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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI, CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA FOR 2013

SPEECH AT THE HANDOVER CEREMONY OF THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA

New York

Thursday 9th January, 2014

United States of America

Your Excellencies, the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Honorable Ministers and Ambassadors,
The Executive Secretary of the Group of 77 and China,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. At the outset, allow me to extend a warm welcome to you all at this handover ceremony of the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China, and to extend to all of you our best wishes for this new year, 2014.
2. A year ago, you gave Fiji the great privilege of chairing the Group of 77 and China for 2013. In taking on that momentous role, we committed our country to honour the great responsibilities you put upon us, with full respect for the duties entailed, holding the Group's interest sacrosanct during Fiji's chairmanship.
3. As we draw the curtain on our term as Chair, it is now my pleasure to present to you a summary report of the Group's achievements in 2013, and to provide some reflections on the experience accumulated, as well as some of the challenges facing our way ahead.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

4. Fiji's chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China in 2013 coincided with a challenging agenda in the United Nations. It was a year when Member States were tasked to implement the follow-up processes to the Rio+20 conference; a year when our political leaders reaffirmed their collective commitment to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015; and a year that required us to deliberate on the creation of Sustainable Development Goals in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. It was also a year when we had to decide on the UN Budget for the biennium 2014-15 in the face of severe financial constraints.

5. The magnitude of the challenge was reflected in the G77 Chair's convening of over 400 coordination meetings of the Group's hard-working experts of the UN's various committees in 2013. The Chair also convened 26 G77 ambassadorial meetings during the year, and prepared and delivered more than 150 statements on behalf of the Group.

6. In 2013, the Group sponsored 32 resolutions in the Second Committee covering a wide spectrum of macroeconomic policy issues and sustainable development challenges. We also sponsored 5 resolutions in the Third Committee covering racism, women, family issues, aging and international cooperation on humanitarian assistance. Both committees covered crosscutting socio-economic issues like employment, international migration and development. In the Fourth Committee, the Group was successful in advancing our position on matters of UN public information policies and activities. We worked long and hard in the Fifth Committee to safeguard the development pillar of the work of the UN, to ensure adequate financial resources will be provided to enable the UN system to carry out its development mandates and responsibilities. Our experts covering oceans and Law of the Sea matters worked diligently to preserve the Group's interests. And for the first time in the Sixth Committee, 2013 saw the Group coordinating with a common position on the issue relating to the UN Programme of Assistance on the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law.

7. The convening of a series of monthly G77 ambassadorial meetings throughout the past year, dedicated to information sharing and

brainstorming on the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda, was an initiative of the Chair aimed at preparing the Group for the negotiations that will dominate work at the UN over next two years. Those ambassadorial meetings were addressed by eminent persons who gracefully shared their experience and insights with the Group. Amongst others, they included the President of the General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General, Queen Maxima of the Netherlands, the Director-General of UNIDO, the Director-General of FAO, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the Executive-Director of the South Centre, and the Co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing.

8. To advance and defend the Group's interests in 2013, the Chair participated at special events and meetings around the world, including when:

(i) the Prime Minister of Fiji, Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, delivered the Group's statements at:

- the Special High-level Meeting of ECOSOC in New York in April with the Bretton Woods Institutions, the WTO and UNCTAD;
- the Special High-level Meeting of ECOSOC in New York in April on External Debt Sustainability and Development;
- the Inaugural Meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, in New York in September; and
- the Special Event to Follow-up on Efforts Towards Achieving the MDGs in September.

(ii) As Fiji's Minister of Foreign Affairs, I delivered the Group's statements at:

- the World Anti-crisis Conference in Kazakhstan in May; and
- Chaired the 37th Annual Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 in New York in September.

(iii) Fiji's Minister for Women, Dr Jiko Luveni, delivered statements on behalf of the Group at:

- the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March;
- the 19th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Poland in November; and
- the 15th Session of the General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation in Peru in December.

(iv) Fiji's Minister responsible for Forests, Mr Inia Seruiratu, delivered the G77 statement at the 10th Meeting of the United Nations Forum on Forests in Turkey in April.

