



High Level Meeting to Commemorate the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations

Remarks by Prime Minister of Fiji

- Hon Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama

Monday 21 September, 2020 (9am to 9pm)

UN General Assembly Hall, NY

Bula Vinaka from Fiji.

On the 10th of October, 1970, Fiji became an independent country. Three days later, we joined this Assembly.

I recall the optimism of that moment; that sense among our people that Fiji had something good to give the world and something much larger to gain from a multilateral pursuit of peace. For 50 years, Fiji's contribution to the United Nations has been driven by genuine care for those less fortunate than ourselves and uncompromising passion for the protection of our natural world.

- Fijian peacekeepers have defended the defenceless in the world's most conflict-ridden regions;
- Our oceans diplomacy spearheaded the United Nations Law of the Sea — of which Fiji was the first signatory. Today, we light the way towards the sustainable management of the ocean and its resources;

- Fiji was the first country to ratify the Paris Agreement as well as the first small island state to lead the climate negotiations as President of COP23. Today, we are among the nations committed to net-zero emissions by 2050.

But in the face of new and terrifying challenges, we and other developing nations are forced to watch social progress, hard-earned over decades, slip through our collective fingers.

Months into economically-devastating lockdowns and border closures, a COVID-19 vaccine is still only guaranteed for those who can afford it. Five years post-Paris, global temperature rise is still projected to rocket past the two, three, or even four-degree mark, our ocean ecosystems are acidifying, and a sixth mass extinction event is already underway.

I ask anyone feeling bleak about the prospects of 2020 to imagine the world 75 years on from today should our foresight continue to fail us.

50 years ago, Fiji recognised we had far more to gain than we could ever give this Assembly. But that humble truth is not reserved for the world's small developing states – the same can be said of even the mightiest among us. Every nation, large and small, stands a better chance at our best future by acting in solidarity. Guided by the UN, we are building a world of peace. But a world of net-zero emissions, sustainably-managed oceans, gender equity, digital inclusivity, and equitable development is no less critical. We have the means to make that world reality. We must meet year 75 of the UN with the political fortitude to see it built. Multilateralism must deliver once again.

And if leaders give voice and vigour to that purpose, then our people, our children, and their children, will all see the greatest gain.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.
