Welcoming remarks by Dr. Alex Lampalzer,
Deputy Head, BWC Implementation Support Unit

Honorable Minister Kubuabola, Permanent Secretary Cawaru, ladies and gentlemen,

- On behalf of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, I am pleased to welcome you to this regional workshop on universalization of the BWC for the Pacific Region.

- I would like to thank our host, the Government of Fiji, and in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the Ministry of Defence and National Security, who have worked very hard to prepare for this workshop. Let me take this opportunity to thank H.E. Mr Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, Minister for Defence and National Security, for being with us today and opening this workshop.

- This workshop would not have been possible without the major financial contributions made available by the European Union under its Council Decision 2016/51 (CFSP) in support of the BWC. We are thankful for the strong commitment by the European Union towards the Biological Weapons Convention. Allow me to welcome Mr. Corrado Pampaloni, Deputy Head and Chargé d'Affaires of the EU Delegation for the Pacific.

- Furthermore, I would like to thank the UN Multi-Country Office Suva for its support in the preparation of the workshop. Allow me to welcome Ms Ellen Alradi, Senior Peace and Development Advisor, Office of the Resident Coordinator, UN Multi-Country Office Suva, for being with us today.

- I would like to thank the international experts Ms. Angela Woodward, Deputy Executive Director, VERTIC, Mr Peter Barcroft, Director of Peace and Democracy Programme, Parliamentarians for Global Action, and Ms. Lorraine Kershaw, International Legal Adviser, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, who have been kind enough to join us here to share their knowledge and experience.
Let me also thank Ms. Lourdes Costacamps, Outreach Coordinator/Program Specialist, US Department of State, for being with us today.

Most of all, I would like to thank the participants - representatives from Australia, Fiji, Kiribas, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, who have made time to travel to Fiji to join our effort towards the further universalization of the BWC. I hope you find the workshop both inspiring and useful.

Over the next two days, we will discuss a wide range of issues related to the BWC: the treaty itself; its benefits and obligations, steps to join the BWC, national implementation experience from other States Parties in the region; and international cooperation and assistance.

Our objective in discussing these topics is to share information, perspectives and experiences. It is a collaborative exercise: an exchange among partners and peers. I would encourage you to participate as actively as possible.

We, the organisers of the workshop, hope as much as you to learn from the discussions and to develop a better understanding of what is required with respect to the further universalization of the Convention in this region.

If our work is to be a success, your input is vital. Please contribute freely to the discussions: ask questions, seek clarifications, challenge assumptions, and present an alternative point of view. We have scheduled time in the program for sharing national experiences and best practices adopted.

Finally, if there is anything we can help you with in the course of the workshop, please don't hesitate to ask. The workshop is for you: if there is a way we can make it work better, please let us know. Thank you again for your interest and participation. I am looking forward to a stimulating discussion over the next two days.