Fiji Government Statement By The Minister of Environment in the UNFCCC COP 16, 29th November to 10th December 2010, Cancun, Mexico.

Madam President,

I would like to join the others before me in thanking you for all of your hard work. I, on behalf of the Fiji delegation, acknowledge with appreciation the warm reception and hospitality extended to us by the people and Government of Mexico during the course of our stay here in this beautiful city of Cancun.

Madam President,

Climate Change is an existential threat, and addressing this threat is our priority. The presence of Fiji's delegation in these meetings reflects our commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Kyoto Protocol.

The Fijian archipelago has over 300 islands scattered across 200,000 square miles of ocean. Total land area is about 2,800 square miles with a population of around 900,000.

The Fiji Islands are surrounded by pristine emerald-blue lagoons, 1000 miles of fine white sandy beaches and are covered by lush rainforests, pine forests and mountainous terrain. But, these pristine ecosystems and bio-diversity are now under increasing stress from the effects of climate change.

Madam President, extreme climate events are now becoming recurrent in Fiji. We are experiencing prolonged droughts during dry seasons and severe flash floods during the rainy season. Saltwater intrusion and inundation of fertile low-lying lands and coastal erosion are now becoming more widespread.

The above extreme conditions are seriously disrupting our agricultural systems, water resources, coastal areas, and ecosystems, in general, and in turn, have threatened and in many instances destroyed human lives.

Madam President, sea water acidification and coral bleaching have been proven by science to be effects of climate change. Our sea waters and beautiful corals are not excluded from these damaging effects. They are the breeding grounds of

marine life that contributes to the livelihood of our communities and national economy.

Madam President, at the macro-level the frequent disruptions caused by the above extreme climate conditions have weakened the sustainability of our terrestrial and marine environments and reduced the productive capacity of the Fijian economy affecting economic growth and depriving our people of better standards of living. Allow me to add that on many occasions, just as we would be smarting and recovering from one hurricane, we would be hit by another flash flood or drought. For tiny and vulnerable economies like ours the chances of our survival on our very own land become smaller and slimmer with increasing occurrences of these extreme climate conditions.

Madam President, the reality is indeed grim for all small island developing states. Accordingly, our delegation calls on the international community and the movers and shakers of international politics to take heed of the increasing concerns and plight of small island developing states.

Madam President,

In the quest to arrest and possibly reverse trends on climate change, and mindful of its international obligations, the Government of Fiji has embarked on strengthening internal structures and arrangements, including institutions, and processes towards mainstreaming and implementing environmental policies and strategies.

Admittedly, our actions and commitments to specifically deal with the impact of climate change for the long-term survival of the people of Fiji will not be adequate without the support of our development partners and the international community. This support should not only come through facilitating adaptation and mitigation measures, but more importantly, through concrete legally binding commitments beyond 2012. In this regard, we would like to express our full support for the statements made by Grenada on behalf of AOSIS and Nauru on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States.

The Fiji Government therefore calls for an effective international cooperation mechanism that recognizes the fundamental framework of the Climate Change Convention and the Kyoto Protocol in line with the Bali Roadmap. The

mechanism should provide finance for climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as capacity building, and technology transfer.

Madam President, Small Island Developing States like Fiji are paying a high price for the cumulative historical actions of others. Time is almost up for many of us. We have been negotiating for too long with too little progress. We are the most vulnerable, and are at the front line.

Madam President I Thank You for your attention.

Mr. Peceli Vocea

Fiji's Ambassador to the European Union and Belgium