(v) Fiji's Minister responsible for Immigration, Mr Jocketani Cokanasiga, conveyed the Group's views and position at the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development held in New York in October.

(vi) Fiji's Ambassador to China delivered a G77 statement and participated at the High-level Symposium on Sustainable Cities and Sustainable Urbanisation in Yangzhou, China in December. While Fiji's High Commissioner to the Republic of South Africa represented the Chair at the 11th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in Namibia in September.

(vii) Fiji's Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs represented the Chair of G77 at the 46th session of the Commission on Population and Development in New York in April. He also led the Group in the climate change negotiations in Bonn in May, as well as COP19 in Warsaw in November.

(viii) In all those meetings, the diplomats of Fiji's New York Mission also attended to support the G77 Chair. In addition, Fiji's Permanent Representative to the United Nations convened in Vienna in May a coordinating meeting of the G77 chapters from Nairobi, Paris, Washington, Vienna, Rome and Geneva. He also represented the Chair at the ECOSOC Substantive Session-High-level Segment in Geneva in July. The Fiji Mission's DPR represented the Chair at the High Level International Conference on Water Cooperation in Tajikistan in August.

(ix) An important initiative of the Group that was facilitated by the Chair in early 2013 was the visit to Washington DC by a delegation of G77 experts, led by two Counsellors from the Fiji Mission, to hold interactive and open discussions with senior officials of the World Bank and the IMF.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

9. Our unity, solidarity and collective effort remain as the guiding principles in promoting our common interests.

10. We are all aware of the magnitude and complexity of the challenges facing the Group in the next two years as we accelerate the achievement of the MDGs, formulate the SDGs and elaborate on a universal global development agenda beyond 2015. It was due to the Group's insistence that we now have an inter-governmentally negotiated outcome document for the Special Event of the MDGs, which sets out the roadmap for the post-2015 development agenda. At that high-level special event, our political leaders reaffirmed that the implementation gaps of the MDGs must be addressed in the post-2015 development agenda. While we look ahead, we must draw on the lessons learned from the implementation of the MDGs and the continued impacts of the global economic and financial crisis.

11. We should also take pride knowing that it was due to our collective demand that the Open Working Group on the SDGs process began with a member-driven conceptualising and mapping exercise. It was the Group's call for openness and full participation that the OWG is now operating in an inclusive manner with universal participation. While we endeavour to preserve the inter-governmental nature of discussions in the UN, we should remain steadfast in ensuring that other tracks of development quests, such as the creation of a technology facilitation mechanism to promote the development, transfer, dissemination, adaptation and capacity building of environmentally-sound technologies remain on target. We must ensure that effective and realistic means of implementation are an integral part of the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda.

12. It is equally important that the negotiations on the modalities and scope of the Conference on Financing for Development, scheduled to take place this year, must identify and set the appropriate parameters that will lead to a development-oriented Conference. The outcome of the Conference should result in a financing strategy that focuses on the development challenges of developing countries.

13. All these processes are taking place in a world that is still recovering from the global economic and financial crises, which have shaken the foundations of the international economic system and created instability and uncertainty. The challenges ahead demand our strong response and innovative approaches to address systemic and global problems. It is imperative that we continue to call for an international development

architecture that is conducive and responsive to the needs and priorities of the developing world.

14. In this context, we believe we should stay vigilant on the need for institutional reforms of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions as well as the World Trade Organization, in order to ensure a greater voice and full participation for developing countries in all international discussions and policy making. It is our hope that the reformed Economic and Social Council will be able to discharge its sustainable development mandates more effectively under the political guidance of the newly established High-level Political Forum.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

15. We continue to stress that poverty eradication remains the overarching and central objective of the post-2015 development agenda. We must ensure that policies and development efforts targeted at poverty eradication are responsive to the challenges as well as to the opportunities of sustainable development at both the international and national levels.

16. In this regard, we believe the Group should continue to monitor and engage with the WTO process through close collaboration with colleagues in Geneva. The Group should also enhance its working relations with UNCTAD, the South Centre, and other development organizations, networks and think-tanks to ensure our deliberations in the UN and the resolutions we sponsor, are backed by sound technical advice and scientific evidence.

