



STATEMENT BY MR. ESALA NAYASI
PERMANENT MISSION OF FIJI TO THE UNITED NATIONS
AGENDA 56: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
14th October 2008

Mr. Chairman,

Let me first congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your election. My delegation assures you of our confidence and support in your leadership of this Committee in its deliberations during this 63rd Session. We also take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for all the reports submitted to the Committee under this agenda item.

We are currently living in a time that many consider to be one of the most uncertain periods of the global economy since the Great Depression. The financial, food and energy crises and the adverse impacts of climate change are expected to substantially reduce national incomes, hinder economic development, raise unemployment and poverty and place enormous pressure on the social infrastructure, at the heart of which is the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. This uncertainty brings with it barriers that would stand in our way in the achievement of *inter alia* the Third Goal of the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of Action.

It is for this reason that it is incumbent upon all of us, now more than ever, to gather our strength through effective multilateralism and take a positive action to improve the capacities of women, ensure equal access to resources and opportunities and minimize their vulnerabilities and exposure to violence and conflict.

Mr. Chairman,

We are of the view that it is important to include a gender dimension to the crises that we currently face. At a national level, all national policies need to be conscious of their social implications in particular on the most vulnerable including women. It is important to emphasize that economic growth and poverty eradication cannot be pursued successfully unless there is sufficient emphasis on the situation of women. Like most developing countries, Fiji recognizes that even though it has achieved considerable progress in building the capacities and capabilities of women through fair and sound

government policies over the years, there is still a lot to be done in ensuring gender equality in all areas of our economy.

In Fiji, the Government machinery for Women has recently been merged with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. We believe that this merger will bring about the much needed integration of gender equality perspectives in all spheres of health, development and management. Furthermore, it also means that the Department of Women will have more access to additional resources and the wider network of health and related infrastructure and processes available as a platform for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Mr. Chairman,

The pivotal role women play in the family, community and nation building cannot be overemphasized. Bearing this in mind, the Government of Fiji has a policy on women contained in the 'Women's Plan of Action' which provides for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in all processes of Government. Some interesting developments in our policies which have been developed with the assistance of donor institutions include gender budgeting strategy in the national budget process and also the gender audit in the major Ministries of the Government.

Although we have included in our programmes, we still find it a great challenge to implement the agenda for gender equality and the empowerment of women for various reasons. Like many other developing countries, Fiji, needs assistance to effectively address the challenges that we currently face in advancing the issues of this agenda item. Consequently, my delegation urges the UN machinery, Funding Agencies and Development Partners for their assistance in that regard and also to be more diligent in incorporating gender equality and women's empowerment agenda in all areas of work.

Thank you.