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**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ISIKIA R. SAVUA  
FIRST COMMITTEE: GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT  
AND ALL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS  
5 OCTOBER 2005, UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**

*(Please check against delivery)*

Mr. Chairman,

Fiji joins others in congratulating you and the newly elected members of the Bureau. We look forward to working with the Committee to address the challenging agenda before us. Disarmament issues, though not mentioned in the Summit Outcome Document, are of critical concern to all nations, and we are hopeful that together we can make progress towards mitigating the threats and effects of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and conventional weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

The growing international recognition of the linkages between the issues of peace, security, governance, human affairs and development as affirmed at the International Conference at the Great Lakes Region last November ought to be noted. The Declaration of Principles adopted by the First Summit of Heads of State and Government in Dar-Es-Salaam gave the disarmament issues a high level of recognition which has highlighted the intrinsic impacts that security and development have upon one another. It is our hope that this recognition can be translated into the reduction in military budgets.

In developing nations, a high military budget adversely impacts development by diverting much needed funds from internal infrastructure needs, to the purchase of weapons and associated war like stores. This is particularly acute during times of growing responsibilities and limited resources with which to accomplish these development requirements.

A careful balance must be struck between expenditures on security issues and other societal needs. The International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security, held in Madrid this year, affirmed this by stressing the need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and promoting this as an effective security strategy. Ameliorating some of the root factors of terrorism through effective economic and social policies, particularly in regard to developmental assistance and foreign aid packages is a pro-active approach which can not be stressed enough in the pursuit of security for all our nations.

Mr. Chairman,

Fiji commends the progress made so far made at the international and regional levels towards conventional arms control; as well as the assistance to States in curbing the illicit trafficking in small arms. Last year we hosted a UN Regional Workshop on Small Arms and Light Weapons for the South Pacific in Nadi. It was a continuance of our partnership within the Pacific Islands Forum to develop a common regional approach for weapons control, as described under the auspices of the Nadi Framework. In this regard we would like to acknowledge the financial, technical and human resources assistance provided by Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

The illicit manufacture of and trafficking in light weapons is of grave concern to our region. However, curbing the practice cannot be accomplished alone. Aid to increase our capacity to effectively control our borders and to improve armory security and management practices is needed. While much has been done, we can not rest on our laurels - there is still much left to be done, and this requires increased multilateralism and the goodwill of all Member States.

Mr. Chairman,

Of importance to Fiji is the sustainability of the work of the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. The Asia-Pacific Centre has made much progress in addressing the disarmament and security concerns of our region, including commendable work on our Small Arms and Light Weapons initiatives. The Centre has also helped to coordinate a treaty creating a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the region. However, as noted by the Secretary-General, funding for the Centre has fallen critically short, and has threatened both its effectiveness and very survival. We welcome the efforts by the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs to assess the situation and hope that this Committee, will also be able to support solutions which bolster such an essential organization.

Mr. Chairman,

Fiji emphasizes the importance of other regional efforts, both in the Pacific and other regions around the world. We are committed to remaining active members of the Pacific Island Forum, which to date has tackled issues of concern to this Committee on a regional basis. These issues included; collective security, Nuclear-Free Zones, the shipping and transport of radioactive materials and co-ordinations of weapons controlled legislation.

Fiji believes that a synergy should exist between the international and regional levels, and that both are important fora in addressing security issues. Ideas, resources, and strategies should be shared and flow between all levels, so that we can learn from each other, and yet maintain the flexibility to customize solutions to suit our national needs and situations.

Mr. Chairman,

On the question of nuclear disarmament, Fiji is also affected by the fall out of the nuclear testing in the Pacific Region. Our servicemen who participated in "Operation Grapple Hook" on Christmas Island in the 1950s are now after so many years suffering from the diseases associated with their exposure. Children are born deformed, ageing is hastened and skin diseases are common. For some time, this group has been trying to solicit fair compensation for what they have suffered. Some money has been forthcoming but it is our contention that this is insufficient to adequately compensate them and their families for their maladies. While this is not a Hiroshima or Nagasaki we believe it suffices for Fiji to join others and advocate complete nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

Fiji remains committed to the ideals of the United Nations, including multilateral cooperation. We trust that our collective efforts here in the First Committee in the upcoming weeks will translate into laudable yet achievable goals and strategies; as well as concrete commitments from Member States.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.