



4 August 2023

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**Trade Policy Review Body**

FJI

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING\* HELD ON 19 AND 21 JULY 2023

Delegations are invited to submit factual corrections, if any, on their own statement to the Secretariat (Daniela Salas: [danielamariana.salas@wto.org](mailto:danielamariana.salas@wto.org), or to [tprd@wto.org](mailto:tprd@wto.org)) no later than 21 August 2023.

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**Organe d'examen des politiques commerciales**

FIDJI

PROJET DE COMPTE RENDU DE LA RÉUNION\* TENUE LES 19 ET 21 JUILLET 2023

Les délégations sont invitées à soumettre leurs éventuelles corrections factuelles concernant leurs propres déclarations au Secrétariat (Daniela Salas: [danielamariana.salas@wto.org](mailto:danielamariana.salas@wto.org), ou [tprd@wto.org](mailto:tprd@wto.org)) le 21 août 2023 au plus tard.

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**Órgano de Examen de las Políticas Comerciales**

FJI

PROYECTO DE ACTA DE LA REUNIÓN\* CELEBRADA LOS DÍAS 19 Y 21 DE JULIO DE 2023

Las delegaciones pueden enviar a la Secretaría (Daniela Salas: [danielamariana.salas@wto.org](mailto:danielamariana.salas@wto.org), o [tprd@wto.org](mailto:tprd@wto.org)) a más tardar el 21 de agosto de 2023 las correcciones fácticas que deseen introducir en sus propias declaraciones.

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\*In Original language only/En langue originale seulement/En el idioma original solamente.

**TRADE POLICY REVIEW**

Fiji

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

*Chairperson: H.E. Mr Saqer Abdullah Almoqbel (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)*

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## 1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON

1.1. The fourth Trade Policy Review of Fiji was held on 19 and 21 July 2023. The Chairperson, H.E. Mr Saqer Abdullah Almoqbel (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) welcomed the delegation of Fiji, headed by the Honourable Mr Manoa Seru Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications; H.E. Ambassador Luke Daunivalu, Permanent Representative of Fiji to the WTO; the rest of the delegation; and the discussant, H.E. Ambassador George Mina (Australia).

1.2. The Chairperson was pleased that, in addition to physical presence, the meeting also benefited from the Interprefy online connection, allowing for a wider participation of the Membership. Members were informed that, in agreement with Fiji, participants to the Advanced Trade Policy Course would attend the Review meeting.

1.3. The Chairperson recalled the purpose of TPRs and the main elements of procedures for the meeting. The Report by Fiji is contained in document WT/TPR/G/444, and that of the WTO Secretariat in document WT/TPR/S/444.

1.4. Questions by the following delegations were submitted in writing before the deadline: United Kingdom, Chinese Taipei, Australia, Brazil, New Zealand, Costa Rica, China, European Union, and Singapore. The following delegations submitted written questions after the deadline: United States, Dominican Republic, Argentina, Canada, Iceland.

1.5. The Chairperson first recalled some elements of the Fiji's previous Review and developments since then, as well as by identified some key issues arising from the advance written questions submitted by Members for this TPR.

1.6. At the time of Fiji's previous Review in 2016, Members praised Fiji for its remarkable economic performance, and for its sound macroeconomic policies that underpinned a solid GDP growth. They welcomed various steps undertaken by Fiji to further improve its business environment, facilitate foreign participation in the economy, with a view to attracting foreign investment. Members also praised Fiji's efforts to modernize wide-ranging aspects of its trade and related policies in areas such as competition, government procurement, foreign investment, SPS measures, standards and agriculture. They took note of the significant risks posed by climate change to Fiji's economic and social development.

1.7. During Fiji's previous Review, while Members were appreciative of its positive economic outcomes and numerous reforms, some raised concerns regarding the gap between applied MFN and bound tariff rates, together with a relatively low number of bound tariff lines. Fiji was encouraged to address this issue in order to increase the transparency and predictability of its trade regime.

1.8. The Chairperson focused on the developments since Fiji's last Review. During the period under review, Fiji continued to implement strategic measures geared at strengthening its economy and consolidating its resilience in the face of the numerous climate-related and other structural challenges. In recent years, Fiji's economic performance was undermined by various shocks. In 2016, Fiji was struck by a cyclone which led to production losses and destruction of physical infrastructure. The COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictive measures also led to a significant GDP contraction in 2020 and 2021.

1.9. Fiji's current long and medium terms vision attaches a significant importance to environmental sustainability. It also considers women empowerment and the promotion of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) as a favoured way to promote inclusive growth and broaden Fiji's economic base.

1.10. Various investment-related measures were implemented by Fiji with a view to attracting investments into sectors with high export potential. In particular, the adoption and implementation of the Investment Act in 2021 eliminated certain registration and screening requirements. The Act also provides for foreign investment restrictions by the means of reserved and restricted activities, on which Members wanted more clarification.

1.11. As highlighted in the advance written questions, several trade and investment measures were of great interest to Members. In particular, they sought clarification on specific initiatives to further improve foreign investment framework, and actions envisaged by Fiji to ensure the predictability of its trade regime through tariff binding.

1.12. Questions were also raised regarding notification of trade-related measures, WTO participation, imports control, SPS regulations, customs issues, government procurement, intellectual property rights, sectoral policies, measures to promote environmental sustainability and digital economy.

1.13. In total, Fiji received over 169 advance written questions from 14 delegations for the current Review, out of which 92 questions from 9 delegations were sent within the established deadline. Prior to the meeting, Fiji already provided written replies to all questions submitted within the established deadline.

1.14. The meeting was a good opportunity for Members to discuss in greater detail issues of interest to them and of systemic importance to the multilateral trading system. The Chairperson looked forward to a fruitful exchange.

1.15. The Chairperson closed his introductory remarks by wishing Fiji a very successful fourth Trade Policy Review.

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## **2 OPENING STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI (THE HONOURABLE MR MANOA SERU KAMIKAMICA)**

2.1. Chair, H.E. Mr Saqer Abdullah Almoqbel, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Permanent Representative to the WTO; discussant, H.E. Mr George Mina, Australian Permanent Representative to the WTO, Excellencies, WTO Secretariat, Ladies and Gentlemen.

2.2. *Bula Vinaka* and good morning to you all. I bring warm greetings from the Government and people of my country Fiji. It is a pleasure to be here at the World Trade Organization.

2.3. The Fiji Government welcomes the fourth Review of Fiji's trade policy by the WTO, and I am pleased to be here today to present and discuss Fiji's trade and investment policies and our future development aspirations.

2.4. As Fiji's Minister for Trade and Deputy Prime Minister, on behalf of Fiji and its people, I extend warm greetings and sincere gratitude to engage in this crucial dialogue that underpins the very essence of our nation's economic growth and prosperity.

2.5. At the outset, I would like to acknowledge the WTO Secretariat for the comprehensive Report. I would like to also thank H.E. Ambassador George Mina of Australia for taking up the role of the discussant for Fiji's Trade Policy Review.

2.6. Fiji has provided written responses to all the advanced written questions, as well as those questions that were submitted past the deadline. We received over 100 questions and we attempted to answer them all in a short space of time. We thank all the WTO Members for their insightful and constructive questions, as well as their engagement throughout this process, including your presence here today.

2.7. Trade has long been the lifeblood of Fiji's economic growth and development, ingrained deeply within the fabric of our society. From the fertile fields of our farmers to the skilled hands of our artisans, from the creativity of our entrepreneurs to the inviting warmth of our hospitality industry, Fiji's trade landscape blossoms, driven by a collective determination to connect with the world and showcase the richness of our culture and products. It is through trade that we expand horizons, open new opportunities, and foster innovation.

2.8. Our dependence on international trade is not merely a choice. It is a necessity shaped by the unique geographic, demographic, and economic factors that characterize Fiji. With a relatively small yet vibrant domestic market, we understand that our pathway to progress lies in our ability to embrace global connections, harnessing the potential of international trade and supply chains to fuel our economy and uplift the livelihoods of our people.

2.9. This is why Fiji acknowledges the critical role of the WTO in facilitating a rules-based, transparent and equitable global trading system. As we navigate an increasingly interconnected world, the WTO remains instrumental in ensuring that all nations, regardless of size, can participate in international trade on fair and just terms. This is why we need a strong rules-based multilateral trading system.

2.10. As we embark on the Review of our trade policy, we look forward to engaging with all the WTO Members in the spirit of cooperation, with the hope that this review will be an opportunity to strengthen Fiji's trade and economic policy and in the process create a stronger, fairer, and more prosperous global trading environment for all.

2.11. Those that were present during Fiji's last Trade Policy Review in February 2016, would recall that during the presentation in this very chamber, Fiji was in the grips of the strongest tropical cyclone ever to make landfall in the Southern Hemisphere. Tropical Cyclone Winston, a Category 5 cyclone, caused extensive and widespread destruction to our homes, schools, hospitals, and critical infrastructure, costing us about one third of our gross domestic product (GDP).

2.12. Since our last Review, Fiji has encountered even more frequent cyclones and floods that have tested the resilience of our economy and our people. Climate change remains a formidable adversary, with cyclones and hurricanes of increased frequency and intensity wreaking havoc on our

infrastructure and agriculture, hindering our economic progress. Our experience with natural disasters and climate change has served as a stark reminder of the importance of integrating climate resilience into our trade policies.

2.13. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these challenges, posing unparalleled health and economic crises for our nation and our citizens. The pandemic, apart from bringing suffering, shut down our tourism sector and as a result our economy endured one of the highest contractions of GDP in the world.

2.14. With the new Government taking office in December last year, Fiji is well on the path of recovery. Our economy grew by 18.6% last year and a further 8% this year and is forecasted to continue on the growth path by 3.8% next year, despite global challenges of dampened growth in our major trading partners and continuing crisis plaguing the world economy.

2.15. One of the most pressing obstacles we are confronted with in international trade is the escalating impact of non-tariff barriers faced by Fijian traders. These barriers impede the smooth flow of goods and services, disproportionately affecting the livelihoods of our communities engaged in trade. Addressing these issues is crucial for Fiji, to ensure fair and equitable participation in the global marketplace.

2.16. In the face of these adversities, Fiji remains steadfast in its commitment to formulating robust policies and strategies to navigate the complexities of global trade. As part of our economic diversification agenda, we are supporting industries that have proven to be resilient during the COVID-19 crisis.

2.17. Apart from tourism, there is intense focus by the Fiji Government on renewable energy, green and blue solutions such as recycling, commercial agriculture and aquaculture with strategic local or foreign investors, manufacturing especially in renewable spaces and niche products, the fast-growing BPO sector, education and ICT/data warehousing opportunities.

2.18. To address the rising challenges of non-tariff barriers, Fiji is engaging in constructive dialogue and collaboration with our trade and economic partners, seeking mutually beneficial solutions that facilitate smooth trade and investments flows, promote job creation and sustainable development.

2.19. One example of such an engagement is Fiji's participation in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) for Prosperity, which aims to fuel economic activity and investment, promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth through negotiation of four key pillars: (i) trade; (ii) supply chains; (iii) clean economy; and (iv) fair economy (tax and anti-corruption).

2.20. In May this year, the IPEF partners substantially concluded negotiations on the supply chain pillar. The IPEF Supply Chain Agreement is a first-of-its-kind international agreement, which aims to increase the resilience, efficiency, productivity, sustainability, transparency, diversification, security, fairness, and inclusivity of their supply chains through both collaborative activities and individual actions taken by each IPEF partner.

2.21. To overcome the multifaceted challenges facing Fiji, we recognize the vital role that support and assistance from our trade partners play. We remain committed to fostering and strengthening regional and international partnerships to unlock new trade opportunities and promote sustainable economic growth.

2.22. I wish to emphasize the priorities that lie at the heart of our newly elected Government's vision for economic growth and building resilience through international trade.

2.23. Fiji recognizes that a diversified economy is vital for stability as it allows us to be less susceptible to external shocks. While we recognize the contributions of our traditional industries, such as agriculture and tourism, we are committed to exploring new sectors and avenues for economic expansion. By promoting investments in renewable energy, ICT, BPO, manufacturing, film making and other creative industries, and other emerging sectors, we aim to reduce over-reliance on specific industries and create a more resilient economic landscape.

2.24. The backbone of Fiji's economy lies in our vibrant community of micro, small, and medium enterprises. We view MSME empowerment critical to fostering inclusive growth and reducing income inequality. Through targeted capacity-building programmes, improved access to finance, and enhanced market linkages, we seek to nurture our MSMEs' entrepreneurial spirit and enable them to thrive in both local and international markets.

2.25. Fiji has undertaken significant efforts to improve the business environment and enhance trade facilitation within our nation. Recognizing the crucial role of a business-friendly climate in attracting investment and promoting trade, Fiji has implemented a range of reforms to streamline processes, reduce bureaucracy, and foster an environment that encourages entrepreneurship and innovation.

2.26. Additionally, Fiji is taking substantial steps in modernizing our trade facilitation environment, with the assistance of international organizations such as UNCTAD and the World Bank, and International Plant Protection Convention.

2.27. As an island nation, the efficient movement of goods and services is paramount for Fiji's trade competitiveness. Our commitment to trade facilitation encompasses streamlining customs procedures, enhancing port infrastructure, and leveraging technology to expedite cross-border transactions. By reducing trade barriers and simplifying administrative processes, we strive to create an enabling environment that encourages trade and investment.

2.28. Allow me to highlight the paramount importance of the conclusion of the second wave of the negotiations on the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement for Fiji. As a nation deeply connected to the ocean, fisheries play a vital role in our economy, food security, and cultural heritage. Thus, the successful conclusion of these negotiations holds significant implications for our nation's sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

2.29. During the WTO 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference, recognizing the urgency of addressing the challenges faced by our oceans, Fiji led the charge, on behalf of the Pacific nations and the ACP, in seeking an outcome on the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies.

2.30. Fiji's commitment to the cause goes beyond words. We have tabled a comprehensive proposal followed by a text, for the negotiation of the remaining issues on the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. Our proposal seeks to strike a balance, taking into account the diverse interests and circumstances of all Member States. We stand resolute in our commitment to driving the negotiations on the remaining issues forward and earnestly seek the support and partnership of our fellow WTO Members, with a view to conclude negotiations by MC13 in February 2024. Fiji's Permanent Mission to Geneva is reaching out to Members to socialize the text and answer any questions that Members may have on it.

2.31. Fiji notes that there have been many questions from Members regarding our outstanding notifications to the WTO. Rest assured that Fiji's inability to meet its notification obligations is independent of Fiji's commitment to WTO. One of the primary challenges in meeting WTO notification requirements is capacity constraints, inadequate data, and competing priorities, such as addressing pressing domestic issues.

2.32. In response to the capacity limitations, Fiji is actively engaged in developing capacity and working with development partners such as the UNDP and the New Zealand Government, in addressing these capacity gaps.

2.33. We have also received several questions regarding women participation in business and cross-border trade. Fiji recognizes the importance of promoting women empowerment in employment, business entrepreneurship, and cross-border trade. Fiji has adopted gender mainstreaming in the National Budget process, and line Ministries play a critical role in encouraging more women participation in business, entrepreneurship, company boards and in cross-border trade.

2.34. We also received questions on the environment and our role in the international and multilateral forum. As stated earlier, climate change continues to pose an existential threat to Fiji. We call on the entire WTO Membership to ensure that through responsible and sustainable trade we are able to mitigate the effects of climate degradation and environment exploitation. Our unique ecosystem and biodiversity help us maintain livelihoods for our rural and maritime communities and

supports our largest industry, tourism. Thus, Fiji's advocacy of environment and climate change is a matter of our survival.

2.35. As I round up my remarks this morning, on behalf of my delegation, I wish to express our gratitude for the opportunity to engage in this constructive process. I also extend our sincere appreciation to all Members for their valuable questions, contributions and feedback. Those contributions will be instrumental in shaping our future trade policies.

