



## SPEAKING NOTES

For Honourable Speaker

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### 147th IPU Assembly and related meetings

General Debate on the theme "Parliamentary action for peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16)"

Honourable Speaker

October 2023

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- The President
- Vice-President
- Honourable Members of Parliament
- Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning/afternoon to you all.

It is a great pleasure and privilege to join you today and I thank the IPU for extending the invitation to the Fijian Parliament to contribute towards the General Debate on the theme of Parliamentary action for peace, justice and strong institutions.

Parliaments have a constitutional responsibility to oversee how all of the SDGs are nationalised, implemented and supported by governments. As all are aware, Parliaments directly relate to SDG 16 which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provides access to justice for all and builds effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Parliaments are a key institution whose inclusiveness and effectiveness are essential to fostering peaceful and inclusive societies. By ensuring evidence-based and transparent budget allocations; providing accountability for government-led policy and law implementation; and integrating people's voices throughout their processes to ensure that laws and policies leave no one behind and reach those that need them the most, Parliaments' contribute and promote effective, accountable and inclusive decision-making.



The laws required to create the legal framework for the SDGs will have to be scrutinised and adopted by Parliaments. The annual state budget that allocates funding for SDG implementation will need to be passed by Parliaments.

To date, the Fijian Parliament has undertaken a series of initiatives to promote and ensure progress on SDG implementation. Recent efforts have focused, in particular, on mainstreaming and integrating the SDGs into the work of Parliamentary Committees as a means of exercising its executive oversight role in implementing the SDGs and legislative function.

Building upon a self-assessment exercise, the Fijian Parliament, along with its development partners, launched a guidance note on integrating the SDGs across the work of Parliament Committees, addressing the alignment of committee systems, structures and mandates to SDG-linked national development priorities, with baselines and agreed reporting processes on progress.

The Standing Committees that primarily focused on SDG 16 are the Justice, Law and Human Rights Committee and the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee. In exercising their oversight role, these Committees review the Annual Reports of institutions or agencies that fall within their purview and then pursue with the necessary inquisitive Committee work that is required. As of late, the Fijian Parliament is determined to improving and strengthening its Committee system by not only just reviewing annual reports but also be able to investigate or inquire into matters raised with the Committees.

Finally, Parliaments need to assess both how best to mainstream the SDGs into their work: through one overarching committee or through multiple, issue-specific committees, such as those on justice



and human rights. These can best be done within new or existing structures, through caucuses or Parliamentary groups.

Honourable colleagues, I sincerely look forward to the rest of the contributions this week, so that as legislators, we can implement actionable initiatives when we return to our respective countries and Parliaments.

Thank you and Vinaka Vakalevu.