Thank you Mister President

- At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair to the 2019 Meeting of State Parties of the Biological Weapons Convention. I wish to assure you of my delegation’s full support and cooperation. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) for its valuable work and remain steadfast in its vision.

- Fiji aligns itself with the Statement delivered by the European Union, with its priorities to promote the implementation of the Convention.

- Mister President, Fiji remains fully committed to the biological and toxin weapons convention and its work on universalization. We wish to commend the BTWC and our development partners for having faith in us to promote the intricacies of the Convention in the region. We will make a separate statement on Agenda Item 8 given our involvement in the region as highlighted in the Report on the Universalisation referenced BWC/MSP/2019/3.
• The unprecedented threats posed by biological and toxin weapons allows member States to seriously consider the challenges to Health and disease outbreak. The technological and scientific advancement requires the Convention to remain responsive in this sphere.

• In our national capacity Mister President, we have established cooperation with our local University to accessing technical and scientific policy advice pertaining to Biology. We intend to strengthen the role of Biosecurity and our Health facilities such as the virus Lab and have in place a robust responsive mechanism in place. The review of our Biological & Toxins Weapons Convention Act 2011 literally underpins empowerment of these agencies including the roles and functions of our law enforcement agencies.

**Regional Efforts**

• Mister President, Fiji being the hub of the Pacific region has a key role in the universalisation, awareness and enforcement efforts in our region.

• We concur with the opening address from the High Representative of the Disarmament that a Strong Health System is crucial to
strengthen the enforcement of the Convention. The region is confronted with a number of issues that require the attention of this august forum.

- Key of which is the existential threat of Climate Change. Climate change is the single greatest challenge facing the Pacific as it exacerbates the structural, economic, health and security vulnerabilities of our region. The eminent rise in sea level would compel small islands states in the pacific to migrate to other neighbouring countries like Fiji and this in its self, has its own challenge to our already constrained health system.

- The increasing frequency and intensity of many natural disasters, weakens our ability to implement the Conventions and in the years to come, we seek the wisdom of BTWC to take note of this in small island developing countries such as in the Pacific.

- Given our vulnerabilities, for instance we have a health threat confronting the region now, which is the outbreak of measles in one of our countries which has now spread to other neighbouring countries including in Fiji.
National Efforts

• Mister President, we wish to underscore that with the outbreak of measles in October this year, there have been over 55 deaths and over 3,000 cases affecting children under four years old, with an expectation of 6,500 more people to be infected.

• Fiji has no measles and has totally eliminated the disease in early 2000, nevertheless with this recent outbreak, we have 10 reported cases which are under control. However, we wish to underscore the vulnerability our region is to such diseases and biological threat. Mister President, given the plight of our small and vulnerable economies we call on the BWC to:
  • Continue on to work on its implementation efforts in the region;
  • Continue to enhance international cooperation and exchanges for medicines, vaccines and partnership to strengthen our capacity in the region;
  • Continue to note the threat of climate change as a security threat in the region;
• Finally we commend the ISU for its efforts and likewise all our
development partners that have assisted in our implementation and
universalisation efforts for a safe and secure region.

• I Thank you Mister President.