2.36. Fiji is committed to multilateralism and remains determined in preserving and furthering the basic principles and objectives that underpin the multilateral trading system. Having a fully fledged Mission in Geneva, is testament to our commitments, even though it is challenging for a small island nation to have a presence in Geneva and allocate resources.

2.37. Thank you for the opportunity to present our Trade Policy Review and we look forward to a productive and constructive conversation. *Vinaka* and thank you.



### 3 STATEMENT BY THE DISCUSSANT

3.1. *Bula* (hello), *Ni Sa Bula Vinaka* (hello and good health), *Yadra* (good morning)

3.2. Let me begin by welcoming the Fiji delegation, headed by Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications, the Honourable Mr Manoa Seru Kamikamica, and my friend and colleague, Ambassador Luke Daunivalu, Permanent Secretary Mr Shaheen Ali, and their teams that are here today. *Bula* to you all

3.3. I was in Nadi, Fiji, with the Director-General of the WTO and with Ambassador Daunivalu and colleagues last November to discuss the needs of the Pacific and to discuss the fisheries subsidies achievement.

3.4. As my friend Ambassador from Samoa, Nella Pepe Tavita-Levy, said we said *Bula* every two minutes. Sometimes we felt all *bula*-ed out. But if we learn a little bit more about what this powerful and heavily used word means, we'll learn more about Fiji. So that's why I'm speaking a little bit about this. Because *Bula* is the Fijian for hello but as I learnt in Fiji - it is also an affirmation of life. It is an encapsulation of the spirit of Fiji, our friends, our brothers and sisters, and our neighbours.

3.5. We thank you, Deputy Prime Minister, for bringing this spirit of life to Geneva. Let me also thank both Fiji and the Secretariat for their high-quality reports, which enable Members to form a deeper understanding of Fiji's trade and economic policies and are the basis for our exchanges today.

#### Personal reflection

3.6. It is a pleasure to act as discussant at Fiji's fourth Trade Policy Review.

3.7. I am particularly pleased to serve here as Fiji and Australia are both part of a Pacific *Vuvale* – a "Pacific family". I had the great pleasure of witnessing first hand the power of those family bonds at the WTO's 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference. Of course, I'm talking about the work we did together, Fiji, Australia and the Pacific in delivering the historic Fisheries Subsidies Agreement.

3.8. On the potential brink of collapse in the last hours of MC12, it was Fiji that delivered an impassioned and morally powerful request for WTO Ministers to return to the table and fulfil their commitment to the sustainability of our oceans – it was one of those rare moments you see in diplomacy where leadership and the ability to speak truth to power changed hearts and minds. It sprung us into action and we worked closely with Fiji and the region to find a solution that could lock-in the gains we made and guarantee a commitment to the second wave of negotiations. Through that night we were able to persuade others to join us and secure the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement. So, congratulations, Minister, for your country's leadership.

3.9. I'll use these remarks to focus on three broad headings whilst drawing out some key observations.

3.10. Firstly, I will take a look at how Fiji has performed since its last TPR. Secondly, I will identify some of the main recent changes in Fiji's trade and investment policies. Finally, I will highlight some of the main areas of interest that were raised through Members' questions and in the reports.

#### Fiji's performance since the last Trade Policy Review

3.11. First, the overall economic context. This review comes at a difficult and challenging time for the global economy, for international cooperation and the multilateral trading system as well as for Fiji.

3.12. The COVID-19 pandemic, Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine and the devastating, worsening and more frequent impacts of natural disasters and climate change have all impacted Fiji's economic environment in recent years. With an important services and tourism sector Fiji has been particularly buffeted by considerable challenges in recent years. Fiji is still recovering from the devastating impact of COVID-19 and the distressing occurrence of two recent major Tropical Cyclones (in December 2020 and 2021).

3.13. I applaud the Fijian people's resilience and the impressive private sector-led recovery.

3.14. Despite these shocks, the Fijian economy is fundamentally strong. It experienced nine consecutive years of growth from 2010-2018. Trade is a driver of that strength, and the reports highlight that Fiji's trade policy settings have supported its growth, its development and is supporting its recovery.

3.15. Trade has always been a central pillar of Fiji's economy. Fiji has been a trading nation for over 3,500 years. Early on, the trade winds brought a wide range of vegetables, pigs and a style of pottery known as Lapita-ware from Melanesia into Fiji. Within Fiji, fertile regions in south Viti Levu near Sigatoka became known as the "salad bowl of Fiji", with agriculture trade within Fiji supporting food security in less fertile regions and more populated cities.

3.16. Today, trade is just as important to Fiji's economy, and Fiji's trade policy is underpinning the recovery from and recent natural disasters. Indicators point to a robust growth outlook with Fiji the second fastest growing national economy in the world in 2022 (growth estimated at 15.6%). The key indicators supporting growth for 2022 include visitor arrivals (1,912.5%), investment lending (25.0%), imports of investment goods (13.6%), and personal remittances (23.1%).

3.17. My first key observation is that trade has played a key role in Fiji's growth and development across its history, and supports its recovery from economic shocks. Its open, outward facing trade policy is a key driver of its development and its reforms will continue strengthen Fiji's sustainable development.

#### **Fiji is a powerful voice for the system**

3.18. Recognizing the important role that trade has always played and continues to play for Fiji's economy, it comes as no surprise that Fiji's engagement in the multilateral trading system is significant.

3.19. And this leads me to my second key observation. Fiji makes an outsized contribution to the multilateral trading system. As we witnessed first-hand at MC12, and as the reports and questions from Members identify – Fiji is an important contributor to the trade policy system. Fiji has a powerful voice in the multilateral trading system. It has a voice of authority on issues of sustainability, on fisheries subsidies, on climate issues, on development considerations and on the importance of the multilateral trading system in underpinning global prosperity, security, and development.

3.20. Its voice helped deliver the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. Fiji initiated the WTO Dialogue on Plastics Pollution, of which Australia is also a proud coordinator alongside Fiji. It is a firm believer and calls for trade to play its important role in the challenges facing our environment. Fiji is a critical participant in the Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD). In the questions for this TPR, recognizing Fiji's role on trade and sustainability issues a number of Members highlighted their interest in Fiji's implementation of its climate change policies and mitigation measures.

3.21. Fiji's voice helps the WTO deliver – but it also helps remind the world that the global trading system, underpinned by a fully functioning Dispute Settlement System is critical for countries like Fiji. The system provides confidence in the predictable enforcement of global trade rules and ensures that Members' rights and obligations can be enforced, regardless of their size or power. I welcome Fiji's commitment to the system and encourage Fiji to amplify its voice in pursuit of the reestablishment of system. While the current dysfunction continues, I would also encourage Fiji and other Members to join the Multi-party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA).

3.22. Similarly, I would encourage Fiji to lift its powerful voice in its calls for reform of agriculture. The Fijian agricultural sector employs, directly or indirectly, close to two thirds of Fiji's labour force and supports the livelihoods of 27% of Fiji's population. Prone to the effects of climate change and as an island country, Fiji recognizes international trade is central to Fiji's food security. Unfortunately, many Members continue to provide trade distorting domestic support – over USD 800 billion (of which 87% is harmful to the environment, or human health and is trade distorting) – which threatens global food security. Fiji's voice on the issue of agricultural subsidy reform, just like on fisheries,

could be powerful in propagating reform that supports food security, development, livelihoods, and the climate.

### **The main changes and developments in Fiji's economic, trade and investment policies**

3.23. Now let me turn to some of Fiji's major reforms and development. And at this point I would like to share my third key observation – Fiji's economy is modernizing rapidly. This modernization, supported by Fiji's trade and investment policies, are critical to securing Fiji's long-term sustainable development.

3.24. Fiji's strategic vision, as highlighted in its National Development Plan relies on two pillars:

- (i) ensuring inclusive socio-economic development to improve living standards of citizens; and
- (ii) promoting transformational strategic actions to maximize Fiji's potential.

3.25. Fiji is working to continue to modernize its economy and mature its trade and investment policies. It places emphasis on promoting the development of MSMEs, empowering youth and women, and building an environmentally sustainable economy. The new coalition government's raft of new programmes will support these goals – including its programmes to facilitate business training, support business advisory services, increase access to finance, develop young entrepreneurs, and enhance trade.

3.26. Its National Export Strategy, currently under review, continues to serve as a guideline to achieve sustainable growth in export competitiveness, value addition, and diversification – and recognizes the key role of exports in Fiji's economic stability.

3.27. Fiji's stated trade policy objectives of diversification, meaningful market access, investment stimulation, human capital, manufacturing and services capacity building, and commitment to gender and environmental protection are all notable. I would like to draw particular attention to this Coalition Government's recent endeavours to consult the private sector in its policy formulation, as evidenced by the reestablishment of the National Economic Summit this year.

3.28. Since the last TPR, Fiji has undertaken reforms to promote investment, trade, and economic growth. As part of the reform package, Fiji now has an Investment Policy Statement that sets the vision, objectives, and principles of the Fiji Government for investment growth. The Investment Policy Statement identified the policy and strategic changes required to further improve the investment environment in Fiji.

3.29. Digitalization represents a key solution to narrowing the vast trade distances in the Pacific and the integration of urban and rural markets. Fiji continues to lead the region in digitization and digitalization, with the Government committing to the benefits of digitalization in accessing international markets through e-commerce. The strength of Fiji's Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector, for example, was demonstrated through their continued reliable operation throughout the pandemic.

3.30. Which brings me to a few key areas of interest identified in this TPR.

### **Main areas of interest in this Trade Policy Review**

3.31. As an active participant in the multilateral trading system, it is not surprising that Fiji received a number of written questions for this review from 14 WTO Members.

3.32. Members are interested in:

- Understanding more about how Fiji intends to implement its climate change goals, recognizing the firm commitments made by Fiji through the adoption of its Climate Change Act (2001) amongst others.
- How Fiji intends to continue to support economic recovery. Members recognized the strong private sector led response underpinned by innovative economic policy by Fiji's Government.

- Understanding the implications of its ratification of the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement in 2017, and whether there are remaining trade facilitation challenges faced by Fiji.
- How Fiji intends to support increases in productivity in its agriculture sector.
- Recognizing Fiji's important role in concluding the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, could Fiji provide and update on its domestic efforts to accept the Agreement?
- Noting the important role of the services sector and the growth of Fiji's outsourcing sector, how does Fiji intend to further promote competition and growth in the sector?
- Recognizing Fiji's commitment to youth empowerment and women's economic involvement how does Fiji intend to further incorporate these goals into its trade and investment strategies?

### **Concluding Remarks**

3.33. Since its 2016 TPR, Fiji has made impressive trade policy revisions in the trying global and regional economic context. I strongly believe that Fiji's encouraging fundamental economic policy, commitment to private sector consultation, and recognition of its role as a leader in the global trading system clearly demonstrates Fiji is on the right track for economic recovery and growth.

3.34. Fiji has a powerful voice at the WTO and is committed to the multilateral trading system. Trade has and continues to be a critical underpinning of Fiji's economic success and supported by strong policy will continue to support the growth and modernization of Fiji's economy.

3.35. I hope that we will have a constructive and useful exchange over the next few days in order to improve our understanding of Fiji's policies and practices and their future direction. I wish Fiji a very successful fourth Trade Policy Review.

## 4 STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### UNITED KINGDOM

4.1. I would like to extend a warm welcome to the delegation of Fiji to their fourth Review, led by Deputy Prime Minister, Honourable Mr Manoa Seru Kamikamica. Let me also thank you, Chair, and our distinguished discussant, Ambassador George Mina, for your insights.

4.2. As fellow Commonwealth members, the United Kingdom holds strong and enduring ties with Fiji. It is in fact through the Commonwealth and the Trade Ministers meeting, that our Minister for International Trade, Minister Huddleston, was able to recently meet with yourself, Deputy Prime Minister, for what I am told was a very constructive discussion on how we can further strengthen our trading ties.

4.3. So, let me start by address our trading relationship, I am delighted that Fiji, alongside other Pacific States, has secured duty-free quota-free access to the UK market under the UK-Pacific Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). We are currently looking to arrange our first meeting of the Trade Committee established under this agreement which will enable us to develop a shared agenda for the future of our trading relationship and allow us to establish the necessary governance for the implementation of the EPA. We look forward to engaging further with Fiji on its tariff liberalization schedule, following the updated schedule it agreed with their EU counterparts.

4.4. We also welcome the achievements of Fijian businesses under the UK Trade Partnership Programme. Last September, delicious Fijian ginger was represented at a London food fair, and through the support of UK Trade Partnership three products received Great Taste Awards – an accolade recognized as a reliable stamp of excellence among major food buyers which provides a gateway to exciting opportunities for producers. This year we are scaling up ambition of the UK Trade Partnership programme to promote Fijian beauty products.

4.5. Alongside these plans, we are aware that Fiji is keen to diversify its export market and welcomes Fiji's intentions for sustainable hardwood exports, which we believe will help contribute towards mitigating harmful climate change. We also welcome the growing influence and importance of the tourism sector in Fiji, which contributes to roughly 38% of GDP. The UK strongly supports diversification to strengthen growth and economic resilience and is keen to hear from Fiji about further plans, and opportunities to support, diversification.

4.6. If I could now turn to reflect on Fiji's commendable presence here in Geneva. Fiji is recognized as providing an active and constructive voice across various WTO files, not only representing its own interests, but also strongly advocating for the interests of other Small Island Developing States and Pacific countries. This activism and influence extend across the rest of multilateral Geneva as well and I congratulate Ambassador Luke Daunivalu for the excellent work of his delegation.

4.7. This is exemplified in the fisheries negotiations, where Fiji's constructive engagement contributed towards the landmark Fisheries Subsidies Agreement at MC12. Since then, Fiji's recent proposal on Overfishing and Overcapacity pillar offered new elements and sparked a lot of interest from Members. The UK applauds this engagement from Fiji, and SIDS more broadly, and we look forward to continued constructive discussions to deliver an ambitious and strong agreement which protects our fishing resources, coastal communities and fully delivers on SDG Mandate 14.6.

4.8. In the Committee on Trade and Development, Fiji plays a vital role as the Pacific Group coordinator, highlighting the difficulties of Members from that region, particularly the SIDS, given the unique vulnerabilities they face. The UK is eager to work closely with Fiji and other SVEs to identify how to best build upon the small economies report published earlier this year.

4.9. Finally, I want to draw attention to the work Fiji does in the environment space. As co-chair of the plastics dialogue Fiji has facilitated vital discourse around the challenges of Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade. I would like to emphasize the UK's commitment to the various environmental aims of the WTO and our support for Fiji, as they, like many other SIDS, face the most direct and critical impacts of the climate crisis and other environmental challenges. One example of our partnership in this space is a joint event we will be hosting on environmental services at the forthcoming Public Forum in September – to which we are particularly looking forward.

4.10. We also recognize the progress that Fiji has made over the review period regarding WTO notifications, and we would encourage our Fijian colleagues to continue this positive trend to enhance transparency further.

4.11. To conclude, we are grateful to Fiji for engaging in this important transparency exercise and wish them a most successful fourth Review.

## AUSTRALIA

4.12. We warmly welcome the Fiji delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications; the Honourable Mr Manoa Seru Kamikamica. The partnership between Australia and Fiji is strong and enduring, underpinned by the *Vuvale* Partnership and membership of the Pacific Island Forum. Fiji is an important partner for Australia.

4.13. We note the strong and effective cooperation between Australia and Fiji at the WTO including with your Permanent Representative, H.E. Luke Daunivalu.

4.14. Our partnership played an important role in securing the successful conclusion at MC12 of the first phase of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement, and we recognize Fiji's leadership in achieving this outcome. We welcome Fiji's deep engagement in the second wave of negotiations. Fiji's proposal to curb subsidies contributing to overcapacity and overfishing is testimony to Fiji's commitment to the negotiations. We commit to working closely with Fiji to pursue an ambitious and effective Agreement.