17. We acknowledge the important role of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation in addressing the many development challenges of the 21st century. The clear message we continue to emphasise is that development cooperation from the South is complementary to, and not a substitute for North-South cooperation.

18. Towards that end, and as part of preparations for the Group's 50th anniversary celebration this year, the Chair convened a High-Level Panel of Eminent Personalities of the South to examine the future landscape of South-South Cooperation, as a means of further enhancing the Development Platform for the South. Fiji's Prime Minister convened that

meeting in Fiji in May 2013 where he had the honour of hosting the invited High-level panelists during their discussions, which was graced by the in-coming Chair, President Evo Morales.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

19. As far as the climate change debate is concerned, I am happy to report that the unity of the Group as a negotiating bloc remains intact; this despite the protracted negotiations, in particular those taking place under the Durban Platform. COP19 in Poland last year, tested the solidarity of the Group. Some are eager to dismantle the emphasis this Group places on its traditional principles of CBDR, Equity and Respective Capabilities under the framework of the UNFCCC. The Group has to remain vigilant in defending those principles that are the cornerstone of its unity and provide strength to our negotiating strategies.

20. The Group may wish to revisit and strengthen its role under the United Nations Convention on Desertification. While discussions under that Convention remain primarily the prerogative of the three regional Groups of Africa, GRULAC, and Asia-Pacific, our unity as G77 will and must continue to be the force that binds regional developing countries' interests on issues concerning desertification.

21. On the subject of the United Nations budget, the Group as always played a critical role during the negotiations of the Administrative and Budgetary Committee of the UN General Assembly. The Assembly managed to agree on a Resolution on the Senior Advisory Group Report on the UN Peacekeeping Allowances. The Assembly also delivered the 2014-15 Biennial Budget in the closing days of 2013. We believe it would be in the interest of the General Assembly for the working method of the 5th Committee to be revisited, in particular the practice of last moment, all-night negotiations. We also emphasise that for the good of UN service delivery to our developing countries, the Group must give positive focus over the next three months to the Secretary-General's initiatives regarding Partnership and Mobility.

22. We move into 2014 assured that the many challenges we face will be overcome through the Group's firm unity and solidarity. We will celebrate several International Day and International Year of particular interest to members of the G77. We will be required to work together to

tackle the diverse and unique challenges faced by our members and sub-groupings of G77. The convening of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Samoa this year will require the Group to work closely together in support of our SIDS members.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

23. In conclusion, let me express our deep appreciation and gratitude to the Member States of the Group of 77 and China for your constructive engagement, guidance and support to the Chairmanship of Fiji. My sincere thanks go also to the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General of the United Nations for their presence here with us today and their continued support and commitment in advancing the global development agenda.

24. I would like to pay tribute to the Executive Secretary of the G77 Secretariat, Mr. Mourad Ahmia and his hard-working team for the untiring support they have provided us in servicing and supporting the Chair in the Group coordinations in various committees and Ambassadorial meetings during this Chairmanship. On your behalf, I thank the G77 Secretariat staff of Arturo Lozano, Suzanne Maikarfi, Vincent Wilkinson, and Mahmoud Ablan for their dedication throughout the year. Thanks also go to Jeffery Howard and Paolo Dua who supported us during the course of 2013.

25. Finally, allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the team of hard-working Fijian diplomats of Fiji's Permanent Mission to the UN. Led by Ambassador Peter Thomson, they were a professional and dedicated team throughout. Using the terminology of rugby, Fiji's national sport, they promised not to drop the ball during the Chairmanship. They kept their promise, and as I have reported to you today, they scored some goals along the way.

26. The time has come to handover the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China to the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. We have every confidence that under the leadership of Bolivia, the Group's collective effort and perseverance will reach new levels in continuing the advance of the development agenda of developing countries during this critical juncture in the history of the United Nations. I would like to take

this opportunity to renew to the President of Bolivia and his representatives, the full support of Fiji as his proud nation takes up this high mission on behalf of the Group.

I thank you.