



**Statement by the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
20th Session of the Universal Periodic Review
Review of Fiji - 29 October 2014**

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka extends a warm welcome to the delegation of Fiji to the UPR Working Group and thanks them for their comprehensive national report and the presentation this morning. We congratulate Fiji for the achievements and the progress made in the follow up to its first UPR.

We are pleased to witness the promulgation of the Constitution along with a robust and internationally recognized Bill of Rights. We also take note of the establishment of the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission as the enforcement body for the Bill of Rights. As acknowledged by Fiji, Sri Lanka has assisted Fiji in many areas, particularly in relation to the capacity building of its judicial and legal institutions. We would like to ask the delegation of Fiji to explain what barriers they experience in the effective functioning of its judiciary and how the international community could assist in further strengthening the judicial system. We recommend that Fiji continue partnerships with Member States and UN bodies as it deems necessary in furthering its efforts to ensure the independence of the judiciary.

We are encouraged by the tremendous resilience that Fiji has shown in the wake of challenges to economic progress. In this context, we welcome the pro-growth measures taken by the Government including focus on strategic priorities for social development aimed at reducing poverty; improving health services; ensuring education for all, based on principles of accessibility and quality; provide affordable and decent housing; measures to address climate change and disaster risk reduction; measures for gender equality and employment enhancement through training, education and protection for children and the youth. We recommend that Fiji further strengthen measures to ensure equal access to health services for all, while giving special attention to the needs of children, women and the elderly.

We acknowledge several specific policy initiatives taken by Fiji in order to achieve gender equality and commend the launch of the Fiji National Gender Policy in 2014 in this regard which promotes social justice and sustainable development as well. We hope that this policy will achieve its goal to reinforce inextricable links between gender equality and sustainable development goals in the nation's development and ensures gender equality in the public and private sectors. We encourage Fiji to take further measures for the promotion of gender equality and women's rights, ensuring women's participation and gender responsiveness within government and other agencies.

In conclusion, Sri Lanka firmly believes that the UPR process as a state-driven mechanism is the appropriate platform for comprehensive engagement and constructive dialogue on all human rights concerns in the country. Accordingly, the UPR is the appropriate approach to explore avenues that would best support the Government of Fiji. We encourage the international community to provide technical assistance and capacity building to Fiji, in full cooperation with the Government, taking into account its specific needs and views.

We wish Fiji success in its UPR engagement.

Thank you.