4.15. We also acknowledge Fiji's leadership on climate, its ambitious domestic reforms and its efforts to align multilateral trade and environment initiatives. Trade and the multilateral trading system must be part of the solution to environmental problems, including climate change. We note Fiji's ongoing commitment to ensuring that the multilateral trading system plays its part in responding to climate issues and reiterate our commitment to work alongside Fiji in pursuance of this goal.

4.16. Australia is a proud co-coordinator of the Dialogue of Plastic Pollution at the WTO, which Fiji initiated – for which we commend Fiji's leadership. We look forward to working alongside Fiji to drive the initiative towards "concrete, pragmatic and effective" outcomes at MC13 and beyond.

4.17. We note the growth of e-commerce within Fiji's economy, for example its Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector. Australia encourages Fiji to consider building further on this by joining the WTO Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on Electronic Commerce. The digital trade rules that JSI participants are negotiating stand to support developing countries to engage further in digital trade, boost digital inclusion and enable enterprises, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, to access global markets to the benefit of workers, businesses, and consumers.

4.18. On agriculture, we note that 87% of agricultural support – of over USD 800 billion in global support – is trade distorting, or harmful to human health and the environment. Agriculture underwrites the livelihood and income of 27% of Fiji's population. Given the importance of the agriculture sector to Fiji's economy, and Fiji's leadership on climate issues and subsidy reform, we encourage Fiji to amplify its calls for reform of domestic support in agriculture. Australia, and the Cairns Group, stand ready to collaborate with Fiji in pursuit of this common cause.

4.19. We share a strong interest in an effective rules-based global trading system, with the WTO at its core. Australia appreciates Fiji's commitment to strengthening this institution through the WTO reform agenda. To further support the rules-based multilateral system, we encourage Fiji to join Australia and others in the Multi-party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement as an interim solution while discussions on restoring the full functionality of the Dispute Settlement System continue.

4.20. The Government of Fiji has done a remarkable job on its economic fundamentals following the very challenging period of COVID-19 – which resulted in both devastating loss of life and economic impacts. Fiji demonstrates a commitment to liberal economic policies and we note the reforms that enable it to continue integrating with and benefiting from global trade.

4.21. Reform of the Investment Fiji Act 2022 is a welcome development in efforts to attract foreign investors, showing Fiji's commitment to the principles of non-discrimination – by providing investor

protection such as fair and equitable treatment, national treatment, and most favoured nation treatment. Also, Fiji's digitization of business and government services through the launch of the bizFIJI portal will help facilitate investment applications and instil business confidence.

4.22. Free trade agreements play a role in supporting regional integration. The South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement (SPARTECA), established in 1981, has supported duty-free access for Fiji and other member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum to the Australian and New Zealand markets. We encourage Fiji to give further consideration to joining the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus - a modern and comprehensive Agreement with significant "in-built" technical assistance and capacity building components. PACER Plus will help simplify and harmonize trade and investment rules and negotiations, thereby reducing the costs to traders and investors. As one of the largest economies in the Pacific and a regional leader, Fiji would make the PACER Plus more complete. Australia remains ready to engage further with Fiji on PACER Plus and respond to any questions Fiji may have.

4.23. Australia welcomes Fiji's ongoing commitment to negotiations on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), as we continue to consider new ways to deal with contemporary trade and investment challenges. An important Pacific voice at the table, we appreciate Fiji's constructive approach to the negotiations, and look forward to working to ensure IPEF delivers tangible benefits for all members as soon as possible.

4.24. In closing, Australia congratulates Fiji on its progress in implementing its WTO commitments. We wish Fiji a successful Trade Policy Review.

## BRAZIL

4.25. Brazil would like to thank the Government of Fiji for engaging in its fourth Trade Policy Review and for providing Members with an overview of the country's economic performance, trade policies and adherence to the multilateral trading system.

4.26. We would like to welcome the delegation from Fiji, headed by the Honourable Mr Manoa Seru Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications; and extend greetings to its representatives in Geneva, led by H.E. Ambassador Luke Daunivalu.

4.27. We would also like to express our appreciation to the WTO Secretariat for its thorough and comprehensive Report, as well as to you, Chair, and the discussant, H.E. Ambassador George Mina (Australia), for your contribution to a successful trade monitoring exercise.

4.28. Since its previous Review in 2016, Fiji has been facing severe constraints in its economy. After constant economic growth between 2009 and 2018, Fiji has experienced challenges in keeping this trajectory in the recent years. In addition to the difficulties derived from extreme weather events, the country had to cope with the effects of the pandemic.

4.29. Bilateral relationship between Fiji and Brazil began in 2006. The value of bilateral trade is modest, accounting for USD 1.9 million in trade flow. This figure indicates there is potential to growth in bilateral trade.

4.30. Brazil is keen to open the Fijian market to beef exports from Brazil. We have been trying to negotiate an International Health Certificate with Fiji and we look forward to receiving more engagement from the Fijian side in the near future. Brazil appreciates the responses from Fiji to the questions posed by Brazil, which address technical issues regarding this potential market.

4.31. Brazil notes with satisfaction the recent development of the bilateral relationship in other areas, with the negotiation of several cooperation instruments in the fields of health, culture, sports, and education. We hope our trade relationship can also benefit from this trend and fulfil its potential.

4.32. We wish Fiji a successful Trade Policy Review.

## NEW ZEALAND

4.33. *Aotearoa* New Zealand extends a very warm welcome to the Fijian delegation led by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister Kamikamica. It is wonderful to see so many colleagues here in Geneva for the fourth Trade Policy Review of Fiji.

4.34. I would also like to thank the Government of Fiji, in particular Ambassador Daunivalu and his team, with whom my delegation enjoys a close working relationship, as well as the Secretariat, for their work in preparing us for this review. We thank the discussant, H.E. Ambassador Mina of Australia for his insightful analysis. It is evident that the Fijian Government has undertaken considerable work to address matters raised during the previous Review, which we commend.

4.35. New Zealand holds a substantial interest in Fiji's trade and investment policies, given the close links between our two countries. Fiji is a key regional partner for us, being our largest Pacific Island trading partner, and among our top 25 trading partners globally. Two-way trade between us reached nearly USD 650 million for the year ending 2022.

4.36. Since Fiji's election in December last year, there has been a significant exchange of high-level visitors between Fiji and New Zealand. In addition to Prime Minister the Honourable Sitiveni Rabuka, New Zealand was delighted to be able to welcome you, Deputy Prime Minister Kamikamica, and Finance Minister, the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad. Those visits provided the opportunity for rich engagement on Fiji's trade policy and broader economic aspirations.

4.37. Like ours, Fiji's trade profile continues to have a strong focus on agricultural exports. We welcomed the recent commitment from the Government of Fiji during its budget process to reduce duties on meat products – including selected lamb, beef, and chicken products. This announcement is consistent with the WTO objective to liberalize trade, will almost certainly benefit Fijian consumers, and will help ease some of the cost pressures from high-inflation that Fiji and others are experiencing.

4.38. In the WTO, New Zealand and Fiji enjoy close collaboration across a range of work streams, including in relation to strengthening the rules-based system and work at the trade and environment nexus. For instance, we are pleased to work alongside Fiji as a cosponsor of the Fossil Fuel Subsidies Reform initiative. We also welcome Fiji's active engagement in the Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD) and Dialogue on Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade (DPP) processes, including as a co-coordinator of the DPP.

4.39. We strongly support Fiji's approach to the sustainable management of its fisheries. New Zealand actively supports Fiji's fisheries management system through our regional fisheries support programme, and we greatly appreciated Fiji's work over many years in the WTO Fisheries Subsidies negotiations. Fiji's leadership was instrumental in getting the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement across the line at MC12, and we look forward to Fiji depositing its Instrument of Acceptance soon. We also welcome Fiji's active and constructive engagement in the second wave of negotiations, including recent text proposals put forward to advance the discussions. We look forward to continuing to work together in order to reach agreement on a comprehensive and ambitious final pillar that reflects the importance of the fisheries sector to Fiji's economy as well as its world-class fisheries management practices.

4.40. In respect of the Trade Policy Review reports, we took particular note that of the statement that Fiji views regional integration as a key steppingstone towards fuller participation in the increasingly liberalized global economy; and that Fiji considers that its trade agreements will help increase market access and investment inflows in support of its economic diversification efforts. New Zealand welcomes these sentiments.

4.41. We particularly value the leadership role that Fiji plays within the Pacific. We look forward to Fiji enhancing its credentials as a regional leader, and we encourage Fiji to join New Zealand and our other Pacific partners in our important regional free trade agreement, PACER Plus. New Zealand welcomes Fiji's recent active engagement in regional and plurilateral trade processes, including the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework.



4.42. We have been pleased to recently contribute technical support to Fiji to assist with further enhancing its trade capacity, and look forward to further engagement with Fiji as to what further support can be provided in this area.

4.43. Fiji's strategic vision, as highlighted in its Development Plan, places emphasis on promoting MSMEs' development, empowering youth and women, and building an environmentally sustainable economy. These are consistent with New Zealand's broader trade priorities, as articulated in our Trade for All Agenda. We strongly support the efforts made by the Fiji Government in particular to enhance opportunities for MSMEs, who play a critical role in the Fijian economy. We look forward to working with Fiji on related initiatives, and to supporting it to continue broadening the benefits of trade engagement to underserved groups.

4.44. We are impressed by Fiji's strong economic recovery since the COVID-19 pandemic. Fiji suffered one of the hardest economic contractions of any economy during COVID-19, but its subsequent growth, led by the tourism sector, has been significant. It is evident that trade and investment reforms introduced since the last Trade Policy Review, including the passing of the 2022 Investment Act, have contributed to Fiji's trade performance.

4.45. New Zealand welcomes Fiji's continuing efforts to facilitate the flow of imports and exports. Implementation of policies that will insulate Fiji from the negative effects of external shocks will allow for a more stable trade posture. New Zealand believes that further restructuring and streamlining of Fiji's regulatory framework and associated processes for trade and investment will increase investor confidence to the benefit of Fiji. We welcome the recent statements by you, Deputy Prime Minister, that Fiji is focused on building investor confidence and improving the business environment. New Zealand stands ready to support with technical assistance and looks forward to further conversations with the Government of Fiji as to what would be useful in this regard.

4.46. In conclusion, the Secretariat and Fijian Government reports illustrate the positive steps Fiji is taking to ensure an open and stable trading and economic environment, in particular through active engagement with international trade processes, and through work to improve the business environment in Fiji. New Zealand encourages Fiji to continue seeking opportunities to be part of regional and international trade-mechanisms, as a pathway to increasing its overall trade linkage with the global community, and as a mechanism for further accelerating its economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to being part of Fiji's journey.

#### COSTA RICA

4.47. En nombre de la delegación de Costa Rica y del Embajador Saborío, deseo darle la bienvenida a Ginebra al Excmo. Sr. Manoa Seru Kamikamica, Primer Ministro Adjunto y Ministro de Comercio, Cooperativas, Pymes, y Comunicaciones de Fiji. Asimismo, quisiera saludar a la delegación que lo acompaña y aprovechar para agradecer las reflexiones del ponente, el Embajador Mina, enmarcando de manera clara y orgánica la discusión que hoy nos reúne.

4.48. Costa Rica y Fiji comparten muchas similitudes, a nivel de desarrollo humano, vulnerabilidad a los shocks climáticos, la prioridad asignada a las pymes y al empoderamiento de las mujeres, y en particular la importancia que se le otorga a robustecer su economía con un enfoque ambientalmente sostenible.

4.49. En esa línea, felicitamos a Fiji por su compromiso y liderazgo en las negociaciones que culminaron exitosamente con la aprobación del acuerdo sobre subvenciones a la pesca en la pasada Conferencia Ministerial. Esa inclinación por preservar y hacer uso sostenible de sus recursos naturales y por eliminar progresivamente la dependencia de los combustibles fósiles, es lo que convierte a Fiji en una potencia para el turismo sostenible y como generador de servicios como motor de su economía.

4.50. Mi delegación aprovecha esta oportunidad para agradecer a Fiji su apoyo como patrocinadores de las Discusiones Estructuradas sobre Comercio y Sostenibilidad Ambiental, pues empatizamos con los retos de ser una delegación pequeña, sin embargo su apoyo y participación ha enviado un mensaje fuerte y claro de la importancia de participar en estas discusiones, sobre todo para los pequeños estados insulares en desarrollo (PEID).

4.51. Costa Rica es un firme creyente en la cooperación, particularmente entre países en desarrollo y sobre todo entre aquellos que comparten similitudes económicas, geográficas, y de desarrollo. Fiji es un Miembro activo y comprometido con el sistema multilateral de comercio, con una destacable experiencia que compartir. Costa Rica se une a este ejercicio de transparencia para aprender más de la política comercial y de inversión de Fiji, con el fin último de potenciar las oportunidades que puedan existir entre ambos países y fortalecer los lazos de intercambio y cooperación. Mi delegación desea aprovechar este espacio para instar a Fiji a ponerse al día con notificaciones pendientes como Miembro comprometido con el sistema.

4.52. Remitimos una serie de preguntas en materia de inversión y servicios, con ese espíritu de construir y conocer sobre la política de Fiji. Mi capital se encuentra evaluando las respuestas recibidas y agradecemos la proactividad de Fiji preparándolas.

4.53. En conclusión, Costa Rica felicita a Fiji en cuarto examen de política comercial, ejercicio de transparencia máximo de esta Organización, deseándoles una exitosa sesión y agradecemos el apoyo técnico y sólido de la Secretaría en su preparación.

## CHINA

4.54. I want to extend my warm welcome to the delegation of Fiji led by the Honourable Mr Manoa Seru Kamikamica, and I appreciate the Government of Fiji for the preparation for this review. I would also like to thank the discussant, H.E. Mr George Mina, for his insightful remarks. Let me also thank the Secretariat for their invaluable contribution to the present Review.

4.55. China applauds Fiji's action in undertaking reforms to promote investment, trade, and economic growth since the last TPR. We would like to compliment Fiji's progress in implementing its National Development Plan to pursue a progressive, vibrant, and inclusive society, including promoting MSMEs' development, empowering youth and women, and building an environmentally sustainable economy.

4.56. Under the circumstances that the COVID-19 pandemic has severely hit the global tourism industry and related industries, we highly affirm the series of positive response measures taken by the Fijian Government, including increasing the vaccination rate. We are happy to see that Fiji's GDP growth reached 15.6% in 2022, and the recovery is set to continue in 2023.

4.57. China appreciates Fiji's firm commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system and its substantial contribution to the WTO through its active acceptance and steady implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and the TRIPS Amendment. China also commends Fiji's critical role at MC12 as the Chair of the Pacific Group in the Fisheries Subsidies negotiation and engaging in discussions on the WTO response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.58. China is delighted to note that Fiji has taken the initiative to bring to the forefront the impact of climate change and actively participated in the Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD) and the Fossil Fuel Subsidies Reform Initiative. China is also grateful to Fiji for working with relevant Members and China to launch the Informal Dialogue on Plastic Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastic Trade and for its leadership as a coordinator in the ongoing discussions. China looks forward to extensive cooperation with Fiji and other cosponsors to achieve positive outcomes by MC13.

4.59. In addition to the WTO, China highly admires Fiji's essential role in the Belt and Road Initiative and its efforts to integrate into the increasingly liberalized global economy through deeper participation in regional cooperation.

4.60. Fiji is an important economic and trade partner of China in the Pacific region; China is Fiji's fourth-largest source of imports and seventh-largest export destination. China attaches great importance to the development of economic and trade relations with Fiji, recent years have seen rapid growth in the bilateral trade between us. China's statistics show that despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, our bilateral trade was still up 31.1% and 21.6% in 2021 and 2022, year-on-year, respectively. Based on that positive trend, our bilateral trade is expected to reach a new record this year.

