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**STATEMENT BY MR. SIMIONE ROKOLAQA,  
SECOND SECRETARY,  
DURING THE THIRD COMMITTEE MEETING ON AGENDA ITEM 71(B)  
“HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE  
EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS”  
31 OCTOBER 2005, UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**

Mr. Chairman,

The connectivity between human rights and the empowerment of individuals is essential for bridging the gap between rhetoric and reality. The Report of the OHCHR cites human rights, security and development as the three pillars of the Secretary General's reform proposal. Each pillar helps nations protect the human rights of its citizens and assures that they can live a life of dignity and respect. We subscribe to the fact that human rights must be seen as an immediate, short-term, as well as long-term endeavor for the benefit of people across the globe.

Mr. Chairman,

The National implementation plans should reflect OHCHR's Plan of Action particularly in the areas of country engagement, leadership, and partnerships. The key challenge according to the plan is for OHCHR to scale up the implementation of international human rights norms and standards at the country-level.

The Fiji Human Rights Commission established in 1997, was specifically mandated to educate the public, to make recommendations on human rights, and to perform such other functions as conferred upon it by Parliament. The 1999 Act empowers the Commission to investigate allegations of HR violations and unfair discrimination in employment.

One of the main goals of the Fiji Constitution is the achievement of equal employment opportunity for all. Chapter 5 is devoted to the achievement of Social Justice and affirmative action and has been translated into the 2004 Social Justice Act. One of its sections requires Parliament to provide equal access to services such as education and training, land, housing, trade, and participation in decision-making to all groups.

Mr. Chairman,

We commend the work of the OHCHR in establishing and strengthening National Human Rights Institutions and providing technical assistance and advisory role to Member States in the promotion and protection of HR. In this regard, we acknowledge the assistance in support of the establishment of a Race Relations Unit within the Fiji Human Rights Commission. The unit will strengthen the work carried out by the Fiji Human Rights Commission.

We reiterate the call for governments to ensure that indigenous groups have free and equal access to the administration of justice. The recognition of the human rights and fundamental freedoms

of indigenous people has a direct impact on their enjoyment of civil, political, economical, and cultural rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Fiji supports the idea that good governance is an important component of democratic processes. Good governance ensures equity, rule of law, participatory process, and accountability but it cannot exist without human rights. The Fiji Human Rights Commission hosted an international round table meeting in December 2004 on National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) as promoters and protectors of good governance. Participants from nine countries, including observers from United Nations Entities based in Fiji and civil society, shared experiences in relation to the major common issues and challenges facing National Human Rights Institutions. They also identified practical actions that can be taken by National Institutions. The meeting's outcome was the adoption of the Suva Declaration which outlined the essential elements of good and effective governance.

Fiji supports the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which provides the opportunity to further the advancement of women, and the OHCHR efforts to empower women across the globe. It further targets the removal of the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life.

OHCHR's report emphasizes the need for women to have equal access to opportunities and resources so they can exercise their full potential and capacity to contribute to nation building and economic prosperity. In this regard, it is incumbent on Fiji to ensure that women are safe and protected from violence. The In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence Against Women is critical to understanding the challenges of protecting women. The study requests the Secretary-General to seize all opportunities to raise awareness and strengthen cooperation with relevant NGOs in the preparation of the study.

Fiji has made concerted efforts to reduce violence against women. In 1995 the Fiji Police adopted a "No Drop Policy" on all reported cases of domestic violence. The result of this policy is that all reports of violence against women are investigated and cases brought before the Magistrate. In May of the same year, a sexual offenses unit was established in the Police Department to handle specific cases of sexual assaults and abuse, and also making referrals for counseling. Recently, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre has been targeting the disciplined forces including the Fiji Police and the Fiji Military Forces through its male advocacy program. Fiji will continue to work in the area of women's rights and we will assist countries in the Pacific Region if requested.

Mr. Chairman,

Fiji endorses the proposal for a Human Rights Council, as an improvement upon the present arrangements. However, in order for the Council to be effective, the members have to be as widely represented as possible and not subjected to special reporting. Fiji welcomes the deployment of a Senior Human Rights Officer to the UNDP office in Fiji. This will strengthen the presence of the United Nations human rights effort on a subregional level.

We thank the High Commissioner for Human Rights for their report and hope that we can act upon its recommendations. My delegation reiterates its commitment to the foundations of human rights and calls for the cooperation and support by Member States to further strengthen the machinery.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.