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**Speech by the Speaker the Hon. Filimone Jitoko**  
*On the Occasion of the General Debate of the 151st IPU Assembly*

*17 – 23 October, 2025*  
*Geneva, SWITZERLAND*

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**“Upholding humanitarian norms and supporting humanitarian action in times of crisis”**

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- Honourable Chair and Vice President of the 151st Assembly;
- Honourable Vice President of the IPU;
- Honourable Speakers and Members of Parliament;
- Distinguished Guests.

Bula Vinaka and warm greetings from the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji.

It is a timely opportunity to address this esteemed Assembly as we convene under the critical theme: ***“Upholding humanitarian norms and supporting humanitarian action in times of crisis.”***

The theme compels us to look beyond the conflicts that dominate global headlines and turn our attention to the quieter, yet equally devastating emergencies that affect millions—natural disasters, forced migration and displacement, climate-induced crises, and the erosion of fundamental human rights that threaten the dignity of countless individuals.

But first, it would be remiss of me if I do not acknowledge and join the world in applauding peace that has descended upon the people of Gaza and of Palestine – long may it endure!

As a small island developing state, the climate crisis for Fiji is not a distant possibility—it is a lived reality. Fiji grapples daily with the harsh realities of the climate crisis—from intensifying cyclones to rising sea levels that displace families and stretch our resources thin. Yet, in the face of these challenges, we have found strength through international solidarity and the guiding framework of humanitarian law, which places human needs above political interests and helps safeguard our most vulnerable.

In moments of crisis, our Parliament: is the guardian of national legislation, breathing life into our global humanitarian commitments; serves as the watchdog of public accountability, ensuring that assistance reaches those who need it most; and it stands as the voice of the people.

Let me highlight some reflections from Fiji's perspective:

To truly uphold humanitarian norms, it is the duty of parliamentarians to ensure that domestic legislation aligns with international standards for human rights and humanitarian law. Fiji has demonstrated its commitment by ratifying the nine core international human rights treaties and actively advancing its obligations in our domestic legislations.

This dedication is evident in our forward-looking laws on environment, such as the Climate Change Act of 2021 and the Environmental Levy Act of 2017. Together, these legislative measures form a robust foundation for Fiji's climate strategy—addressing mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction in a unified approach; also giving practical effect to our international obligations under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

A very important issue on our environment of the Pacific Ocean is the concept of the Pacific Ocean as ‘Ocean of Peace’, championed by Fiji’s Prime Minister and Government, and recently adopted by the Pacific Island Forum Leaders’ in a Declaration at its Honiara meeting last month.

The Climate Change Act sets Fiji on a path to net-zero emissions by 2050, establishing systems for emissions tracking, institutional co-ordination, climate finance, marine protection, community relocation, and climate resilience, in national planning.

These efforts reflect Fiji’s unwavering resolve to turn global promises into meaningful, measurable progress at home.

A key example of Fiji’s commitment to climate action was taking tangible steps toward sustainability by eliminating single-use plastics in Chambers, introducing reusable bottles, and advancing e-Parliament initiatives to reduce paper waste. These efforts reflect a broader commitment to climate-conscious governance and resilience-building for the region, under the newly-established Pacific Inter-Parliamentary Association (PIPA), a milestone achievement of the Blue Pacific signed and sealed by the Parliaments of the region in August this year.

PIPA stands as a powerful symbol of our commitment to integration, resilience and democratic governance.

Protecting democratic principles during crises is essential. Emergency powers must be used with transparency and respect for human rights. Through its partnership with UNDP, our Parliament has strengthened legislative capacity, citizen engagement, and inclusive representation. This commitment is reflected in the current National Budget, which prioritises social protection and disaster resilience through –

- Increased support for vulnerable families, children, and the elderly;
- Funding for relocation of climate-affected communities; and
- Financial backing for NGOs and faith-based groups providing grassroots humanitarian aid.

Fiji's humanitarian approach is rooted in inclusive principles and practical action—strengthening democratic institutions, promoting transparency, and ensuring marginalised voices help shaped our policies. **This commitment extends to addressing climate-driven displacement, with a call for stronger legal protections, safe migration pathways, and climate justice.**

Finally, the Fijian Parliament stands firmly behind the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) and pledges to work with fellow SIDS and PSIDS Parliaments, to champion equity and resilience. Let this Assembly spark bold, co-ordinated action—where dialogue leads to decisive progress.

*Vinaka vakalevu – Thank you!*

**-ENDS-**