4.61. The launch of the China-Pacific Island Countries Reserve for Emergency Supplies in 2021 has provided an important guarantee for the Pacific Island countries, including Fiji, to improve their ability to respond to major public health events and natural disasters and better protect the lives and health of the people in the island countries. China is willing to strengthen strategic docking with the Pacific Island countries, including Fiji, and deepen cooperation in trade, investment, infrastructure, transportation and communication, tourism, and other fields to achieve development and prosperity jointly.

4.62. In 2015, China and Fiji reached an important consensus on promoting the negotiation of a bilateral FTA and officially launched a joint feasibility study. Both sides have completed the report under their respective responsibility. China believes that the China-Fiji FTA will help further explore the potential of cooperation between the two sides, enhance the level of liberalization and facilitation in goods, services, and investment, and bring tangible benefits to enterprises and people of both countries. China is willing to work with Fiji, in line with the principles of mutual benefit, pragmatics, and efficiency, to continue to promote the work of the joint feasibility study and strive for its early completion to lay a good foundation for the next step of launching negotiations.

4.63. China is now accelerating the further development of its domestic market and is willing to share the opportunities of its market with all WTO Members. Fiji has actively participated in the China International Import Expo (CIIE), the only large-scale import-themed expo globally. We welcome Fiji to continue using that platform to increase promotion, expand cooperation and promote more advantageous and unique products to the Chinese and global markets. China is willing to work with Fiji to jointly promote our bilateral economic and trade cooperation to a new level.

4.64. For this review, China has submitted the questions to Fiji, we appreciate the written response from Fiji and we will review them carefully.

4.65. Finally, I wish the Fiji delegation every success in this Trade Policy Review.

#### EUROPEAN UNION

4.66. On behalf of the European Union, I would like to welcome the Delegation of Fiji, led by the Honourable Mr Manoa Seru Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications.

4.67. I would also like to thank the WTO Secretariat and the Government of Fiji for their respective reports and express appreciation to H.E. Mr George Mina (Australia) for his remarks as discussant.

4.68. Let me start by acknowledging the extremely challenging external context for Fiji during the past review period with devastating impacts of three cyclones on the country's people and its economy as well as the severe economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the key sector of tourism. Looking ahead - and on a more positive note - there are encouraging signs that economic recovery is underway.

4.69. The EU would like to commend Fiji for its vision to build an environmentally sustainable economy and increase resilience to climate change as reflected in its Development Plan. The EU and Fiji are strong partners in promoting climate change action on the multilateral stage in the UNFCCC framework and as well as working together at the plurilateral and bilateral levels. We welcome Fiji's engagement and participation in the plurilateral environmental initiatives in the WTO such as on plastics pollution, TESSD (Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions) and Fossil Fuel Subsidies Reform (FFSR).

4.70. The EU and Fiji also share the same commitment to ensuring sustainable management of natural resources, ocean governance and the fight against IUU. We recognize Fiji's active participation in the fisheries subsidies negotiations and encourage Fiji and other Members to ratify the phase 1 Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies so that this landmark deal can enter into force by MC13.

4.71. The EU's bilateral relationship with Fiji is underpinned by the interim Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) that Fiji started to apply in 2014. The Agreement provides for duty-free quota-free access to the EU market alongside flexible rules of origin allowing for the further expansion of trade.

The EU looks forward to cooperating with Fiji on the full and effective implementation of the Agreement. The recently launched Fiji-European Union Trade and Investment Forum should also help to deepen trade and cooperation and provide further opportunities for the private sector, including small and medium-sized entrepreneurs.

4.72. The EU fully supports Fiji's integration into the world economy and Pacific regional integration. The EU welcomes the Government's ongoing efforts to diversify the country's export production base. Fiji's current exports to the EU consist mainly of fish, bottled water, gold, and sugar. Fiji's imports include manufactured goods, machinery and equipment, petroleum products, foodstuffs, and chemicals.

4.73. The EU and its member States are important development partners for Fiji. During the review period, the EU has been providing support to Fiji through the Pacific Regional Integration Support Programme (PRISE) amounting to EUR 37 million. The objective is to assist the Pacific States to better reap the benefits of regional trade, the EPA, EBA/GSP and the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). Under a new instrument covering the period 2021-2027, the EU will be providing significant funding to Fiji towards the objective of contributing to green and blue Pacific economies, including through trade, the EPA and the leverage of private investment.

4.74. The EU acknowledges that Fiji has carried out several customs' modernization reforms during the review period. The EU commends the Government for having fulfilled 97.1% of its TFA implementation commitments according to the Secretariat Report. We also welcome Fiji's active participation in multilateral files, as well as in various plurilateral environment initiatives. Given the Government's reform efforts on investment promotion and facilitation and setting up a framework for MSMEs during the review period, we would encourage Fiji to seize the opportunities provided by the recently concluded negotiations on Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement, those on Services Domestic Regulation and participate in the MSMEs initiative.

4.75. The EU would like to thank Fiji for having replied in a comprehensive manner to our advance questions. The EU's questions covered Fiji's support to the fisheries sector, the expected timeline for Fiji's acceptance of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, the customs treatment of e-commerce and postal consignments and the application of Fiji's Skilled Professionals Act.

4.76. Looking ahead, the EU looks forward to further deepening our bilateral trade relationship and engaging with Fiji on strengthening and reforming the WTO in preparation for a successful MC13.

4.77. On behalf of the EU, I wish Fiji a very productive and successful fourth Trade Policy Review.

## CANADA

4.78. Canada joins others in welcoming the Honourable Mr Kamikamica and the entire delegation of the Republic of Fiji to Geneva. Canada is very pleased to have this opportunity to participate in the fourth Trade Policy Review of Fiji.

4.79. We congratulate Fiji on the strong recovery of its economy following the severe negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to its economy and tourism sector in particular. According to the World Bank, Fiji was the strongest performing Pacific economy in 2022 amidst resurgent demand in its tourism sector. Despite being a Pacific Small Island Developing State prone to severe weather disruptions and exposed to the impacts of climate change, it has been very resilient to the shocks of the many crises affecting its economy, including the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine, broader supply chain disruptions and related food and fuel price inflation. In addition, it has undertaken many policy and structural reforms to promote environmentally sustainable economic growth, the development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and the empowerment of youth and women. Notably, it has revised the investment framework through adoption of the Investment Fiji Act to simplify registration of investment in Fiji and allow investments in key sectors while protecting MSMEs. This reform effort continues to inspire business confidence following the free and democratic election and peaceful transition of Government in 2022.

4.80. Canada commends Fiji's commitment to the WTO and to rules-based trade, its work towards international economic integration, as well as its policy goals of protecting 30% of the country's waters by 2030 and achieving net zero emission by 2050. Being the Pacific Islands Forum Chair

in 2022, it has demonstrated leadership in uniting the members of the Forum and facilitating the adoption of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent by Pacific Islands leaders, a seminal document that charts the future course for Fiji and the economies in the region.

4.81. Fiji was instrumental in WTO negotiations to obtain the Agreement at the WTO's 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in June 2022. We call on Fiji to move quickly to now ratify this agreement.

4.82. Canada commends Fiji for its efforts to reduce the average applied tariff rate from 11% to 6% over the review period according to the Secretariat Report. We, however, note that a number of applied tariff rates remain over their respective bound rates and encourage Fiji to remedy this situation. In addition, Fiji's negative escalation tariff structure in some industries such as textile and food does not align with its development objectives to diversify its economy with manufacturing as it discourages investment in processing in these industries.

4.83. It is clear to us that Fiji recognizes the importance of the multilateral trading system. The country is making efforts to comply with its WTO commitments, though we would encourage further efforts in this regard, particularly around outstanding notifications. Canada encourages Fiji to continue to play an active role in the WTO.

4.84. We look forward to continued close cooperation with Fiji to strengthen the WTO, and beyond the WTO, we hope to deepening our relationship with Fiji, and consistent with Canada's Indo Pacific Strategy, we are in the process of opening our first Mission to Fiji, with a diplomat already on the ground in Suva.

4.85. Before concluding, I would be remiss if I did not make a special mention of the strong and constructive work of the small but mighty delegation of Fiji undertakes at the WTO led by its Ambassador, your leadership is important and recognized. As Ambassador Mina mentioned, we need more of the Fiji's spirit in this house.

#### SINGAPORE

4.86. Singapore warmly welcomes Fiji's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications, the Honourable Manoa Seru Kamikamica and the Fijian delegation to Geneva. We would like to express our appreciation to Fiji for the comprehensive Government Report and statement. We also thank the Chair, Ambassador Saqer Abdullah Almoqbel and the discussant, Ambassador George Mina for their insightful statements, as well as the Secretariat for its detailed Report. Allow me to make three points.

4.87. First, we commend the Fijian Government for its efforts in stimulating the recovery of the Fijian economy, following the enormous challenges posed by COVID-19 and compounded by natural disasters. We are glad to hear that the Fijian economy is on the path to recovery, with an estimated 15.6% growth in 2022 that is set to continue this year. The pandemic has brought several economic and social challenges to the forefront and has highlighted the need for countries to embark on more sustainable modes of development. In this regard, we welcome the implementation of Fiji's 20-Year Development Plan (2017-2036) based on the two prongs of "Inclusive Socio-Economic Development" and "Transformational Strategic Thrusts", which seeks to promote MSME's development, empower youth and women, increase resilience to climate change, and build an environmentally sustainable economy, amongst others. We also commend Fiji's efforts in undertaking Customs modernization reforms, including the digital and organizational transformation of the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service, which will enable Fiji to harness digitalization opportunities and meet future challenges of increased traffic and trade. We note that as of September 2022, Fiji had fulfilled 97.1% of its implementation commitments under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). This demonstrates Fiji's commitment to its obligations under the TFA, and we look forward to Fiji's implementation of the two remaining commitments, to bring Fiji towards the full implementation of the TFA.

4.88. Second, Singapore looks forward to enhancing our bilateral relations and economic ties with Fiji. In 2022, bilateral trade between Singapore and Fiji saw an almost 95% year-on-year growth, amounting to more than USD 543 million. During the review period, Singapore was Fiji's largest source of imports in Asia, making up approximately 18.2% of Fiji's total merchandise imports, and

representing 97.4% of Fiji's total imports of petroleum oils. As a fellow small island developing state (SIDS), Singapore has also provided training through the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) to more than 1,000 Fijian officials in the areas of economic development, finance, and public administration, amongst others. We look forward to building on the more-than-50 years of bilateral relations between Singapore and Fiji, to deepen our economic cooperation in shared priorities such as trade and investment, tourism, information and communications technology (ICT) and digital connectivity. In this regard, we have submitted a question relating to Fiji's plans for the digital economy, and we would like to thank Fiji for its timely and detailed response.

4.89. Third, Singapore and Fiji share a common commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system as embodied by the WTO. As small states that are particularly vulnerable to climate change and rising sea levels, we also share a deep interest in addressing climate change through concerted international efforts. In this regard, we commend Fiji's participation in the environmental initiatives at the WTO, such as in Trade and Environmental Sustainability, as well as Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade. In the same spirit, we would like to urge Fiji to ratify the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, which will complement the Government's efforts in implementing sustainable fisheries management and combatting illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. Likewise, we would like to encourage Fiji to consider joining the Joint Statement Initiative on E-Commerce as well as the Information Technology Agreement (ITA), to complement Fiji's efforts in digital transformation.

4.90. In closing, I would like to acknowledge the valuable contributions that Ambassador Luke Daunivalu and his team at the Fijian Mission have made to the WTO. We wish Fiji a successful fourth Trade Policy Review.

#### UNITED STATES

4.91. The United States is pleased to welcome Deputy Prime Minister Kamikamica and the rest of the Fijian delegation to the fourth Trade Policy Review of Fiji. We appreciate the opportunity to review the significant work that Fiji has undertaken since its last Review.

4.92. The United States values its economic relationship with Fiji, and will continue our work to strengthen our commercial relationship, including under the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, the United States-Pacific Islands Trade and Investment Dialogue, as well as through our bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA).

4.93. The United States commends the progress that the Fiji has made since the last Trade Policy Review in 2016. For example, as noted in the Secretariat Report, Fiji ratified the Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA) in 2017 and subsequently notified its related commitments to the WTO. Additionally, Fiji has implemented several customs modernization reforms, including a digital and organizational transformation of the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service to meet future challenges of increased traffic and trade, as well as to take advantage of digitalization opportunities. We would also like to recognize that as of September 2022, Fiji had fulfilled 97.1% of its TFA implementation commitments.

4.94. We appreciate Fiji's constructive engagement in the WTO negotiations on fisheries subsidies. We hope to work together in the continuing negotiations to pursue additional, ambitious disciplines, and we would urge Fiji's support for promoting greater transparency with respect to the use of forced labour on fishing vessels. In addition, we would encourage Fiji, as well as other WTO Members, to promptly accept the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and allow its entry into force as soon as possible.

4.95. We welcome Fiji's leadership advancing the Dialogue on Plastic Pollution and environmentally sustainable plastics trade and look forward to continuing to work with you. Fiji's support and participation in the Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions demonstrates the importance of trade and environmental issues to developed and developing country Members. Fiji's support and participation in these informal dialogues demonstrates the critical role that trade, and the WTO, plays in addressing pressing environmental challenges. We look forward to maturing the TESSD work back into the work of the Regular Committees, including the Committee on Trade and Environment.



4.96. We note that Fiji continues to work to fulfil its WTO commitments, as reflected in our observations through our advance written questions. For example, the United States is interested in learning more about Fiji's plans to submit its outstanding notifications to the WTO, including those on agriculture, anti-dumping measures, subsidies and countervailing measures, and import licensing. Notifications are an important responsibility of WTO Membership so traders and other Members can understand Fiji's laws and regulations affecting trade.

4.97. We recognize the trade-related challenges Fiji faces, including vulnerability to climate change, as well as the impact of recent exogenous shocks on the Fijian economy, including the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple devastating natural disasters. Despite these challenges, we commend Fiji's efforts to: promote investment, trade and economic growth; enhance opportunities for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs); facilitate ease of doing business; improve financial accountability, good governance, and public expenditure management; work towards international economic integration; and engage a wide cross-section of stakeholders from the private sector, civil society, academia, as well as labour and industry leaders. We urge Fiji to continue its regulatory reform efforts to facilitate trade and investment.

4.98. We commend Fiji for its commitment to the trade policy review process. We look forward to continued engagement, both bilaterally and within the WTO, to strengthen our commercial relationship.

## ARGENTINA

4.99. Quisiéramos asociarnos a los Miembros que han dado la bienvenida a la delegación de Fiji, encabezada por el Honorable Manoa Seru Kamikamica, Primer Ministro Adjunto y Ministro de Comercio, Cooperativas, Pymes, y Comunicaciones.

4.100. Agradecemos, al mismo tiempo, los informes elaborados por el gobierno de Fiji y por la Secretaría, así como al Embajador George Mina por sus valiosos comentarios. Estos elementos nos han proporcionado la información necesaria para enriquecer nuestra comprensión de las políticas, prácticas comerciales y entorno económico de Fiji.

4.101. Hemos tomado nota de los avances normativos de Fiji durante el período objeto de examen relacionadas con el comercio, las inversiones, las aduanas, la propiedad intelectual y el turismo, entre otros.

4.102. Notamos con preocupación que, según señala el informe de la Secretaría citando al Banco Mundial, la exposición de Fiji al cambio climático amenaza con socavar los objetivos de desarrollo a largo plazo del país, enunciados en su actual Plan de Desarrollo. No obstante, felicitamos a Fiji por las iniciativas existente para hacer frente a los desafíos que plantea el cambio climático.

4.103. Argentina ve con satisfacción la resiliencia de la economía de Fiji demostrada luego del ciclón tropical Winston en 2016 y esperamos que esta misma resiliencia le permita recuperarse plenamente y pronto de los efectos de la pandemia de COVID-19.

