
Salutation

- The Political Adviser in the UNODA – Mr Jean Zanders
- The Biological Weapon Convention Implementation Support Unit Rep- Dr Alex Lampalzer
- The US State Department Programme rep – Ms Lourdes Costacamps
- Rep from the VERTIC – Ms Angela Woodward
- Director Parliamentarian Group of Action – Mr Peter Barcroft
- Hon Minister Lemalu Taefu from Samoa
- Hon Member of Parliament Netani Rika
- Regional Participants
- Excellency’s, Ladies and Gentlemen

Ni sa bula vinaka and a very good afternoon to you All!

I’m so privileged to be here again today at the conclusion of this Regional Biological Weapons Convention Workshop here in Nadi.
At the outset, Let me take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) in collaboration with the Fijian Government, has been able to co-host this important Regional workshop - Particularly with the five (5) countries under the BWC Universality programme. Fiji continues to support the global effort to rid all biological weapons at all levels and by demonstrating this, we as regional partners are challenged to establish a robust platform. Possibly this could be established along the margins of the Forum Secretariat or the Pacific Islands Development Forum to coordinate assistance in conjunction with the ISU or better still with the Parliamentarians for Global Actions (PGA).

May I remind us that our collective responsibility as good regional citizens, is to work together and establish a network with the Experts from the UNODA, BWC ISU, Depository States, GPA and VERTIC that could provide regional cooperation and assistance in areas of:-

- Capacity building,
- Capability development and
- Funding of various projects in order to meet and comply within the aspirations of the Convention.

I’m led to believe that in the region, funding seems to be a common problem. There are prevalent issues like Climate Change as being a pressing issue in the region that takes precedence over some of these disarmament issues. On the other hand one could imagine, if there was a biological attack or outbreak for that matter, the exorbitant costs it may incur could surpass the cost of establishing national machinery that could respond to such calamities.

I understand the volume of information acquired over the two days would be intensive to grasp for you as participants however; I urge everyone in particular those Non State Parties to perhaps craft a concept paper which forms the basis of your action plans to initiate things at the national level. By identifying key agencies and possibly share a draft framework like what had been presented to you during the workshop would at least map the Way Forward.

At this juncture, I would like to direct our attention to the Opening Statement of the Hon Minister Kubuabola where he revealed that the threat of biological weapons is real. The Hon
Minister further mentioned that consequences of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa had multilayered consequences ranging from public health, economy, travel, social, families and other issues that had gross implications on. It must remind us that humanity is a fragile commodity that we should always think of.

I firmly believe that as a region, we can be strong if we stand together with our vision rooted in our shared values and beliefs and our collective efforts to contribute to the overall objective of embarking towards collective security and realize the unprecedented threats confronting our very region, not only Biological, Chemical and Nuclear Weapons as well.

We must be able to utilize Collective Diplomacy and international assistance through the ISU of the BWC in implementing the requirements of the Convention and to engage constructively with each other. In doing so we must not lose sight of the international security architecture that continue to shape and re-shape our regional security outlook.

The development of common approaches by respective Governments to such UN Instruments is vital in enhancing our solidarity as a Region by establishing equal footing to addressing these security issues. May I reverberate a renowned slogan used in the United States Propaganda Poster for WWII
which states and I quote “United we stand, divided we fall” - used to inspire Unity and Collaboration.

I understand that the deliberation in the two days’ workshop has been meaningfully and demonstrates the significance of regional security; the importance of the Conventions and its global implications. We cannot afford to remain in isolation.

Hence, I would echo the same notion to us as regional participants to at least start somewhere. To our international Experts, a big vinaka vakalevu to all your support for this wonderful and fruitful workshop. I trust you may have enjoyed Fiji’s hospitality and travel mercies to those of you that would be departing Fiji to your respective countries.

With this few remarks, I thank you once again and declare this workshop close.

Thank you and Vinaka vakalevu.