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Chairman of Pacific Islands Forum

Australia
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Kiribati
Federated States of Micronesia
Marshall Islands
Nauru
New Zealand

Palau
Papua New Guinea
Samoa
Solomon Islands
Tonga
Tuvalu
Vanuatu



Pacific Islands Forum

United Nations Member States

Pacific Islands Forum Group

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. AMRAIYA NAIDU,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI TO THE UNITED NATIONS
AND CHAIRMAN OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM GROUP
TO THE SECOND COMMITTEE ON ITEM 87:
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
22 OCTOBER 2002, UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum group represented at the United Nations, namely Australia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and my own country, Fiji.

Agenda Item 87 on Sustainable Development is of significant interest to our Group, particularly as the subject covers the components on SIDS, Agenda 21 and WSSD, which in our view are clearly linked and mutually reinforcing. Our Group would therefore use this opportunity to address together a number of relevant items under agenda item 87.

Mr. Chairman,

The WTO Ministerial Meeting in Doha, the High Level Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, and especially the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg are avenues that we have chosen to guide our way to a more sustainable and equitable world. Each of these paths needs to be now merged into a united and coherent roadmap, because each has become intrinsically interrelated components in the quest for balance between economic development, social development and environmental protection.

Our Pacific Regional Submission to the WSSD was a manifesto of our dependence on the environment, and of our stewardship responsibilities. We recognized that the countries of the Pacific share a common responsibility for the stewardship of our islands, the ocean and its resources. The vast Pacific Ocean has supported generations of islanders as a medium for transport and as a source of food, tradition and culture. Our present and future well-being is dependent upon it. Our ecosystems contain high biological diversity - from the most extensive coral reefs in the world, to globally important fisheries, and they may also contain many undiscovered resources of potential use to humankind. Appreciation of this great responsibility we bear for our children and for the rest of the world, has therefore guided us in our dialogue with the international community, and has pressed us to revisit the core of what sustainable development means to us.

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Mr. Chairman,

Through a consultation process that began 2 years ago, our region has established a definition of what Sustainable Development means to us: it is a *‘process of development which ensures that quality of life, and quality of growth are achieved, through good governance, within the limits of acceptable change to these communities, their islands and their large ocean, without comprising the opportunities available to their future generations.’* ”

Quality of Life in this context incorporates healthy communities with access to basic necessities, opportunities for development, resilience to risks, integrity of the ocean and islands, fair access to natural and physical capital for all and preservation of the Pacific identity. **Quality of Growth** is a process that allows for inclusive and equitable development, changes within the limits of nature and society, an empowered population with livelihood opportunities, economic security, environmental integrity, progressive resilience to risks, opportunities of future generations and respect for cultural identity. The concept of **Good Governance**, therefore, refers to a holistic approach to development that is socially appropriate to the Pacific, establishes and continuously develops appropriate institutional frameworks, consistent with the principles of transparency, accountability, law and order, justice and liberty.

In this context, Mr. Chairman, agenda item 87 then takes on a wider significance for us. The key issues for our Group that are subsumed under this broad agenda item were covered in the Phnom Penh Regional Platform on Sustainable Development for Asia and the Pacific (E/CN.17/2002/PC.2/8). These included: oceans, climate change, vulnerability, sustainable energy, conservation and management of natural resources, people s’ health and governance issues, capacity building, tourism, freshwater, ICT, and financial resources.

The Pacific Islands Forum submission to the WSSD process has since materialized these themes into specific priority actions for sustainable development in our region, backed up with a home-grown portfolio of 14 type-II partnership initiatives presented in Johannesburg. Foremost among those was a comprehensive Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy, recently adopted by our leaders, that forms the basis for all ocean governance issues in our region. We would welcome new partners to participate with us in these initiatives.

Following the WSSD, an inter-agency task force was created comprising regional experts from our Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific to begin the work of translating the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation into an appropriate and implementable regional strategy. Ultimately, we hope to bring to fruition a coherent regional plan set within a medium-term development framework. The primary objective of this strategy will be to strengthen national capacities in key sustainable development programme areas, and strengthen the focus of interventions and thereby promote long-term development with an intergenerational equity.

With this notion in mind, Mr. Chairman, the Pacific Islands Forum Group strongly reiterates its commitment to Agenda 21. The Barbados Program of Action is a concrete expression of Agenda 21, and, together with the outcome of the 22nd Special Session of the UNGA, the Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, embodies a number of principles and actions that the international community have agreed to advance the sustainable development of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

We took from Rio a vision to achieve sustainable development that will improve the quality of life for all, present and future. Agenda 21 provided the path for us to work towards that goal, and the Johannesburg Summit certainly came at a critical time in the reinvigoration of that agenda. Our Group was pleased with the outcome of WSSD, particularly the commitments made on Oceans, SIDS and the call for an International Meeting in 2004 to comprehensively review the implementation of the BPOA. However, until the commitments made at the summit are actually met, we are concerned that many fundamental issues will remain unresolved. The poverty of opportunity as expressed by the isolation and vulnerability of Pacific Island Countries continues to be an intractable problem, while environmental problems have intensified.

Overcoming the vulnerability of Pacific islands to the potential effects of natural disasters, environmental damage and global economic shocks is fundamental to the sustainable development of our region. The recent work in the area is indeed indicative of our region's efforts to be proactive on the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

Through the topics listed under this agenda item, we can adequately identify the social, economic and environmental challenges facing the developing world, and the series of conferences over the last 12 months have been earnest attempts to address each of them. It is time now to merge these steps into a coherent global strategy and deliver on the commitments and promises made. Our region has already started developing what we hope will become one of the first significant actions to come out of the rhetoric of Johannesburg, and it could be useful as a model for others.

On a final administrative note, the issues under agenda item 87 can and should be amalgamated in future to streamline the work of the committee and maximize efficiency. This is certainly in keeping with the Secretary-General's ongoing reform program, and should be helpful for many of the smaller missions, including those in our group, who are short on the resources to cover so many different debates.

With these comments, Mr. Chairman, I thank you on behalf of our members.