



**STATEMENT BY MR. FILIMONE KAU,
COUNSELLOR/DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI
TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON
"WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY"**

28 OCTOBER 2004, UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

Mr. President,

My delegation thanks you for calling a debate on this issue. We also congratulate the Secretary-General for his timely reporting on the follow-up to the full implementation of Resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

While the SG's report shows positive developments and significant achievements in the implementation of the Resolution, more concerted efforts are needed to ensure that all implementation challenges are fully addressed. Its full implementation will continue to be a challenge for the Security Council and the United Nations.

Mr. President,

Fiji attaches great importance to this subject and we commend the efforts put in thus far by the Security Council, the General Assembly, ECOSOC and its functional commissions, and other United Nations bodies and entities. We commend in particular the efforts put in by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and other regional bodies including the Commonwealth Secretariat which have been active partners in the pursuance of the subject in Fiji. Our Ministry for Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation has been the focal point of efforts to mainstreaming gender perspectives in relation to critical peace and security components in government and other areas.

Mr. President,

The necessary groundwork for the launching of national policies and strategies pursuant to Resolution 1325(2000) in Fiji has been greatly boosted by the sponsorship and support of UNIFEM and other actors including the civil societies. Work on mainstreaming gender perspective in relation to conflict prevention, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance and post conflict reconstruction and reconciliation are in progress.

Recent political and internal upheavals in our country have brought out the best in our women and their contribution has been a strong factor for good and steady progress. They have been effective stabilizers and mediators in conflict prevention and very active players in recent efforts in post-conflict peace building and reconciliation processes. A weeklong peace and reconciliation process with the objective, *inter-alia* to unite our polarized and divided country held last month, saw women and children playing key roles. This was preceded by national workshop on conflict prevention and early warning.

In peacekeeping, Fiji being a staunch supporter and consistent contributor to international peacekeeping, has introduced specific measures to ensure the expansion of women's role in peacekeeping. Despite the difficulty in overcoming cultural and traditional barriers, recent deployments have seen the successful integration of women into the various specialized duties including guards. The Military and Police departments together with other relevant bodies are working on coherent strategies for gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping. The Fiji peacekeeping deployment to Iraq will include six women who have been given specific training in searching and counseling. It also illustrates our view that women can be as good as men in all areas if given the opportunity.

Mr. President,

We totally agree with the Secretary-General that more efforts must be put in capacity building and training. Gender mainstreaming in relations to all facets of peace and security require knowledge and information sharing. Training and capacity building must not only target girls and women but also boys and men and all levels of government and the community. It should be all encompassing and comprehensive targeting both formal and non-formal sectors. Its inclusion in the education curriculum will ensure early intervention and sustained impact. The government through its Ministry for Women programmes and through the UNIFEM sponsored Women and Peace and Security committee are addressing the issue with all relevant stakeholders.

Added to this, Mr. President is the need for more effective coordination and partnerships. There are certainly no lack of will and enthusiasm at the national levels, particularly in developing countries, but, enhanced cooperation and partnership are vital to ensure inflow of resources and expertise which are generally lacking in our countries. We therefore welcome the call by the Secretary-General for development and strengthening of cooperation and effective partnerships at all levels. We acknowledge the good work done by UNIFEM and other UN bodies together with regional organizations like Pacific Islands Forum and the Commonwealth Secretariat in the Pacific region and in Fiji. We can only hope for more of such cooperation and partnerships.

We also commend the SG's recognition of the role of indigenous women in conflict resolution as mediators and peace builders. Indigenous and local women have a strong advocacy role and it should be utilized in all aspects of security and peace.

Mr. President,

The need to ensure that national and international efforts for the implementation of Resolution 1325(2000) must be undertaken in a comprehensive manner in the context of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. To ensure complementary and proper coordination, all efforts must be undertaken in collaboration with and within existing institutional arrangements.

Mr. President,

Fiji has a total population of approximately 886,000 with women making up almost half of this. With this small population, it was easy for us to recognize the great potential women represent. In order to progress, we had to harness all the resources at our disposal and women have played a prominent role we expected and more in the measured forward momentum of our developmental goals. Our support for the effort of the Security Council and the Secretary-General in the furtherance of women participation in peace and security is therefore total.

Thank you, Mr. President.