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**Statement on behalf of Fiji for the High-Level Panel on Migration,  
Environment and Climate Change, delivered by  
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and Chief Negotiator for the Fijian UNFCCC COP23 Presidency**

On behalf of Fiji, I would like to commend the secretariat of the IOM Council for organizing this high-level panel to create more awareness about the linkages between climate change, environment and migration and thank for inviting me here today to share my views on behalf of Fiji. It is evident that effective policy-making in any of these areas would strongly benefit from a holistic approach.

The issues we face as a human species today, are not one dimensional, but balanced on the edge of an interlinked and chaotic system. By addressing the nexus of environment and development we can begin to unleash real change and real progress and help the people who need to leave their homes better.

When people are forced to leave their homes, they often become even more vulnerable due to loss of jobs, belongings and social safety nets. For instance, fishermen may be forced to become farmers, and women may be exposed to harassment. At the same time, large migration waves may increase the pressure on the local environment and lead to deforestation or food shortage. The positive side is that migrants come with skills and can be seen as a valuable addition to the workforce of a nation if mobilized effectively.

It is important to understand to what extent climate and environmental factors are reasons for migration and which key climate and environmental factors need to be addressed to reduce the vulnerability of migrants and transform migration into an opportunity for economic development.

It is therefore good to see the strong movement towards identifying synergies and enhancing coherence in the inter-related multilateral processes.

For instance, earlier this year, in June, at the 35<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council, a resolution on Human Rights and Climate Change was adopted, which recognizes the linkages between human rights and a number of other policy areas, including climate-related loss and damage and displacement, gender and indigenous peoples. The inter-sessional panel organized by OHCHR on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October in Geneva was a very useful first step to understand the challenges that countries are facing in addressing migration due to the negative impacts of climate change. It also provided an opportunity for an initial exchange of best practices.

Fiji is looking forward to the OHCHR report next year on the gaps in human rights protection in the context of climate-related migration and displacement, and on the means of implementation needed to bridge these gaps in developing countries through adaptation and mitigation planning.

Also in June this year, Fiji chaired together with Sweden the Oceans Conference on Goal 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals on conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources in New York, which resulted in a Call for Action, recognizing the role of oceans for the implementation of the Paris Agreement and inviting countries to undertake adequate climate change mitigation and adaptation actions related to oceans. We know that the impacts of climate change on the ocean and marine ecosystems have a profound impact on livelihoods and mobility. The Call for Action is one way in which we have stood up to address this.

Another milestone towards enhancing coherence between climate change, environment and migration was the United Nations Climate Change summit in Bonn (COP23).

Fiji was proud and honoured to be elected as a President of COP23. As the first small island state to preside over the multilateral climate change negotiations, Fiji had the responsibility of bringing in sense of urgency into the process and ensuring that the voices of the most vulnerable are heard. This is a responsibility we did not take lightly, as islanders, we have seen over and over again what the destructive impact of climate change can do to our homes and our people. In a one degree warmer world, we are already living with the consequences of climate change and their impact every day and they influence every aspect of our lives.

In our view, COP23 was an overwhelming success. What was initially expected to be a low-profile working COP, turned into a strong political momentum for implementation. COP23 sent a clear signal to the world that all countries are in the same canoe, working hard and committed to undertake ambitious climate action, and to realize the vision of the Paris Agreement.

The Fijian COP23 Presidency delivered on the mandates, which it was expected to deliver and overachieved on the expectations for outcomes of this COP. For instance, through launching new processes and initiatives and breaking the deadlocks on a number of issues that had been under discussion for a long time, such as agriculture and long-term finance.

At COP23, the Fijian COP23 Presidency together with the Moroccan COP22 Presidency delivered as mandated by COP22 the design of the Talanoa Dialogue and launched this process, which will be held in the course of 2018. The Talanoa Dialogue establishes an inclusive and participatory process to allow governments, researchers, the private sector and the civil society, to share stories and showcase best practices on their nationally-determined climate ambitions under the Paris Agreement.

We hope that the outcomes will inspire governments to higher ambition before and after 2020 to reach the more ambitious range of the Paris Agreement goal of limiting the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

While important work remains to be done, COP23 made significant progress towards the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The contours of comprehensive Implementation Guidelines for the Paris Agreement are now in sight. COP23 made progress on all elements of these Guidelines and decided on how to further speed up the work to finalize it in 2018.

I would like to share with you, some of the other important outcomes of COP23 and next steps, which are relevant for the topic of discussion for this panel.

First, COP23 can truly be featured as the Peoples' COP. It is part of our mission to have the voices of the most vulnerable heard in the multilateral climate change negotiations during Fijian Presidency, which will continue until December 2018.

