

**STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF THE FIJI DELEGATION FOR THE 2ND MINISTERIAL
REVIEW CONFERENCE, GENEVA - THE MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, NATIONAL
SECURITY & IMMIGRATION – HON JOKETANI COKANASIGA**

Salutations

Honorable guests and fellow Ministerial Colleagues, it is indeed my great pleasure and honor on behalf of the Government and the People of the Republic of Fiji to deliver a short statement at this high-level meeting. May I from the outset, acknowledge the efforts provided by the host government and the unprecedented support from affiliated organizations such as the UNDP for organizing this important Conference.

I also would like to acknowledge with utmost appreciation the development of diverse programmes aimed at reducing armed violence under the various UN instruments with intentions to creating an enabling environment for socio-economic development. I firmly believe that such initiatives are a step in the right direction in our endeavor to achieve measurable reductions in the global burden of armed violence in conflict and non-conflict settings by 2015 and beyond.

The Government of the Republic of Fiji, being a signatory to this Declaration is committed to implementing the various programme of actions designed to achieve the aim of addressing the interrelation between armed violence and development. We recognize that armed violence undermines development and constitutes an impediment to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Like any other developing country, Fiji fully recognizes and realizes the importance of the Declaration, however, the challenge for us is our 'capacity' to effectively monitor and detect arms smuggling and other associated illicit activities attached to such crime. Although being faced with the capacity constraints, Fiji continue to progress well in developing an enabling framework that encourages integrated approach to achieving national and regional goals. The Pacific region has over the years experienced its share of arms-related violence, insecurity and instability and we believe that these States have strived to establish, where appropriate, bilaterally or multilaterally to ensuring that Pacific Island Countries, too, can play their part in support of the Declaration on Armed Violence and Development.

Fiji has been subjected to peculiar challenges and crisis confronting internal security that undermines the rule of Law. In recent years, authorities have confirmed that some of the arms had emanated from our international ports of entry. This relatively indicates the vulnerable nature of our borders. At least to mention are the few uninhabited islands in Fiji representing 20 percent of the total 300 islands which could also be used as a transit point for arms trafficking.

Fiji's maritime boundary stretches to about 200 miles and its air space of 6 million square kilometers. The scarcity of appropriate resources to effectively police our boundaries is a concern to national and regional security. Fiji Government has been actively involved in discussions with other Pacific Island Countries on initiatives to address pertinent issues of law and order and endeavoring to consolidate resources to upholding and supporting the rule of Law within the region. The ensuing development in active discussions and consultations with

regional partners have streamlined and improved the approaches agencies to combating these challenges. Island States sometimes have taken their own national initiatives in an effort to address the root causes of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons as well as improving the national regulation of arms transfers.

An initiative worth mentioning is the proposed Formed Police Unit, which is a preventative approach to armed violence in the region and deployment to UN designated peace keeping missions. Fiji actively participates in peace support operations over the years, clearly illustrating our commitment and active involvement in global peace building. We have contributed immensely since the 1970's on peace building having served in Lebanon and these include prevention, reconciliation and reconstruction of war torn countries mainly under scourged by armed violence. The recent deployment is in Iraq and including the Pacific region with RAMSI mission in the Solomon.

Fiji welcomes the consideration for International Cooperation after this meeting especially the imperative need for international assistance under the framework of the said Declaration. This is to enhance collaborative effort in implementing regional initiatives especially the establishment of reliable, comprehensive and relevant indicators to measure the global burden of armed violence and its impact on human development. It is crucial that concerted efforts and partnerships among a diverse array of institutions and agencies are well coordinated to enhance prospects for sustainable development and to promote the achievement of practical results on the ground.

To conclude, it must be realized that armed violence is not only a cause but also a consequence of certain forms of underdevelopment. The various risk factors commonly associated with underdevelopment all contribute to shaping patterns of armed violence in most developing countries. I therefore wish to reiterate Fiji's commitment towards realizing the scourge of armed violence and its impact on national development and fully implement the aspirations of the Geneva Declaration.