4.104. También felicitamos a Fiji por sus objetivos de política comercial que apuntan a transformar el país en una economía dinámica, diversificada y competitiva a escala internacional, impulsada por las exportaciones y orientada al crecimiento. Asimismo, Argentina destaca el enfoque puesto por las políticas de Fiji en el desarrollo de las mipymes, el empoderamiento de las mujeres y la juventud, el aumento de la resiliencia frente al cambio climático y la construcción de una economía sustentable.

4.105. Agradecemos a Fiji, y en particular a su Embajador Luke Daunivalu y su equipo en Ginebra por su participación activa en las negociaciones relacionadas a las subvenciones a la pesca.

4.106. Coincidimos con Fiji en el enfoque de prohibición de ciertas subvenciones, y vemos con interés la propuesta que ha presentado, que incluye adicionar a la disciplina un límite monetario o CAP. En los últimos tiempos hemos mantenido reuniones bilaterales ya que con Fiji compartimos el mismo objetivo: Lograr un acuerdo ambicioso, con una disciplina rigurosa, con un TED apropiado, considerando que el Acuerdo deberá evitar que las flotas de gran altura que operan a miles de kilómetros de las costas de sus Estados de bandera continúen, a través del uso de subsidios, depredando los recursos marinos.

4.107. Hacemos uso de esta oportunidad para reiterar nuestra intención de trabajar en conjunto con toda la Membresía en el proceso de reforma de la Organización a fin de fortalecer sus capacidades para dar respuesta a los desafíos presentes y futuros del comercio internacional, para crear un sistema multilateral de comercio más justo y que atienda las necesidades de los países en desarrollo.

4.108. Por último, y en el marco de este examen de política comercial, hemos consultado a Fiji por su Marco de Crecimiento Verde. Agradecemos las respuestas, las cuales están siendo debidamente estudiadas por nuestros y nuestras colegas en Buenos Aires.

4.109. Además de reiterar nuestro reconocimiento por esta nueva oportunidad de intercambiar consideraciones sobre prácticas comerciales de Fiji, permítanos señalar, una vez más, la relevancia de este ejercicio de transparencia en todos sus aspectos y desear a sus autoridades una exitosa conclusión del presente examen.

## JAPAN

4.110. Japan warmly welcomes the delegation of Fiji, headed by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister Kamikamica. Japan would also like to thank Ambassador Daunivalu for his open contribution to the WTO. I thank the WTO Secretariat in preparing the comprehensive reports for today's Review, and I also thank Ambassador George Mina for his role as the discussant.

4.111. Fiji is an important partner for Japan in the Asia-Pacific region, with Japan and Fiji celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2020. Bilateral relations between Japan and Fiji have been further deepened since the discussion between Prime Minister Kishida Fumio and then Prime Minister Bainimarama and the visit of Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa to Fiji in 2022, followed by the visit of State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Takei Shunsuke, to Fiji this year.

4.112. Japan commends Fiji for its strong macroeconomic recovery, which is estimated to recover by 15.6% in 2022, despite the significant economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters during the review period.

4.113. Taking this opportunity, I would like to highlight a few points on Fiji's trade policy. First, regarding the multilateral trading system and WTO, Japan is grateful for Fiji's contributions towards strengthening the multilateral trading system since its accession to the WTO, most recently through its contributions to MC12 and the negotiations for the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies.

4.114. Japan also commends Fiji's contribution to discussions on environment-related initiatives, in particular as a co-coordinator of the Informal Dialogue on Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade. Japan is encouraged by Fiji's strong interest and contribution in these issues, recognizing its remarkable presence as an ocean nation.

4.115. Second, as regards the investment environment and energy sector, Japan notes Fiji's efforts to improve its investment environment through enacting the new Investment Act and creating opportunities for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Fiji enacted an Investment Act 2021, which notably stipulates National Treatment and most favoured nation treatment for investment, and the prohibition of compulsory or arbitrary acquisition of property by the Government. As regards MSMEs, Japan commends Fiji's efforts such as the establishment of the new Central Coordinating Agency (MSME Fiji) and launching its policy framework in 2020. As MSMEs account for significant share on Fiji's economy. We believe such efforts will lead to and expansion of foreign investment and trade in goods and services.

4.116. Japan and Fiji have a close relationship on investment. As of April 2021, 24 Japanese companies have been operating in Fiji. Also, as mentioned in the Secretariat's Report, two Japanese entities have invested in Energy Fiji Limited, a public enterprise that supplies electricity to Fiji. In the energy sector, we are also aware that the Cabinet of Fiji approved the National Energy Policy in May of this year, which is commendable for its aims to shift from dependence on imported fossil fuels to low-carbon and renewable energy.



4.117. Third, regarding bilateral economic relations, Japan has been cooperating with Fiji and other Pacific Island countries through the Pacific Islands Leaders' Meeting (PALM) and other fora, respecting their own agendas and taking their needs into account, by utilizing Japan's strengths for promoting sustainable and resilient economic development in each country. In this context, Japan has provided financial assistance of up to JPY 20 billion in total through emergency loans to Fiji to support its economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, a project to reconstruct the Tamavua-i-wai Bridge is underway to strengthen the country's resilience against natural disasters and to enhance its transportation capacity.

4.118. In April of this year, direct flights between Japan and Fiji resumed. Fiji is a popular destination for Japanese tourists, and these direct flights are expected to increase the flow of people between the two countries and contribute to Fiji's economy by revitalizing Fiji's air transport and tourism services. Fiji has also announced its participation in the Expo 2025 Osaka-Kansai, Japan, and we look forward to working together for deepening the economic ties between Japan and Fiji.

4.119. Finally, on regional trade, Japan is grateful for Fiji's active contribution in regional trade activities including the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). We would like to continue to cooperate with Fiji in achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the region.

4.120. To conclude, we look forward to continued cooperation with Fiji to achieve fruitful results at MC13 next year. We wish Fiji a successful and productive fourth Trade Policy Review.

#### MAURITIUS

4.121. Mauritius joins other delegations in welcoming the delegation of Fiji led by H.E. the Honourable Manoa Seru Kamikamica Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications. We congratulate Fiji for its fourth Trade Policy Review. Mauritius would like to congratulate Ambassador Mina for his usual incisiveness, but also for bringing Fiji folklore to the fore today.

4.122. Much binds Mauritius and Fiji as two upper middle-income SIDS with a high human development index but with many challenges over which they have little control like Climate Change and extreme weather events. These continue to affect our economies at unexpected moments and serve as a reminder of our inherent vulnerabilities.

4.123. Because the levels of trade of SIDS are not a very high percentage of world trade, the concerns of SIDS are often overlooked in multilateral discussions. Yet it is important that Members understand the realities of SIDS so as to ensure that multilateral frameworks cater for the unique situation of these Members.

4.124. Most SIDS like Fiji and Mauritius are net food importing developing countries, dependent on a narrow basket of exports, fighting to attract significant FDI due to the size of the economy and challenges linked to geographical isolation.

4.125. Fiji has risen to many of these challenges successfully and we commend it for its development plan that focuses on promoting MSMEs, empowering youth and women, and building an environmentally sustainable economy. We were particularly impressed to find out that more than 50% of Fiji's electricity is generated from sustainable sources and this shows the positive effects of the tax incentives, price regulations, and subsidies that the Government of Fiji had introduced.

4.126. We were also pleased to note that Fiji's National Development Plan and National Export Strategy aiming to promote sustainable growth in export competitiveness, value addition, and diversification. We also recognize Fiji's efforts to attract FDI through the adoption of the Investment Act 2021 but like Fiji, we know that legislation and providing favourable conditions, whilst important, are not sufficient in themselves.

4.127. We also welcome the changes that Fiji made in intellectual property rights legislation, although not yet in effect. We note that, as is the case for Mauritius, the services sector is a significant contributor to Fiji's economy, with tourism being the largest provider of services, both our countries have moved from being sugar islands, big producers of sugar cane, to being services-dominated islands.

4.128. We commend Fiji for all the measures it has taken to comply with its WTO commitments, its support of the multilateral trading system and of free trade. We are both active participants in the OACPS and as such have a close relationship with the EU.

4.129. The severe impact on the tourism industry in Fiji due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 and the three cyclones during that period led to a contraction of the economy. However, Fiji did not have recourse to protectionist trade policies. We commend it for this approach. Initiatives taken by Fiji subsequently have led to expected growth rate of 15.6% in 2022. Fiji is back on a growth tangent as tourism has picked up significantly.

4.130. We welcome the active engagement of Fiji in all discussions at the WTO and in particular on fisheries subsidies where it has made constructive proposals which we fully share and support. Fisheries is one of the mainstays of the economies of small island states. This sector, which has yet to be developed to its potential is challenged by unfair competition from the massive subsidies which large fishing nations have been providing leading to overcapacity and over supply.

4.131. We also welcome Fiji's efforts to enhance regional integration through its participation in the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA).

4.132. We wish Fiji much progress in the years to come and a very successful Trade Policy Review.

#### JAMAICA

4.133. Jamaica extends a warm welcome to the delegation of Fiji to the fourth Review of its trade policies and practices. We commend the Honourable Manoa Seru Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications; head of delegation and his team for their comprehensive Report.

4.134. We thank our discussant, Ambassador George Mina for his valuable insights, which provide greater understanding of key aspects of Fiji's trade policies. My delegation also thanks the Chair and the Secretariat for their respective contributions to this exercise.

4.135. During the last Trade Policy Review, the Fijian Government was praised for maintaining a good economic performance over the review period of 2009-2016. Jamaica, therefore, welcomes the reports that the Government continues to make progress in this area. As highlighted by our discussant, Fiji has one of the most developed economies in the Pacific, relying heavily on its tourism earnings and trade. The country is also endowed with natural resources, including forest, mineral, and fish resources.

4.136. However, as a small island developing states (SIDs), Fiji knows all too well the devastating impact that climate change and adverse weather conditions can have on its efforts to achieve economic growth and sustainable development. As reflected in its Report, both the COVID-19 pandemic and the passage of three cyclones negatively impacted the country's positive economic trajectory. These resulted in the contraction of GDP by 17% in 2020, and a further reduction of 5.1% in 2021.

4.137. We are, therefore, encouraged by the indications that the country is on a path of strong recovery – recording robust growth of 15.6% in 2022. This recovery is buoyed by the continued growth in tourism related activities; transportation and storage; and business service sectors. We urge support for the Government's efforts to sustain this progress.

4.138. Employing a multisectoral approach, Jamaica appreciates Fiji's efforts to create a stable investment environment, expand trade and enhance the performance of major sectors of the economy. We view favourably the various reforms being implemented by the Government, including its Investment Policy Statement; Trade Policy Framework 2015-2025, as well as those that seek to address the challenges that would limit the impact of its efforts to increase production and productivity in agriculture, especially in rural areas. The Government's efforts to meet its international environment commitments is being strengthened through the implementation of a National Development Plan (2017-2036), as well as the five-year Emission Reduction Programme Agreement with the World Bank.

4.139. Fiji also has a well-developed fisheries sector, contributing approximately 10% of its total export earnings and affecting the lives of 75% of its population. Given concerns related to the sustainable development of the industry, we support the Government's implementation of its National Ocean Policy, and the ratification of the Port State Measures Agreement to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU caught fish landing in its ports.

4.140. These efforts must be encouraged, as countries like Fiji require the necessary policy space, supported by appropriate global trade rules, to accomplish their sustainable development goals.

4.141. Jamaica is pleased by Fiji's commitment to strengthening the multilateral trading system, as demonstrated by its high engagement in the work of the WTO. Fiji is an active Member of several negotiating groups including the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) Group. Jamaica values its active engagement in and its constructive contributions to the Fisheries Subsidies negotiations, WTO Reform, Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade, and the successful conclusion of an Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies at MC12. Jamaica looks forward to continuing our close collaboration and partnership with the delegation, so ably led by Ambassador Luke Daunivalu.

4.142. We take note that the Fijian delegation has provided responses to Members' questions related to amendments of trade-related law; Fiji's expectations and interests to the WTO Joint Initiatives, and its priorities and objectives for the MC13. My delegation looks forward to any additional insights that the Government may provide during today's exchange.

4.143. On a final note, as 2023 marks 44 years of diplomatic relations between Jamaica and Fiji, we convey our commitment to further strengthening of these ties. We reiterate our best wishes to the delegation for a successful fourth Trade Policy Review.

#### TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

4.144. Trinidad and Tobago is pleased to participate in the fourth Trade Policy Review of Fiji. We join others in welcoming to Geneva, and to the WTO, the head of delegation, the Honourable Mr Manoa Seru Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications of Fiji; as well as all other capital-based officials who have travelled to Geneva for this review.

4.145. We extend our best wishes for a productive Review. We also commend Ambassador Mr Luke Daunivalu, Mr Vueti May and the rest of the team for their sound and valuable contributions here at the WTO, not least of all on fisheries subsidies, on the development dimension, including special and differential treatment, on trade and the environment and on small and vulnerable economies, among other key files. In addition, we take this opportunity to highlight Fiji's vocal advocacy in wider international Geneva on the particular circumstances and challenges of small island developing states, including at the WHO, ILO, and UNCTAD.

4.146. In addition, we applaud you, Chair, on your able stewardship of this meeting. We also recognize the diligent efforts of the Secretariat and Fiji in the preparation of their respective reports ahead of this review. Kudos to you as well, Ambassador Mina, for your focused, insightful approach in embracing the role of discussant.

4.147. Fiji's engagement at the WTO and its participation in global trade evidence a clear commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core. Here in this house, and despite evident constraints, Fiji continues to make valuable contributions to our deliberations and negotiations, not least of all within the contexts of the Pacific Group, the ACP Group and the SVE Group. Within the ACP Group, in particular, we value the contributions and guidance of Fiji on development issues, but also on agriculture and fisheries subsidies negotiations. My delegation recalls the focused and resolute approach of Fiji at MC12 and the insistence that disciplines on overcapacity and overfishing must align with the mandate and secure the interests of our people. We note that Fiji has been robust and constructive in its engagement in the second phase of negotiations, putting forward a proposal that seeks to move us closer towards fulfilment of our mandate and recently providing Members with a proposed legal text. Fiji's outsized, meaningful and constructive contributions at the WTO on fisheries subsidies, development, plastics pollution and trade and environment more broadly, among other areas, are truly worthy of recognition and

commendation. We also applaud Fiji's noteworthy achievements relating to implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

4.148. Recovery has been a key point of focus for Fiji since the last Review, including recovery from the impacts of the 2016 tropical cyclone and, shortly thereafter, recovery from the slowdown in tourism and supply chain disruptions, among other key challenges triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Vulnerability to exogenous shocks, the challenges associated with classification as an upper middle-income country, remoteness, high transport costs, challenges relating to market access and penetration, small size, commodity dependence, climate-related vulnerability, limited range of merchandise exports, limited engagement in global merchandise and services trade, lack of wherewithal to harness the benefits of the digital economy – these are all challenges with which Fiji continues to grapple resolutely, including through its approach to trade policy.

4.149. This is the context in which we commend policy and decision-makers in Fiji for their strategic approaches and their commitment to ensuring that Fiji remains open to international trade and to building a more inclusive and sustainable multilateral trading system.

4.150. We recognize key reforms pursued since the last Review, aimed at enhancing opportunities available to MSMEs, improving the ease of doing business and strengthening financial accountability, good governance, and public expenditure management. Having undergone a change in administration late last year, we recognize the ongoing efforts of the Government of Fiji to review the National Development Plan and National Export Strategy and applaud ongoing economic and export diversification efforts aimed at securing the wellbeing of the people of Fiji. With the agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing, and services sectors, including financial services, all contributing significantly to GDP, there is a viable platform in place for effective diversification and building resilience, including through the opportunities presented by digitalization and engagement in cross-border digital trade.

