



FINAL

**11th MEETING OF STATE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILE, PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LAND MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION- PHNOEM PHEN, CAMBODIA
28 NOV – 02 DEC 2011.**

REPUBLIC OF FIJI

Mr President,

Your Royal Highness,

Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegation

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen

will not speak,
just submit
to President.

This is the first time Fiji is taking the floor. Yes I must congratulate you on your appointment as President and the sterling effort you have demonstrated in spearheading discussions in the last few days.

At the outset, I must sincerely acknowledge the tireless effort rendered by the host country for organizing the 11th meeting of the State Parties on the AP Mine Ban Convention. I also wish to acknowledge the tremendous work vigorously embarked by the various NGO's and the civil society on critical programme of actions, awareness training, technical capacity assistance and development towards the countries affected by land mines. It is notable that civil society and NGO's are the catalysts to the implementation of the Convention and rightfully they should be commended for the remarkable contribution to helping build confidence for victims in hard stricken countries not to mention the atrocities and suffering they had to bear over the years. Yes, the NGO's and civil society contribution has impacted our society and significantly changed the lives and livelihoods of affected individuals.

Mr President, hearing statements of progress and development from member countries this week and of course the continuing support and significant contribution from major donor agencies towards this worthy course, I can only add that the ensuing momentum would no doubt consolidate resources to providing unprecedented support and cooperation amongst affiliated

international organizations at the grass root level for the sustainment of demining and building the lives of those affected immensely by land mines. Various development programmes of actions and coordination for victim assistance on a community based in the African Continent, Cambodia etc is an indication of the ensuing collaboration and integration at the community level. On the other hand, it must be noted that the global realization of suffering, permanent scars and disability caused by land mines for victims in most countries have created an environment of discrimination against employment, privileges and amenities freely enjoyed by us today. The opportunity for victims to be fully accepted in the community is slim thus they are always suppressed and undermined in our society. Along the margins of this Convention, member countries are encouraged to ensuring appropriate resources be made available for victims and assistance in this regard. Hence, it is imperative that comprehensive and holistic approach is embarked, not only to fulfill the aspiration of the Convention and impose ban on AP land mines but to eradicate any forms of discrimination for victims at all levels. It must be also realized that the global financial crises has drastically impaired the implementation of the Convention especially the need to creating an enabling environment for socio-economic development in the pursuit to achieving tangible outcomes.

Mr President, Fiji is one of the many Island countries in the South Pacific and common knowledge revealed that the Second World War was fought on the Pacific front. In the post war development, these smaller Island countries are still littered with World War II (WWII) ordnances such as cluster munitions and other explosives, though it may not be a direct threat to the people but the leakage of explosive materials, contamination and the gradual corrosion of war heads from missiles and mortars is a major concern. Fiji was actively part of the allied Force deployed to the Solomon in 1945 and our reputation still reverberates today of our tactical combat operation. Hence, we still hold and cherish memories of the WWII within our hearts as bloods were shed for the mere purpose of maintaining the Pacific solidarity from being colonized by the Japanese.

In the pursuit of maintaining a sustainable development in the region especially the imperative need to support countries like the Solomon, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu and other smaller Island States, Fiji wishes to reaffirm its position to commence dialogue with non-State parties in the region to sign and ratify the latter, given that the context of the Convention is directly related to their situation.

Mr President, in the Pacific, we have nothing but our natural resources, land and sea as the only means of sustaining our livelihood. Tourism, on the other hand is an added value to our fragile economy. The Pacific is surrounded by vast ocean and the concern for the delay in demining and the proper disposal of these WWII ordnances in our respective sea beds is somewhat a sensitive issue to discuss diplomatically with major donors such as Japan, US etc given their direct involvement in the war.

These WWII ordnances significantly pose unprecedented threats to our Pacific Ocean, our environment, resources and if not expeditiously addressed now, it could destroy our only source of livelihood. Fiji, currently Chairs the Melanesian Spearhead Group which includes Vanuatu, Solomons, and Papua New Guinea and these countries were then regarded as battle fields in the WWII. Hence, on the margin of this forum, we would be able to focus on specific areas of assistance and development to these countries by maintaining our Pacific as a safe and secure place to live.

Mr President, the Government of Fiji, being a signatory to this Convention is committed to put in place supportive framework and pertinent regulatory measures that enables us to fulfill the minimum requirements of the Convention. Recently, the Fiji Government has enacted a Decree on Anti-Personnel-Mine, Decree No 19 of 2011. The Decree categorically outlines the various regulatory measures, legislative requirements, penalties and other pertinent matters that dovetail the aspiration of the Convention. Even though the context of the Convention may not be directly relevant to our situation but our support for the implementation and the universality of the Convention within the Pacific is enviable. The Fiji government being renowned for its active participation in the various UN peace keeping missions since the 1970's, stands ready to provide resources in a form of assisting smaller Island States with affirmative action to engage collaboratively in the clearance, demining of active landmines, cluster munitions and other related WWII ordnances.

Mr President, our role is very crucial given our geographical position as the hub of the Pacific. I wish to conclude that we will pursue this worthy course of encouraging other regional partners through the diplomatic channels, perhaps exert a degree of influence to those smaller Island States who have not acceded to the Convention to consider joining. The Government of Fiji is obligated to assist in whatever capacity, though not financially but in areas of empowering the

community through awareness training in collaboration with NGO's and the civil society.

Mr President, I again wish to thank the host country, the UNODA and other critical partners for organizing this conference of State Parties, the host officials and the various logistics and security agencies for providing the necessary support; making this conference a safe and secure for its participants.

Thank you

Joji Washington
[Head of the Fiji Delegation]
Ministry of Defence, National Security & Immigration