Minister Kubuabola, Your Excellencies,

The United Kingdom extends its thanks to the Government of Fiji, the city of Nadi and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for hosting and co-organising this Biological Weapons Convention (BTWC) universalisation workshop for the Pacific Region.

As one of the founders of the BTWC over 40 years ago, the UK maintains a keen interest in this Convention and remains at the forefront of efforts to ensure its effectiveness and continued relevance in an ever changing world. The UK therefore welcomes this opportunity to contribute through the kind offices of colleagues in the Implementation Support Unit and emphasise the importance of universalisation of the BTWC as an important step towards a world free from the threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction.
The UK urges those States which remain non-signatories, or have yet to ratify or accede to the Convention to do so as soon as possible. Our focus now, and the objective of this workshop, is to provide the advice and assistance necessary to enable all those in this region to become full parties to the Convention and to be able to implement it effectively.

Simply put – the Convention remains the fundamental keystone in the global architecture to counter the misuse biological sciences for hostile purposes. We all aspire for a world free from the possible threat of biological warfare against humans, animals or plants and cannot afford to compromise or let down our guard.

It is in all our interests that the Convention remains effective and is global in its reach, that its prohibitions continue to be upheld, and that its proper place in combating infectious disease is recognised. Any use of BW would not only be illegal, but repugnant to all conscience. No effort should be spared to minimise this risk as the Convention’s preamble puts it. We must all keep this objective to

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the fore in our future national and collective efforts to sustain the Convention.

Our aim must now be to ensure that the Convention remains relevant and even more effective by striving to promote and achieve both universalisation and effective implementation by all States Parties.

The UK acknowledges that a variety of considerations may underlie the approach of those states not yet Party to the Convention now considering membership, balanced against other priorities. With this in mind, we would encourage states as a first step to set a clear timeline for becoming Parties to the Convention, demonstrating determination and commitment to a common goal.

The UK sees this workshop as an excellent opportunity for all - states already party to the Convention, including fellow Depositary states, the EU Delegation for the Pacific, the UNODA and the BTWC Implementation Support Unit – to share experience and best practice and to work together in a spirit of cooperation and openness to achieve the

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universal adherence to the Convention to which we aspire.

We also want to reiterate the UK’s readiness to share experience, offer assistance and engage with you. We want to continue and intensify dialogue on giving effect to the BTWC so that together we can achieve a safer world.

Thank you.