4.151. As a fellow Commonwealth member, OACPS member State, small and vulnerable economy (SVE) and small island developing State (SIDS), Fiji is a key partner of Trinidad and Tobago in many multilateral spaces and processes. Our trading relations are also robust, with Fiji enjoying a trade surplus with Trinidad and Tobago and with there being evident scope to build upon existing trade in cane molasses and mineral waters. As small island economies with similar circumstances and challenges, both Fiji and Trinidad and Tobago strongly value regional integration and derive benefit from key RTAs. Trinidad and Tobago identifies with Fiji's efforts to advance its development-related interests and, in this regard, wishes to endorse Fiji's call for the support of the WTO with regard to better integration into global trade and addressing supply-side constraints, including through the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building. Reference is made in this regard to the 2015 Nairobi Ministerial Decision on substantially and meaningfully addressing the needs of SVEs in every area of WTO work.

4.152. In closing, Trinidad and Tobago applauds Fiji on its evident commitment to an open, transparent, rules-based multilateral trading system. We congratulate the delegation in advance on the completion of a successful Review.

#### KENYA ON BEHALF OF THE ACP GROUP

4.153. On behalf of the ACP Group, I wish to extend a warm welcome to the delegation of Fiji, led by the Honourable Manoa Seru Kamikamica, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications, to its fourth Trade Policy Review. Ambassador Luke Daunivalu's engagement and leadership along with the robust engagement of Fiji's Geneva-based team also cannot go unmentioned. I also thank Ambassador George Mina of Australia for his remarks and insights as a discussant, as well as the WTO Secretariat for their detailed Report.

4.154. At the outset, we acknowledge Fiji's dedication in championing the collective positions held by the ACP Group at the WTO, as well as its advocacy for small island developing states within the Pacific region.

4.155. The ACP Group applauds several initiatives undertaken by Fiji during the review period. Fiji's continuous endeavours to remain open to international trade and its firm commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system are noteworthy. Fiji clearly views trade as an engine for

growth and prosperity, while seizing every opportunity at home, in the Pacific region and globally, for progress. Fiji is indeed an important trading partner in the WTO and a key enabler for regional and multilateral cooperation. In this regard, the ACP Group welcomes Fiji's leading work towards the Pacific regional integration as exemplified by its participation in the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA).

4.156. We note Fiji's economic challenges since 2016, including a small contraction in 2019 after nine years of growth. The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted Fiji's economy in 2020 and 2021 due to travel and tourism restrictions, along with three cyclones. This led to a record drop of 17% in output in 2020 followed by another contraction of 5.1% in 2021. Fiji's resilience is paving the way for the Government's initiatives with the economy making progress towards recovery despite the ongoing economic effects of the pandemic. The reopening of international borders and successful vaccination targets achieved in December 2021 led to a resurgence in tourism, resulting in an estimated growth rate of 15.6% in 2022. Notwithstanding the economic effects of the pandemic, numerous service sectors have seen significant growth as the world recovers. Accommodation and food services, transportation and storage, wholesale and retail trade, and business services, such as finance and insurance have all experienced a surge in activity. Between 2016 and 2022, merchandise trade in Fiji saw an annual rise of 20.3% in exports, resulting in FJD 2,323 million, while imports increased by a total of 36.9%, reaching FJD 6,599 million.

4.157. Fuelled by a renewed objective to strengthen its economy through industry reorientation and diversification, Fiji has made strides in its efforts to mitigate external shocks, promote economic growth, and successfully reduce unemployment and inflation rates during the review period.

4.158. We appreciate the changes that Fiji implemented in 2018, during which the Government reformed policies, legislation, and procedures to enhance business efficiency and productivity. Reforms included a process review to eliminate redundancies and overlaps, the establishment of an online platform for investors, and the repeal of unnecessary laws/processes resulting in improved business processes and lower compliance costs.

4.159. Fiji has made changes to promote investment, trade, and economic growth. The Investment Policy Statement sets out the vision, objectives, and principles for investment growth. The Statement outlines a pathway for legislative review and reform. To attract "efficiency-seeking" investments, Fiji requires policy and strategic change. MSMEs contribute significantly to Fiji's economy but have not been fully captured in statistics.

4.160. Notwithstanding these milestones, we take this opportunity to draw Members' attention to the unique constraints that Fiji is constantly facing as a small island nation and urge Members to support WTO work that promotes the further inclusion of small vulnerable developing countries.

4.161. To conclude, the ACP Group reiterates its support to Fiji and wishes the delegation a successful Trade Policy Review.

## BARBADOS

4.162. I am particularly honoured to have been tasked with extending a warm welcome to the delegation of Fiji, a fellow small island developing state (SIDS), which is very ably led by the Honourable Mr Manoa Seru Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications for this their country's fourth Trade Policy Review.

4.163. Minister Kamikamica, we thank you for your very informative and thought-provoking opening remarks. It has certainly given us some food for thought as it relates to the inherent realities confronting many SIDS on a daily basis. We also wish to thank the discussant, H.E. Ambassador George Mina (Australia), for his comprehensive analysis and the WTO Secretariat for its usual excellent preparations for this review.

4.164. The compounding effects of three successive cyclones, the climate crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic have taken a significant toll on Fiji's economy and has had a knock-on effect across all of its economic sectors. It is therefore concerning that some measures employed by much larger countries to support their impacted sectors in the aftermath of such disasters, for example post cyclone stimulus packages, have had not only served to assist Fiji but has also had a detrimental

impact on the countries' fiscal and current balances, increased its stock of public debt and reversed some hard-won development gains.

4.165. We have certainly taken some solace in that fact owing to Fiji's sound fiscal and monetary management as well as the lifting of COVID restrictions, the country's economy rebounded by an estimated 15.6% in 2022 after a contraction of 17% and 5.1% in 2020 and 2021, respectively.

4.166. We have noted that in its current Development Plan, Fiji's strategic vision, has placed significant emphasis on promoting the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) - the backbone of Fiji's economy employing 60% of the Fijian workforce; empowering youth and women; building resilience against climate change and building an environmentally sustainable economy. The Government's plan to review the development plan with an aim to chart a path towards economic recovery is indeed commendable.

4.167. Barbados recognizes that Fiji, like so many other SIDS, is on the frontline of the climate crisis. The World Bank's sobering assessment that the country's exposure to climate change threatens to undermine the long-term development objectives is one that we know all too well. We therefore applaud Fiji for its commitment at the national level by recognizing this in its low emissions Development Plan and in 2021 through the adoption of its Climate Change Act which, among other things, legally binds Fiji to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. We are pleased to hear that Fiji's careful planning is already bearing fruit as more than half of the electricity generated by the country originates from renewable energy resources. The country's provision of tax incentives and green subsidies on environmentally friendly items and on renewable energy products will also go a long way in realizing this ambitious goal.

4.168. The best laid plans are however just that if adequate financing and other technical assistance and capacity building is not available to support the implementation of such plans. We urge donors and other development partners to work with Fiji to fill the technical and financial assistance gaps that exist.

4.169. Fiji's stewardship on environmental issues transcends to its commitment to multilateralism and the multilateral trading system through its active participation in our work here at the WTO, particularly in its advocacy for the nexus between climate change, development, and trade to be more actively discussed under WTO agenda.

4.170. We commend H.E. Ambassador Luke Daunivalu and his team in Geneva for being leaders here in this multilateral ecosystem. The Barbados and Fiji Missions here have cooperated on small economy matters, on fisheries, on human rights, and more recently as co-chairs on a WHO process on SIDS, NCDs, climate change and mental health. Fiji gives meaning to the expression, "small but not invisible". This is why my Ambassador, H. E. Mr Matthew Wilson, who is currently chairing a meeting in UNCTAD, and hence could not be here, wanted to pass on a special mention of congratulations to the delegation. We look forward to our continued collective championing of the interests of small island developing states and small vulnerable economies in the WTO and indeed across international Geneva.

4.171. In closing, we wish Fiji a successful conclusion to its fourth Trade Policy Review.

## INDONESIA

4.172. First and foremost, Indonesia would like to welcome the Fiji delegation, led by Deputy Prime Minister Manoa Seru Kamikamica, to their fourth Trade Policy Review. We would also like to thank Ambassador George Mina, who served as a discussant on this policy review, as well as the Government of Fiji and the WTO Secretariat for their insightful Report, which reflect Fijian policy on international trade cooperation during the review period.

4.173. Allow me to also express appreciation to Fiji's Permanent Mission in Geneva led by Ambassador Daunivalu, for their continue and active engagement in the WTO negotiations, especially the Fisheries Subsidies negotiations.

4.174. We note that Fiji has prioritized the development of its agricultural products and agri-food preparations as primary export products. However, during this review period the Fijian economy has



faced numerous challenges, including the effects of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and frequent extreme weather episodes. In this regard, it would be appreciated if the Government could outline the programmes that support those primary export products and ensure that they are in accordance with Fiji's WTO commitments. According to the Secretariat Report, Fiji maintains export incentive schemes and other extensive tax incentives.

4.175. In addition, we note that the Government of Fiji has undertaken reforms to promote trade and investment growth, with one of them focusing on the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises. Indonesia would appreciate it if the Government of Fiji could share their strategies for supporting MSMEs as a backbone of economic growth.

4.176. In terms of bilateral trade, we note that trade and investment relations between Indonesia and Fiji have more room to improve and reach their potential, with total trade estimated to be around USD 28.7 million in 2021 and USD 41.2 million in 2022. According to our data, there is market potential in Fiji for Indonesian export products such as flat-rolled products of iron or non-alloy steel, cement, polyacetals, and tissue. In this regard, we hope that Indonesia and Fiji can collaborate to promote business-to-business contact while also improving trade facilitation and market access.

4.177. To conclude, we would like to wish Fiji a successful Trade Policy Review.

#### SAMOA ON BEHALF OF THE PACIFIC GROUP

4.178. *Bula vinaka, Talofa lava*, good morning. From your Pacific family here in Geneva, I extend a very warm welcome, to the Honourable Manoa Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister of Fiji; and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications; and members of the Fiji delegation. Thank you for your comprehensive remarks, Deputy Prime Minister, taking us through Fiji's trade landscape and priorities. Thank you also to Ambassador Mina, for your *Bula*-inspired contribution as the discussant of Fiji's Trade Policy Review.

4.179. I make this statement on behalf of the Pacific Group Members of the WTO. I acknowledge the active engagement of Fiji in the WTO, and as part of our Pacific family, the ACP group, through H.E. Ambassador Daunivalu, Mr Vueti May, and the Fiji mission in Geneva. We congratulate the Fiji Government for the quality of its Report as well as that of the WTO Secretariat.

4.180. The Pacific Group notes, the positive growth achieved by Fiji. Particularly, the strong rebound of 15.6% in 2022 from the decline largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The rebound was attributed to the resumption in tourism and the early opening of international borders in 2022. And as the discussant referred, we were fortunate to experience that welcoming Fijian hospitality last November with the WTO Director-General.

4.181. The Pacific Group commends Fiji for its commitment towards a liberal trade policy regime and the pursuit for structural and economic reforms since the last Review in 2016. In particular, we highlight the following four reforms:

- first, the adoption of the Trade Policy Framework 2015-2025 to position Fiji as an internationally competitive, dynamic and vibrant economy serving as the hub of the Pacific;
- second, the establishment of a dedicated unit for MSMEs in the Ministry of Trade in 2019 and a new MSME policy framework launched in 2020. These aim to support the growth of the MSMEs and increase its contribution to the economy, noting that MSMEs contribute 18% of GDP and 37% of employment;
- third, the streamlining of investment approvals through the new Investment Act 2020, the modernization of business processes and digitalization of Government's business and investment approvals systems as well as business and tax registrations; and
- fourth is the reforms to sectoral policies such as in agriculture, fisheries and forestry as well diversification into new sectors and explore investment in renewable energy, ICT, business process outsourcing (BPOs) as well as the audiovisual industry.

4.182. Fiji is also participating alongside Pacific Island countries in regional trade agreements such as the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA), the MSG Trade Agreement as well as the Economic Partnership Agreements with the EU and the United Kingdom. It is noted that Fiji is seeking to enhance its global integration including through the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). As an important regional player, we also urge Fiji to consider joining PACER Plus and enhance the regional market.

4.183. Beyond the region, Fiji is also playing an active role in the WTO including in the Pacific Group, the ACP and the SVEs. And as we are aware in this house, Fiji's leadership and perseverance in shaping the outcome of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement at MC12; and Fiji's contribution to the menu of elements in our work to discipline subsidies on overcapacity and overfishing.

4.184. The ability of Fiji, and small island developing states, to generate growth depends on an open, transparent and equitable rules-based multilateral trading system. As reflected in Fiji's Report and the remarks by the Deputy Prime Minister, the impacts of climate change and frequent natural disasters remain a significant challenge. The frequency and intensity of these disasters have subjected Fiji, the Pacific and small island states, to a continuous cycle of rebuilding of infrastructure and productive sectors from one disaster to the next. These are also contributing to increasing levels of debt. The multilateral rules of the WTO should therefore be responsive to the trade and development challenges faced by small vulnerable economies like Fiji.

4.185. In conclusion, the Pacific Group commends Fiji's active participation in the WTO and the shared pursuit of an open and equitable trading environment. We recognize the challenges Fiji faces and stand in solidarity, supporting its efforts to overcome these obstacles. The Pacific Group also appeals to development partners and donors to assist Fiji with the implementation of the remaining reforms and in building its capacity, through aid for trade and technical assistance, to achieve its trade and economic policy objectives.

4.186. We wish Fiji a successful Trade Policy Review.

## ECUADOR

4.187. Mi delegación da la bienvenida a la delegación de Fiji, presidida por el Sr. Manoa Kamikamica, Primer Ministro Adjunto y Ministro de Comercio, Cooperativas, Pymes, y Comunicaciones de Fiji; y extiende un afectuoso saludo al apreciado colega y amigo, Embajador Luke Daunivalu, Representante Permanente de Fiji ante la OMC.

4.188. Agradecemos al Gobierno de Fiji y a la Secretaría por los informes presentados para este examen, así como a las oportunas observaciones y comentarios del ponente, Embajador George Mina.

4.189. Quiero empezar felicitando al Gobierno de Fiji por el buen manejo sanitario de la crisis causada por la COVID-19 y otros desastres naturales. Como se evidencia del informe, estos eventos golpearon fuertemente su economía, resultando en una caída del 17% en la producción en 2020, que fue seguida por una nueva contracción del 5,1% en 2021.

4.190. Las acertadas acciones gubernamentales han permitido que hoy la economía de Fiji transite por un camino de recuperación. Ya en 2022, el país registró un 15,6% de crecimiento, y la situación permitió la reapertura de fronteras y con ella la reactivación del turismo, una de sus principales fuentes de ingresos.

4.191. Asimismo, el informe nos permite ver la visión estratégica del Gobierno de Fiji sobre los temas comerciales, con muchos de los cuales coincidimos en su relevancia para los países en desarrollo, como es la promoción de las mipymes, el empoderamiento de los jóvenes y las mujeres, o la construcción de una economía ambientalmente sostenible.

4.192. Ecuador reconoce el liderazgo de Fiji en materia de comercio, ambiente y desarrollo sostenible. Fiji y Ecuador, coordinan junto con Australia, Barbados, China y Marruecos, el Diálogo por Contaminación por Plásticos, que hoy tiene 76 Miembros y trabaja hacia resultados concretos para la Decimotercera Conferencia Ministerial, contribuyendo desde la perspectiva del comercio a la respuesta global a la crisis sanitaria y ambiental que provoca la contaminación por plásticos.



4.193. Ambos países participamos activamente en los debates hacia la eliminación de subsidios dañinos para el medio ambiente. Reconocemos el liderazgo de Fiji en materia de protección de océanos, a nivel global.