Fiji wove the Pacific identity, bringing our culture, music and songs to the UN process to inspire the delivery of stronger results – we created an atmosphere of warmth, inclusiveness and transparency; and at the heart of it all, we used the power of a COP Presidency to put people first. Because at the end of the day, what we are working for, is not for decisions and submissions, but for people and our planet. We wanted to make a connection between the complex multilateral climate change negotiations and the real, everyday concerns and aspirations of people over the world. We did many things differently and we hope that we changed the process for the better. This is one of the strongest legacies of this COP.

For instance, Fiji held the first open dialogue, where governments and the civil society discussed key issues related to the negotiations, national implementation of climate ambitions and how to engage the civil society better in national and international climate action. One of the immediate effects was a wider access of observers to the negotiating sessions.

Fiji also brought two children from small local communities who won a national climate speech competition in Fiji. They stole the hearts of the climate leaders at

the High-level segment and of the observers in the Climate Action zone with their stories on how climate change has impacted their village and their calls for urgent response of the international community to climate change.

COP23 adopted the first Gender Action Plan and operationalized the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform.

COP23 also launched the work on education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information so as to enhance actions under the Paris Agreement and decided to organize a workshop in May 2018, under Fijian Presidency, to develop a list of actions. Youth and representatives of the civil society will be invited to participate in this workshop.

We believe that by hearing the voices of the most vulnerable in the climate change negotiations, we will empower them to become agents of change, instead of victims of climate change.

Second, COP23 strengthened further the work of the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage and its Task Force on Displacement, which started in March this year. We await with interest the first report of the Task Force on Displacement in March next year. It is encouraging to see that the IOM is represented in the Task Force on Displacement in the person of Dina Ionesco. Indeed, one of the strengths of the Task Force is its integrated membership, which ensures that the work of the Task Force will similarly have an integrated approach.

During COP23, we launched the Fiji Clearing House for Risk-Transfer, which has the potential to provide millions of climate-vulnerable people over the world with access to affordable insurance against climate-related loss and damage, such as displacement.

COP23 also decided to organize under Fijian Presidency in May 2018, the Suva expert dialogue on Loss and Damage, which will raise awareness for the

vulnerability of small island states and explore options for mobilizing expertise, technology and support for the victims of climate change.

The Fijian COP23 Presidency also held together with Germany a High-Level Presidency event on Resilience and Insurance. We also held High-Level Presidency events on Health, Policy Coherence, the 2050 Pathway, Climate Change and Human Rights.

Moreover, the Fijian COP23 Presidency, together with Sweden, launched in response to the Call for Action of the Oceans Conference, the Oceans Pathway Partnership. This major new initiative intends to strengthen the link between climate change action and the health of the ocean, including in the UN Climate Change process and in national adaptation and mitigation planning.

It started a process to finding the proper space for the ocean in the UNFCCC by 2020. It will navigate the negotiation process and increase actions in the climate and ocean nexus for 1.5 degrees and ocean health. The reality is that is unlikely that we will reach our targets on 1.5 degrees without a healthy ocean and it is unlikely we will sustain a healthy ocean without staying below 1.5 degrees.

All these decisions and events will help directly to address the inter-linkages between migration, environment and climate change in the multilateral climate change negotiations.

As last, COP23 achieved important results for securing more funding for climate action on adaptation and mitigation, which is necessary to minimize the adverse impacts of climate change on people.

In 2018, the second year of our Presidency, Fiji will aim to promote higher ambition and further actions to prevent, minimize and divert the effects of climate change on people. We will also undertake to improve further the coherence between climate change and other policies, including on migration and displacement, such as those being developed under the Sendai Framework

for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 2030 Agenda, the development of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Pact for the Environment. In doing this, we will build upon the work of the Steering group of the Platform on Disaster Displacement.

I have to acknowledge that the success of COP23 and of our activities as a COP Presidency in 2018 was and will be only possible due to the support and constructive cooperation of all countries and stakeholders around the world.

At national level, Fiji is preparing for responding adequately to the predictions by science that extreme weather events will become more frequent and more intense in the future. The projected increase of climate-displaced people in the Pacific, and other regions will further increase our vulnerability. Displacement is not only a regional responsibility, but also a global one.

Small Island Developing States are at the forefront of climate change. In the Pacific, natural disasters and slow-onset events are already impacting the ability of our people to fully realise and enjoy their human rights. Some Fijian communities have relocated or are in the process of relocating due to this. Forced relocations can have a dissociating effect on communities.

Fiji has offered to give a permanent home to the populations of two of our closest neighbours who are already losing territory due to sea-level rise - Kiribati and Tuvalu. We will naturally work with the region and stakeholders to preserve human dignity in the mass movement of people when the time comes.

In the absence of an international legal framework to support us in this challenge, we hope that through this initiative, we are at least building the consensus that we need to adequately respond to a situation that is unique in human history.

The Fijian government has included the human right to a clean environment in our constitution. We have also taken the initiative of developing our own people-

centered relocation guideline that advocates for, plans, and pre-empts individual and community needs. This proactive work is to ensure that when communities relocate within Fiji, because of climate change, they do so in a way that protects and upholds the rights and dignities of the people involved.