



# PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

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## Leadership, Coordination, Advocacy & Communication for the Effective Implementation of the SDGs

1. Why do we have Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs are part of a plan of action consisting of 17 goals with the intention to end poverty, protect the planet, promote prosperity and ensure peace for all. You see, humanity is inflicting harm, not only on each other as reported daily on our global news, but also on nature and is driving the quality of our land and water to a point they will not support human life.
2. 193 leaders of the UN member states adopted the SDGs in September 2015. In order for SDGs to succeed, legal implementation at the national level is required. Parliaments are expected to promote the SDGs, since the SDGs reflect the needs and aspirations of the people. It is crucial that Parliaments take the initiative to translate global and regional commitments of the SDGs into national commitments based on national priorities. In turn, the government is expected to report back to parliament. Given these responsibilities, parliaments should play a key role in ensuring the success of the SDGs agenda.
3. How do we do it, I wish to quote the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Ms Helen Clark when she said,  
*“Every time a law is made, MPs can call attention to whether it is consistent with the SDGs, and move amendments if it is not. Parliamentary committees can ensure that their scrutiny procedures hold Ministers to account for national progress on the SDGs. And parliamentarians, in representing those who elected them, can ensure an ongoing dialogue with civil society over such progress.”*

4. The role of MPs is very clear. You know, many a times when I am sitting there presiding over debates I am dying to hear an MP make reference to the SDGs to bring the subject under discussion to the SDGs. So what can Presiding Officers and the administration of Parliament do?
5. In Fiji, Parliament is not carrying on with business as usual. We have expanded our role and created activities to strengthen our support in the implementation of the SDGs. I have used a platform called the *Speakers Debate* to create awareness by inviting various stakeholders of Society to talk and deliberate on SDG related issues such as; climate change, oceans, gender violence, youths and health to name a few. The panelists include the Minister responsible, the Opposition Shadow minister and representatives from the civil societies, the academia, faith-based groups, etc. The debate is also live streamed on our website. Actually the debate strengthens coordination of the stakeholders to champion the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. At first we planned to have these debates every second month with the public interest we are now having it almost every month.
6. **Communicating** the SDGs is clearly the key to achieving the global development targets. The more we communicate about the SDGs and make people aware of the agenda, the more the governments will be accountable and will ensure that it is implemented. I have been designated by an NGO, Fiji Council of Social Services to be a Champion for SDGs in Fiji. I have and will continue to advocate for gender based issues with promotion of women. The Fiji Parliament has conducted a *Parliament Mock Exercise* for women, where women of diverse background nationwide undergo two days of training on the development programs of the government as well as Parliamentary procedures. The third day is spent in Parliament experiencing a Parliament Sitting where they debate on an issue of their choice.
7. The **Youths** have had three such events also. You see it is crucial that youths are targeted to be aware that the planet is not doing well and they might inherit a planet that is struggling to sustain lives. They know that the goals will need to be achieved and that they should be

part of the transformation. As Presiding Officers we can make this happen our way.

8. In Fiji's Parliament, a GENDER TOOLKIT has been implemented to mainstream gender issues in its legislative processes and oversight functions. We also have the Parliament Diary dedicated to familiarising MPs with the SDGs. Scrutinizing and reviewing legislation using gender-based analysis ensures that gender equality and empowerment of women which are important components of the 2030 SDG Agenda is considered.
9. MPs in the Standing Committees have also started framing SDGs related questions when scrutinizing bills or when reports from other Ministries and Departments are presented to them. MPs can be leaders and advocates of SDGs through their powers of scrutiny, being representatives of the people meaning that not only do they speak for the people but they can also speak to the people on these issues. Parliament to legislate laws that accommodate SDG GOALS. All chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of all the committees have formed a Gender group to strengthen their commitment to gender issues.
10. We need to have **Advocates** for SDGs in our countries especially selecting those that have the ability to connect and communicate with the people, to have total responsive connection. In this respect, the Fiji Parliament also has a program called, "*Meet the Speaker*" where I travel throughout the country to meet secondary students and community groups to generate awareness of the Parliament process and advocate the SDGs. When I am not available, our *Parliament Bus* consisting of our Civic Education Unit staff conduct the program. We can afford to be succinct in our SDG presentation based on the development strength of the community or school, e.g. the preservation of land or protection of our ocean for maritime communities because, as we are aware, progress on one goal will have positive effects on the other goals.

11. Fiji's leaders have been working hard in advocating the implementation of the SDGs after ratifying the Paris Agreement and this is also the same for the other Pacific islands.
12. The SDGs on climate change, protection of the environment and oceans not only protects Fiji and other Pacific Islands but other small island states and other low lying areas of the world. As such, Fiji's leader and Pacific Island Leaders are now being recognized as global advocates for communities across the region facing the inevitable loss of their homes, heritage and livelihoods.
13. The Fijian Prime Minister, Frank Bainimarama's chairmanship of the United Nation's biggest climate change meeting in Europe, the 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 23) to the UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in October this year, is a case in point.
14. Why is Fiji vigorously pursuing the implementation of the SDGs more so in regards to Climate change? Hon Chair, my country bore the brunt of Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2015, labeled the second most destructive cyclone ever in the world and is still rehabilitating itself to date.
15. And experts have predicted that super cyclones like Winston will continue to develop due to the increasing warmth on the Pacific Ocean's surface and in the years ahead the Pacific Islands will be at the mercies of such occurrences.
16. In concluding, we cannot have business as usual. As the head of the Legislature, the third arm of governance in our nation, we are in a position of authority and we must have the courage and confidence to bring about change when change is critical to our people's survival, the survival of our children and grandchildren. We need strong, inclusive leadership from the international, state and local community level to successfully implement the SDGs and to ensure that no one is left behind.

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