



**FIJI STATEMENT TO THE UNITED NATIONS
C34 SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR PEACEKEEPING
OPERATIONS
NEW YORK,
11 FEBRUARY 2019**

Distinguished Chair, Members of the Panel,

First of all, let me thank the Committee for this opportunity to address members of the C34 Special Committee on United Nations Peacekeeping.

The United Nations celebrated its 70th year of Peacekeeping in 2018. Fiji also commemorated its 40th years of participation in United Nations Peacekeeping. Fiji has been an independent country for 48 years.

Across these 40 years, Fiji has consistently contributed to the noblest mission of the United Nations – to help secure and maintain International peace.

It is through United Nations Peacekeeping that Fiji has chosen to contribute and serve the world community. Of which we are proud of that service.

Fiji has contributed over 20,000 troops to United Nations peacekeeping. We have participated in UN Peacekeeping missions across the Middle-East, Pacific, Asia and Africa.

We have lost 60 of our soldiers in Peacekeeping Missions. Fiji remembers them and all others who have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Mr Chair

Fiji takes its international obligations most seriously. We have made a solemn duty to support global peacekeeping efforts. Our UN peacekeeping efforts cost us around 10 million dollars annually – a large contribution for a small island state. We have not shied away from funding this obligation for a single day over the last 40 years.

The UN Secretary General's Action for Peace (A4P) to improve all areas of UN Peacekeeping must be commended and supported. Fiji's Prime Minister has committed the Fiji Government to supporting this initiative by the UN.

Fiji takes its peacekeeping responsibilities extremely seriously. Fiji is making consistent efforts to improve performance and standards. In this we have the Fiji Government's support.

When Peacekeepers are well protected and secure, they can perform their duties well. But when they do peacekeeping poorly – lives are lost, human development regresses and politics and development fail their communities.

At best, the mission of UN peacekeeping is to create spaces to make politics to work – where leaders – men and women representing communities involved in conflicts can take measured risks. It takes time for markets to kick in. It takes time for institutions that protect civilians to kick in.

A good peacekeeping mission at its core is about broadening such spaces in and between communities. This process involves hundreds/thousands of peacekeepers interacting with men, women, children who need their protection.

When peacekeepers fall short of the high standards expected of them, they fail the people and the communities that they have been mandated to protect. Missions will fail to broaden spaces for peace or fail to create the opportunities for peace that are so needed. They weaken the credibility of the Mission and its overall chances of success.

As a troop contributing country, we have an obligation to do a lot more to lift performance and discharge duties to the highest standards expected and demanded by this Council and the United Nations. These standards are ours as well.

Crucially, peacekeeping is about the soft skills that men and women bring to UN Missions. These soft skills are about the ability to understand cultures, values; the ability to see how women and children become extraordinarily disadvantaged in conflict; the ability to interpret signs of individual and group stress early. Fiji pays significant attention to strengthening the soft skills of its Peacekeepers.

We recognize that when communities strike a positive rapport with Peacekeepers, it contributes immensely to improving dialogue and prospects of reconciliation. That is why women are a crucial part of Peacekeeping.

Mr Chair

We cannot understate the importance of the tools with which our peacekeepers work with in some of the most difficult and challenging circumstances.

They protect UN and international staff involved in development and humanitarian work. They keep armed groups away from communities. They protect themselves.

They operate in communities – giving them comfort and protection. They protect humanitarian missions and allow medicine, food and warmth to reach communities, families, women and girls.

They are aware that when humanitarian support is captured, when human rights of those who they protect are violated – we inch by inch destroy the chances of peace.

Fiji is working with all bilateral partners to strengthen our Peacekeeping capabilities, preparedness, skills and overall performance.

I take this opportunity to thank our bilateral partners for the considerable support you are all providing to Fiji. Fiji is thankful and appreciative.

We welcome this opportunity to restate our support to strengthening UN peacekeeping missions. Fiji remains steadfast in its commitment to the United Nations efforts, to maintaining and securing international peace through peacekeeping missions.

Finally, Mr Chair, allow me to pay tribute to all peacekeepers around the world, who work in often difficult conditions, in the service of peace.

Thank you.