon Hagibis in Japan. Our thoughts go out to the victims’ families and loved ones.

It is indeed an honor to deliver the country statement on behalf of the Fijian Government on our progress in implementing the Beijing
Declaring the most comprehensive policy agenda for the empowerment of women and girls.

- In the years following the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Fijian women and girls pressed this agenda forward, leading local, regional and global movements on issues ranging from ending violence against women and girls, economic empowerment and climate justice to sexual and reproductive health rights.

- The achievements of the last 25 years have been indeed significant for Fiji – in particular on the following areas: education, maternal mortality, access to health services, women’s representation in leadership positions, increased public awareness and recognition of women’s rights issues as well as progressive legislative frameworks, mechanisms and initiatives.

- These efforts have resulted in a shift of Fiji’s ranking on the World Economic Forum’s global gender gap from 2015, moving up 15 places from 121 to 106 out of 187 countries in 2018.

- Distinguished delegates, I am proud to report that enrolment rates in primary schools in Fiji exceed 109% female completion with no significant gender gap. Secondary schools have 92% female completion rate to 73% male. Female students comprise 57% of graduates in tertiary institutions compared to 43% male students.

- Maternal mortality rate stands at 70/100,000 live births in Fiji with 99.6% of births delivered by skilled birth attendants.

- Women’s representation in parliament in Fiji increased from 16% to 20% following the 2018 election, including 3 ministers and 2 assistant
ministers, appointed to the cabinet. Women are comprised of 29% leadership positions in the Civil Service; 24% of Permanent Secretary Positions and 30% of diplomatic posts.

- Distinguished delegates, the Government of Fiji is committed to ensuring that laws, policies and programs are designed to reduce poverty and ensure women’s economic empowerment.
- Our Social Protection Programs have strengthened significantly to ensure “No one is left behind”.
- I am pleased to report that our 2018 Employment Relations Act reaffirms and recognizes the value of unpaid care and parental leave by including provisions to recognize paternity leave, family leave as well as an increase in maternity leave duration.
- The 2018 Succession, Probate and Administration Act adopted to guarantee inheritance rights to all women and men living in de facto relationships.
- Distinguished delegates, Fiji has made significant progress to make municipal markets more safe, accessible and inclusive. Eighty percent of the market vendors in Fiji are women and therefore marketplaces offer important venues to effect women’s social and economic empowerment.
- The Government of Fiji recognizes the important contribution of rural women artisans across handicraft value chains and in our economy. Therefore, the National Women’s Expo was launched in 2014 to celebrate and strengthen economic empowerment of Fijian rural women.
Distinguished delegates, Fiji’s 20-year National Development Plan 2017-2036 and the National Gender Policy outline our firm commitment to eliminating violence against women and girls. The National Gender-Based Violence Service Delivery Protocol (SDP), launched in 2018 in collaboration with non-government organizations. SDP is a multi-sectoral response to ensure that appropriate and timely and quality services are provided to the survivors of gender based violence.

I am delighted to report that the Government of Fiji has also invested in a 24 hour Domestic Violence toll free line, a Child Helpline and a Domestic Violence Support Fund to ensure and ease access to help in a domestic violence situation.

Distinguished delegates, while the progress since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is outstanding, the Government of Fiji acknowledges that challenges still remain to achieve the goal of gender equality and women and girls’ empowerment. Those include: high prevalence rate of violence against women and girls, limited participation of women in formal economy, adolescents’ limited access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information and services, high incidents/mortality rate of cervical and breast cancers, limited institutional capacity, knowledge and resources on gender transformative programming and budgeting as well as availability of sex-disaggregated data and analysis.
o These challenges are further intensified by the effect of climate crisis and regular incidence of natural disasters that have a very real impact on our Island nation, particularly on Fijian women and girls.

o Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, Fiji is firmly committed and driven to create a fair and inclusive society that protects and promotes the rights of women and girls in all aspects. This will be realized through the implementation of our National Gender Policy in close partnership with civil society, women’s rights and faith-based organizations and all relevant stakeholders, with emphasis on comprehensive gender transformative institutional capacity development and improvement on availability and access to quality sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis. In addition, Fiji will continue its efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls with the development, adoption and implementation of a whole of government/inclusive National Prevention Action Plan to stop violence against women and girls before it starts.

o Distinguished delegates, in conclusion, for Fiji, the Beijing+ 25 is not ‘business as usual’. We anticipate that it shall give us clear direction on where our efforts must and will focus in order to deal, once and for all, with this greatest human rights violation, gender inequality. The Fijian Government will continue and look forward to working with regional partners and women’s rights, civil society and faith-based organizations towards the realization of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Thank You!