4.194. Señor Presidente, estoy muy impresionado por un artículo que he leído el día de hoy en el New York Times "*Extreme Heat Will Change Us*", que presenta los severos desafíos para millones de personas en sus vidas diarias, en su trabajo, en el mundo del comercio, fruto del incremento de la temperatura del planeta en los años que vienen. El cambio climático es una urgencia, y desde el comercio tenemos que aportar con respuestas. Fiji también ha sido vocal en la lucha contra la crisis climática. Ecuador comparte la preocupación respecto de esta urgencia ambiental y —por ello— junto a Nueva Zelandia, la Unión Europea y Kenya, promueve la Coalición de Ministros de Comercio sobre el Clima, iniciativa que a la fecha cuenta ya con 58 países y a la que me permito invitar a Fiji y al Ministro Kamikamica a fin de que considere sumarse a la misma.

4.195. Asimismo, con Fiji compartimos el compromiso con el sistema multilateral de comercio y participamos activamente en negociaciones que se llevan adelante en esta materia, en especial aquellas enfocadas en temas de agricultura y pesca. Los productos agrícolas son un importante componente de la balanza comercial de ambos países, gracias a sectores privados eficientes. Es por ello que, para nosotros, la eliminación de los subsidios que puedan causar distorsión en los mercados agrícolas es fundamental.

4.196. Valoramos y compartimos el enfoque de Fiji en el proceso de negociaciones de subsidios a la pesca, particularmente la necesidad de proteger a la pesca artesanal y contar con un TED efectivo de acuerdo que permita implementar este principio en atención a las realidades de los países en desarrollo.

4.197. Deseo terminar mi intervención augurando a Fiji un exitoso examen de sus políticas comerciales.

## INDIA

4.198. It is a great pleasure for India to participate in the fourth Trade Policy Review of Fiji and to welcome the delegation led by H.E. the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications; and also H.E. the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Fiji, Mr Luke Daunivalu. We would like to thank the Fijian Government and the Secretariat for their excellent reports prepared for the Review. Allow me to also thank the discussant, our dear friend, H.E. Ambassador George Mina for his spirited, passionate, and insightful remarks.

4.199. India and Fiji enjoy close partnership underpinned by historical linkages and longstanding strong people-to-people connections, which provide an important link between our two countries. Fiji is at the heart of the Pacific Ocean and therefore, an important partner for India in our collective endeavour of a free, open, inclusive, secure, and peaceful Indo-Pacific region.

4.200. Prime Minister Modi's visit to Fiji in 2014 was a watershed moment not only for India-Fiji relations but also India's relations with all Pacific Island countries. During the visit both countries entered into new areas of cooperation and partnership, the first meeting of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands cooperation was also held during that time.

4.201. Over the years, as a major development partner of Fiji, India has been privileged to support Fiji in its nation-building efforts across key sectors and also in the area of capacity-building.

4.202. Recently India's External Affairs Minister, Dr Jaishankar, visited Fiji in February this year. During this visit the Visa Waiver Agreement between the two countries was concluded, this will help in ease of mobility. We are also grateful to Fiji for hosting the 12<sup>th</sup> World Hindi Conference in February 2023.

4.203. India is also working to deepen its engagement with Fiji through the framework of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation that encompasses development assistance initiatives and cooperation project in various fields, including climate change, create economy IT, community development projects, capacity building, and sharing of expertise.

4.204. Similarly, India is also working with Fiji through the Framework of Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) and, in this regard, we would like to recall our Prime Minister's interaction at first of its kind with the leaders of the Pacific small island developing States, in September 2019 at New York on the margins of UNGA, and the India-Pacific Island Sustainable Development Conference, organized by India in Suva in May 2017.

4.205. We also take this up opportunity to thank Fiji for being one of the first funding members of the International Solar Alliance, an initiative promoted by India along with our international partners to promote solar energy, and also the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.

4.206. Our bilateral trade with Fiji, though, has been steadily expanding in recent years, still remains very modest and we would like to see this improve for the mutual benefit of our people. One area which we would like to highlight is the pharmaceutical sector where Fiji could perhaps benefit from India as a thriving generic medicines exporter, and to help promote equity in the Fijian health care sector. This would require the creation of an enabling policy framework as well.

4.207. A number of Indian companies have invested in Fiji in diverse fields such as health, education, IT, and financial services. India has been a closed development partner of Fiji and has undertaken capacity-building, infrastructure development, and technical assistance programmes, we look forward to building on these initiatives to deepen our partnership with Fiji.

4.208. As brought out in the Secretariat's Report since the last Trade Policy Review in 2016, the economy of Fiji has performed well, based on a relatively open trade regime, sound macroeconomic policies, and structural reforms. Fiji's reliance on trade and tourism makes it vulnerable to external shocks, the small size of its economy and the susceptibility to natural disasters also constrain its economic growth prospects.

4.209. India fully understands the challenges faced by Fiji as a small island developing state. We support and encourage Fiji's efforts to open up its economy and integrate with the global economy. In this regard, we commend the Government of Fiji for the economic reforms being implemented to create the conditions for economic business and social prosperity.

4.210. Finally, I would like to refer to what the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister mentioned in his opening remarks today. We were pleased to note that in his opening statement he laid emphasis on the criticality of trade for Fiji in its economic development and Fiji's firm commitment to a strong multilateral trading system to help everyone benefit in this interconnected world, due to our strong and close bilateral relationship, India and Fiji have been cooperating closely in all multilateral fora, and we thank Fiji for its support to India in the multilateral organization, including here at the WTO.

4.211. Fiji has been and active Member and strong-wiser for small island countries and for the larger Global South, it has been contributing immensely to the ongoing discussions and negotiations at the WTO in order to ensure a balanced, fair, and equitable outcomes, many Members and the discussant have spoken about it, and we look forward to working with the delegation of Fiji in the coming months to ensure a successful outcomes in MC13.

4.212. We wish the delegation of Fiji a productive and successful Trade Policy Review.

#### VANUATU

4.213. The Vanuatu delegation wishes to congratulate Fiji on its fourth WTO Trade Policy Review.

4.214. We extend a warm welcome to the Honourable Manoa Seru Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, SMEs, Cooperatives and Communications and to the members of his delegation to this Trade Policy Review – *Ni sa bula vinaka*. We recognize that the participation of the Honourable Minister in leading this Trade Policy Review is a testament to the high priority the Government of Fiji accords to the WTO and its adherence to the transparency obligations.

4.215. We thank the Government of Fiji for the high quality of its national report which is clear and concise, and also thank the WTO Secretariat for its Report. We also thank the Deputy Prime Minister for his statement outlining Fiji's development strategy and national trade policy as well. We thank Ambassador George Mina for your warm remarks as a discussant.

4.216. We commend the Government of Fiji for the significant progress made in its trade policies since the last Review. The Report outlines some setbacks in economic growth in the recent past due to unfavourable global economic conditions, spill-over effects of wars and instability far from the Pacific and the negative consequences of the global health pandemic.

4.217. Additionally, the effect of climate change, sea level rise, and the disposition and nature of the vulnerability to natural disasters is a constant threat. Despite this, the future is favourable for the Fijian people. Why is this so?

4.218. This is because, and is evidenced in the Report that Fiji has embarked on legislative and process reforms, improving financial accountability, good governance and has adopted prudent public expenditure management and with the recently completed National Economic Summit, short-term, medium-term and long-term economic policies and strategies are being formulated.

4.219. Our view that the thematic areas of the national economic summit include, *inter alia*, macroeconomic management, key growth sectors, governance and reforms, human development, rural and outer island development, transport etc. will provide an impetus for many more years of positive developments in Fiji.

4.220. We note the Report outlines the performance of the major sectors in the economy on MSMEs, Agriculture (both sugar and non-sugar), the manufacturing sector, textile clothing and footwear – on mining, forestry, and the services sector.

4.221. I make two observations on the major sectors, first on tourism - on the services economy- and the second, on the fisheries sector.

4.222. On the tourism sector, Fiji is commended for the positive and recovery phase of the tourism sector since 2021 and the contribution of foreign exchange earnings from tourism which will grow beyond the levels Fiji saw prior to COVID-19.

4.223. On Fisheries, the report sets out precisely the fact that Fiji has an exclusive economic zone of around 1.28 million km<sup>2</sup> and approximately 75% of Fiji's population reside within 5 km off the coast. The major contribution to this sector is from commercial fishing and especially the commercial offshore tuna catches. The threat to this fisheries sector is unfortunately, from climate change, natural disasters, instances of overfishing and the illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU). On this IUU, if we are responding to the Fiji TPR Report, the WTO must address IUU in its disciplines.

4.224. We note the major trade developments and investment policies. Fiji's major trading partners include the Pacific Islands, and we are pleased with the trade relationship between Fiji and Vanuatu.

4.225. The Report also points to the structural challenges that Fiji faces and should be taken into account. Like Vanuatu, Fiji also faces high trade costs stemming from smallness, remoteness from markets and is dependent on a few exports and a few sectors. This is exacerbated by the external shocks particularly natural disasters which are increasing in intensity and regularity in the region and setting back development progress.

4.226. We note the views expressed by Fiji on the issue of non-tariff barriers in foreign markets and institutional capacity limitations to address sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical barriers that inhibit exports. We call on countries who have imposed those barriers to take action for a positive outcome for Fiji.

4.227. We call on Members to support Fiji in its efforts to advance its national trade reforms, to diversify its economy, build its capacity to trade and build economic resilience in the long term in line with its national development strategy.

#### REPUBLIC OF KOREA

4.228. The Republic of Korea would like to extend a warm welcome to the delegates of Fiji led by Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Manoa Seru Kamikamica for their fourth Trade Policy Review. We would also like to express our gratitude to H.E. Ambassador Luke Daunivalu, Permanent Representative of Fiji; we also thank the Government of Fiji and the WTO Secretariat for their

informative reports. My sincere appreciation also goes to the discussant, H.E. Ambassador George Mina, for his insightful comments. The Republic of Korea is grateful for this opportunity to take a closer look at the trade policies and practices Fiji has undertaken since the last Review in 2016.

4.229. The Republic of Korea and Fiji have remained a good economic relationship over the past 50 years. Despite some fluctuations, their trade volume has increased steadily. Recently, Korean companies are increasing their investments in Fiji. For example, the completion of the renewable energy biomass power plant invested by the Republic of Korea and its subsequent sale of electricity to the Fiji Authority showcases a positive development in the economic relationship between the two countries. The Korean Minister of Oceans and Fisheries visited to Fiji in last May to strengthen their cooperation in the marine and fisheries sector. The Republic of Korea has provided development assistance to Fiji through various projects and programmes such as education, healthcare, agriculture, and rural development. These efforts aim to strengthen the bilateral relation and promote economic cooperation between the two countries. Tourism plays a significant role in the economic relationship between the Republic of Korea and Fiji. Korean tourists have shown an increasing interest in visiting Fiji's beautiful beaches, coral reefs, and cultural attractions.

4.230. Turning to economic performance, Fiji's GDP experienced a significant decline in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely impacted its key industry, tourism. Now we are pleased to note that great recovery has been observed, and it is projected that its economy will rebound significantly in 2023, with a growth rate of 8.5% thanks to the Government's efforts.

4.231. Allow me to highlight four points regarding Fiji's trade policy. First, we note that the ongoing development and improvement of Fiji's National Development Plan and National Export Strategy, spearheaded by the Government, are expected to provide substantial assistance to economic development. These strategic frameworks provide a roadmap and guide for a country's economic policies and initiatives, helping to prioritize and align efforts towards specific goals. The Republic of Korea had similar experiences of formulating five-year plans for economic development, and it is currently in the process of establishing a five-year national fiscal management plan.

4.232. Second, the Republic of Korea would like to commend Fiji's active participation and contribution to the multilateral trading system as a founding Member of the WTO. Fiji's role as a leading economic and commercial hub in the South Pacific, combined with its exemplary pursuit of free trade, contributes to trade activation and economic vibrancy in the South Pacific region.

4.233. Third, Fiji's services industry plays a significant role in the country's economy, accounting for two-thirds of its GDP and half of its exports. Among the service sectors, tourism holds particular importance as it contributes significantly to GDP growth and job creation. Consequently, the Government is encouraged to accelerate proactive policy development and attract foreign investments to support this vital sector.

4.234. Lastly, the Republic of Korea recognizes that Fiji faces significant challenges due to climate change. As a small island developing state, Fiji is particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, including rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and disruptions to ecosystems. The impacts of climate change pose a direct threat to Fiji's economy, environment, and the well-being of its population. The tourism sector in particular can be adversely affected by the degradation of coral reefs, beach erosion, and increased risks of natural disasters. These challenges require global attention and collaborative efforts to address and mitigate the effects of climate change. In this regard, the active participation of Fiji and other WTO Members in the discussion of sustainable environment is very meaningful.

4.235. In closing, the Republic of Korea would like to once again appreciate Fiji's efforts for the multilateral trade system and free trade. We are sure that these efforts will contribute to the competitiveness and resilience of its economy. I wish Fiji a successful Review.

#### TIMOR-LESTE

4.236. Timor-Leste warmly welcomes the delegation of Fiji led by H.E. Minister Kamikamica, and congratulates them for the comprehensive Government report which underlines the strong political commitment to the WTO trade policy review process.

4.237. We also express our appreciation to the Chair, Ambassador Saqer Almoqbel, the discussant, Ambassador George Mina, and the Secretariat, for their insightful perspectives.

4.238. My delegation commends Fiji's commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system and its substantive contribution to the WTO, especially in the WTO negotiations on the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies to ensure sustainable ocean fishing and securing the future of the small islands and developing countries' fishing industry.

4.239. As a small island state, Timor-Leste acknowledges that small and vulnerable economies remain disproportionately affected in the global trade agenda and contributes less to the global value chain. Therefore, we kindly encourage the WTO to continue work with such Members to mainstream their trade by providing support and appropriate flexibility within the WTO rules.

4.240. In closing, we would like to acknowledge the valuable contributions of Ambassador Daunivalu and the team in Geneva. We wish Fiji a successful Trade Policy Review.

## **5 REPLIES BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI AND ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

5.1. It is a great pleasure to see you all again. I am certain that the *bula* spirit of Fiji that was abundantly present on the First Day of Fiji's Trade Policy Review, thanks to our wonderful discussant Ambassador Mina from Australia for his intervention and contributions.

5.2. I wish to convey my immense gratitude and heartfelt appreciation to all the WTO Members who actively participated in the first day of Fiji's fourth Trade Policy Review, sharing their valuable insights and interventions. Fiji listened intently to each contribution and is deeply grateful for the tremendous support and affirmations received from the WTO family.

5.3. Throughout our trade policy process, we have witnessed a remarkable display of collaboration and solidarity, which reaffirms the significance of the multilateral trading system in fostering economic development and global prosperity.

5.4. A number of comments and recommendations were made on the first day of the meeting and I would like to take this opportunity to address some of the questions raised by Members during this review.

### **Outstanding notifications**

5.5. Firstly, on the matter of Fiji's outstanding notification obligations to the WTO. I assure you that Fiji is fully committed to fulfilling its responsibility as a WTO Member. In this regard, we are working actively to improve our capacity and meet our obligations more efficiently.

### **Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies**

5.6. Regarding the matter of Fiji depositing its instrument of acceptance for the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies to the WTO. I am pleased to inform you that we are in the process of tabling the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies to our Cabinet and the Parliament for ratification.

5.7. WTO Members can expect a positive announcement of our ratification of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement soon. We firmly believe that this agreement represents a vital component of our collective efforts to safeguard the world's ocean and marine resources, for the benefit of our present and future generation.

### **PACER Plus**

5.8. With regards to some Members asking Fiji to join PACER Plus, Fiji welcomes the enthusiasm of our partners. As a new Government, Fiji will be reassessing its position through a feasibility study on joining PACER Plus.

5.9. This is an important moment for Fiji, as we take a fresh look at this agreement and assess its potential benefits and challenges.

5.10. We are committed to ensuring that any decisions made in relation to the PACER Plus agreement are based on a thorough understanding of its potential impact on Fiji and its people. To this end, we will be engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including the business community, to ensure that all perspectives are taken into account.

### **WTO Joint Statement Initiative**

5.11. We have also noted a number of calls regarding Fiji's interest in joining the WTO Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on E-Commerce, MSME and Investment Facilitation. Again, thank you for your interest and invitation.

5.12. While Fiji has not been part of these initiatives, mainly due to capacity constraints, Fiji is now actively considering its participation in these Joint Statement Initiatives. As we move forward with our positive consideration, we will engage in internal consultations and assessments to ensure that joining these initiatives aligns with our National Development Agenda and supports the well-being of our citizens.

5.13. We will also collaborate with other WTO Members to seek solutions that address the specific needs and challenges faced by SIDS in the context of e-commerce, MSMEs, and investment facilitation.

#### **Multi-party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement**

5.14. We thank Australia and the European Union for inviting Fiji to join the Multi-party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement. Fiji will seriously consider this arrangement and will assess how this arrangement aligns with our overall trade policy objectives and perhaps more broadly the objectives of our multilateral Organization.

#### **Fiji's priorities for MC13**

5.15. Fiji also received a helpful question on Fiji's priorities for the upcoming WTO 13<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in 2024. As expressed during my statement on the first day of the meeting, one of the key priorities for Fiji is the urgent need to conclude the remaining elements of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement and conclude the second wave of negotiations before MC13. Fiji would also like to see the delivery of concrete and effective outcomes to reduce plastics pollution and address environmental concerns.

#### **Fiji's applied and bound tariff**

5.16. Fiji also received comments on some of Fiji's applied tariff rates exceeding the bound rates. Fiji appreciates the opportunity to shed light on this matter and assures Members that Fiji's approach to tariff rates is aligned with the WTO principles of predictability and stability.

5.17. In the most recent budget, tariffs on a number of items that fell outside the bound rates have been reduced. The limited number of products that exceed bound rates includes "sin goods" and revenue items which will be reconsidered in our reform.

5.18. In terms of low bound rates, while Fiji has not bound 3,422 of its tariff lines at the WTO, it is important to note that our applied tariff rates are already set at low levels. These rates are predominantly categorized into four tiers: 0%, 10%, 15% and 32%. This strategy aims to strike a balance between promoting economic growth, facilitating trade, and at the same time protecting domestic industries. Our applied tariff rates provide a high level of transparency and predictability for our trading partners, ensuring a fair and consistent trading environment.

5.19. Furthermore, Fiji recognizes the significance of predictability and stability within the multilateral trading system. While we have not bound certain tariff lines, Fiji remains fully committed to honouring our existing commitments and obligations under the WTO.

5.20. Fiji remains open to further discussions on the binding of tariff lines, taking into account the interests and concerns of all parties involved.

#### **Negative tariff escalation**

5.21. With regards to concern on escalation of tariff in certain industries, such as textile, it is essential to highlight that these measures are often implemented to encourage the development of downstream processing and value addition within our economy.

5.22. Fiji, like many other developing countries, faces the challenge of striking the right balance in its trade reforms and ensuring its domestic industries grow. We aim to design our tariff policies with a comprehensive approach, taking into consideration the potential impact on our local producers and infant industries and their ability to compete with global suppliers.

5.23. In this regard, we are actively working to strengthen our industries and improve their competitiveness, at the same time, continue with trade reforms.

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**Highlight Fiji's MSME strategy and the support Fiji requires from WTO Members and trade partners in the area of MSME development**

5.24. Some Members have requested us to share more details regarding Fiji's MSME strategy. Fiji takes great pride in our efforts to create an enabling environment for MSMEs to thrive.

5.25. MSMEs play a crucial role in our economy, contributing significantly to job creation, innovation, and overall economic growth. As we continue to foster the growth of our MSMEs, we are humbled to see that other WTO Members recognize the importance of such endeavours and express an interest in learning from our experiences.

5.26. We are in the process of creating an "eco-system" of support for MSMEs. Some of the specific aspects of Fiji's MSME strategy are as follows:

- (i) Facilitating easier access to finance and access to equity by working with development banks. In Fiji we are working with the Fiji Development Bank (FDB) where the Government guarantees FDB's loans to enable it to have access to cheaper finance and provide suitable financing for MSMEs
- (ii) Strengthening the capabilities and skills of MSMEs, especially improving their digital and financial literacy by providing relevant support, training, and assistance. For example, we are assisting MSMEs to develop their websites and internet payment gateways, marketing plans and financial accounts and statements.
- (iii) Encouraging innovation and the adoption of modern technologies through grant programmes; for example, in agriculture, the Government funds the mechanization of farms using the one-third two-third model.
- (iv) Enabling MSMEs reach to international markets by fostering exports. One of our grant programmes, National Export Strategy, focuses on addressing barriers that MSMEs face in international markets. This could relate to issues such as technical standards, SPS measures or marketing and promotion.
- (v) Most importantly, simplifying business regulations and reducing bureaucratic hurdles to create a more conducive environment for MSME development. We have an active Doing-Business reform programme that aims to digitize all business-related approvals on a single platform. One of the objectives is to make the services easier for MSMEs to establish, operate and thrive.

5.27. Moreover, certain Members have also expressed their willingness to support Fiji in its MSME development efforts. Such offers of assistance are a testament to the spirit of international cooperation and solidarity which the WTO embodies. Fiji requires assistance from WTO Members and trade partners in reducing trade barriers, in particular non-tariff barriers, and improving market access conditions to enable Fiji's MSMEs to reach international markets. Fiji wishes to also seek assistance from Members in reviewing and streamlining regulatory processes related to MSMEs.

5.28. Building networks and partnerships with international businesses and organizations can open new opportunities for MSMEs. Support from trade partners in facilitating such connections can be invaluable for Fiji's MSMEs.

**Fiji's role on Trade and Environment Issues**

5.29. Fiji remains committed to continue strongly advocating on the nexus between trade and environment and climate change. Fiji has also started incorporating environment focused discussions in all of our regional and plurilateral discussions.

5.30. This is our crucial national interest as we are at the forefront of the adverse impacts of climate change. We will continue to work with Members in advancing the discussions on these issues in the Committee on Environment and Trade and Environment Sustainable Development.



## Conclusion

5.31. I reaffirm Fiji's commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system. We will continue to actively participate in the WTO discussions, especially the second wave of negotiations on fisheries subsidies. I urge all the WTO Members not to further delay the negotiations and show good faith and finalize the remainder of the Agreement.

5.32. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you Mr Chair, for your leadership throughout Fiji's Review and the good work you are doing as Chair of the Trade Policy Review Body this year. I also commend Ambassador Mina, the discussant, for your "*Bula* powered and spirited intervention" as "*vuvale*" and family, which set the platform for such an interactive and enlightening Trade Policy Review. As a "*vuvale*", irrespective of your critics, we appreciate and value your guidance always and we hope you can visit Fiji again soon perhaps after MC13.

5.33. Also, I wish to acknowledge and thank all the Members for your keen interest and active participation in Fiji's fourth Review.

5.34. Last but not the least, I must also thank the Secretariat team in facilitating a smooth and successful Review. See you all at MC13. *Vinaka vakalevu* and thank you.

## DISCUSSANT

5.35. Let me begin by thanking the Membership for its engagement in Fiji's fourth Trade Policy Review, for their questions and interest in Fiji's trade policies and practices. And let me provide particular thanks to Fiji – Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications, the Honourable Manoa Kamikamica; Ambassador Luke Daunivalu; Permanent Secretary Shaheen Ali and the whole Fiji team for the thorough, open and diligent manner that it has engaged with this process. Your faithful engagement in this process leaves us with no doubt that Fiji is committed to the global trading system.

5.36. It is an honour to again serve today as discussant. Deputy Prime Minister, you have responded comprehensively, and openly, just now, to many of the themes in Members' questions and statements in this review. So, there is no need for me to review comprehensively the comments made by the Membership.

5.37. Let me just draw out a few key themes. Earlier this week, Members commended Fiji's impressive post-COVID economic growth in 2022, and the resilience Fiji had shown through other recent shocks. Members welcomed Fiji's ongoing commitment and reliance on trade as a driver of its recovery, and Members congratulated Fiji on its impressive and comprehensive reforms to stimulate this recovery.

5.38. Members welcomed Fiji's economic and trade development strategies, which prioritize the empowerment of women and youth, Fiji's efforts to promote MSMEs, its commitment to enabling private-sector growth, to digitization and economic modernization and encourage Fiji to continue these efforts.

5.39. We heard commendation for Fiji's development vision revolving around building a climate-resilient economy. Members encouraged Fiji to continue to lead the world through the acceleration of the implementation of practical measures to address climate challenges. Members applauded Fiji's engagement and leadership of environment discussions at the WTO.

5.40. Fiji received recognition from Members for actively and constructively participating in various other WTO discussions, particularly in negotiations concerning fisheries subsidies. They urged the authorities to promptly deposit Fiji's instrument of acceptance to demonstrate commitment.

5.41. Whilst I certainly am exceptionally fond of Fiji that means that I must use this opportunity to the full provide some recommendations and suggestions, drawing on Members' suggestions and a few of my own. I am going to call these the four "Ps".

5.42. The first "P" is "PACER Plus". Members welcomed Fiji's significant contribution to the global trading system. The Pacific Group, Australia, and New Zealand specifically welcomed the particular

contribution Fiji plays in the region. Members encouraged Fiji to take the next step towards regional integration and leadership. I welcome the Deputy Prime Minister's announcement that Fiji is reconsidering Fiji's possible participation in the initiative and will conduct a feasibility study on the opportunities and challenges, including by deepening its engagement with stakeholders. This is an important announcement. Let me encourage Fiji to consider positively participation in PACER Plus: joining the initiative would contribute considerably to Fiji and to regional economic integration.

5.43. The second "P" is "predictability". I welcome Fiji's efforts to bring its notifications into compliance, acknowledging the capacity constraints facing Fiji. I also acknowledge the comments you just made, Deputy Prime Minister, on the importance of providing predictability to trading partners by bringing your applied tariffs in line with your bound tariffs. The question of the scope of those bound tariffs is a different question and your partners would, I am sure, welcome continued discussion on the scope of your bound tariffs, but for predictability it will be important to strive to bring alignment between Fiji's bound and applied tariffs.

5.44. The third "P" is "participation". We have heard about Fiji's significant contribution to the global trading system and to this house in Geneva. But I would like to highlight three issues that Members specifically would welcome your engagement, and which through engaging with you during this review, I understand align with your priorities. The first is the E-Commerce Initiative. We have heard about your strong digitization, connectivity, and economic modernization agenda domestically. The impressive growth and increased innovation in your Business Process Outsourcing sector – the E-Commerce Joint Statement Initiative is a natural fit with your interests. The second area is on agriculture – I have heard about Fiji's efforts to grow its agriculture sector, particularly into high-value agricultural products. Fiji's greater participation in agriculture discussions aligns closely with its goal to develop and grow its agriculture sector. Finally, I welcome Fiji's consideration of the Multi-party Interim Appeals Arrangement (MPIA). Your strong commitment to the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement can only be supported by the ability to enforce the commitments Members have made. The MPIA will support that goal.

5.45. My final "P" is "please continue". You have heard it across the Membership – please continue your leadership. Your strength across the whole gamut of issues here. The nexus of trade and environment, your leadership on climate on plastics and your policy innovation – to call for the development of best practice, to drive deliberation, cooperation, and commitments. We welcome your leadership in driving these issues and supporting Geneva in its role as a trade and environment policy capital.

5.46. May I conclude by again saying that just as the WTO has benefited Fiji, we too would benefit greatly from more Fiji in the WTO. I thank Fiji for the way it has participated in this review and congratulate you on a very successful fourth Trade Policy Review.

## UNITED STATES

5.47. Thank you Chair and thank you Ambassador Mina for the very impressive summary as well as Deputy Prime Minister, you already highlighted everything that I was going to say, but I am still going to say a few of those things and reiterate some of the points that have already been made.

5.48. I note with great interest that you have heard us and many other Members on our request for greater transparency and on providing timely notifications, and taking on your message, we look forward to hearing more from you.

5.49. We also note with great interest that you hope to ratify the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement within the next few weeks, that is really good news, and we look forward to that as well. I also take note of the fact that you are looking at bringing your tariff rates into alignment with your bound tariff rates. These are messages are very welcomed.

5.50. We also want to take this opportunity to highlight some of the ways we are going to continue to work with Fiji, now and with the view to your next Trade Policy Review, to help you come up with some of the solutions that you are looking for. Regarding IPEF, we look forward to that engagement and to continuing that process, but as Ambassador Mina said, there are a lot of other areas of mutual interest at the WTO and we hope that we can continue to work with you, because we do agree that Fiji brings an important constructive voice to this house.

5.51. I also want to assure you that the United States remains committed to supporting our trade and sustainable growth with Fiji and the rest of the Pacific Islands. Our Vice-President participated virtually in the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting, where she announced a lot of new commitments to deepen our partnership with the region and deliver concrete results for the Pacific people, this advances the US agenda to strengthen the US and the Pacific Islands partnership, it also builds on five decades of close cooperation in the Pacific Islands Forum, including as a founding dialogue partner USD 350 million in annual assistance to the Pacific.

5.52. I also wanted to just highlight, because we have been talking so much about fisheries agreements, for 33 years the South Pacific Tuna Treaty that has served as the cornerstone of political and economic cooperation between the United States and Pacific Islands supporting livelihoods across the region and providing a platform for broader cooperation, including to combat the scourge of IUU fishing. We will continue to cooperate on fisheries-related economic development and ocean's resilience.

5.53. Through USAID we have been working on other programmes in the region, just last month, to promote recycling in Suva City, the USAID in partnership with Waste Recyclers Fiji Limited (WRFL) and the Pacific Foundation (PRF), conducted a training workshop on Social and Behaviour Change Communication for a recycling project in Suva City. There is a long list that my capital has provided of all the work we are doing, and some of that is with partners in the Pacific such as Australia, Japan, New Zealand and UK as Partners in the Blue Pacific which is bringing USD 2.1 billion in development assistance to the region. All that to say that there are a lot of resources available, and we hope to continue our work and we will continue working with you bilaterally, plurilaterally, and in this house multilaterally.

#### EUROPEAN UNION

5.54. Let me first thank the delegation of Fiji for the very comprehensive replies to our advanced questions, and the overviews presented during the two days of the meeting on the main developments occurred in its trade and economic policy during the review period. Thanks also to Ambassador Mina for his very active role as a discussant and his very pertinent remarks that we all share.

5.55. We are very pleased to note that this review has been useful for highlighting the trade policy and the challenges Fiji is facing, especially the effects of climate change and frequent extreme weather episodes. In this regard, we noted that many WTO Members shared the EU's appreciation for Fiji's role, engagement, and participation in the WTO plurilateral environmental initiatives on plastics pollution and also fossil fuel subsidies reform, and the EU very much looks forward to working with you on this nexus of trade and environmental policies.

5.56. We also took note that Fiji is positively considering joining the Investment Facilitation for Development and perhaps also Services Domestic Regulation and E-Commerce initiatives, as well as MSMEs. This is very positive and thank you also for the very useful update on your own MSMEs strategy that seems to fit very well with the objectives pursued here.

5.57. As we stated already on the first day of the meeting, the management of natural resources, social governance, and fight against IUU fishing is and remains our shared objective, and like many WTO Members, also the EU appreciate very much the significant role of each in delivering the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement at the MC12 and the active participation in ongoing negotiations. In this context, we take very good note of the positive news you delivered this morning that we can expect the ratification of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement soon.

5.58. Finally, the EU looks forward to continuing working with Fiji in the lead-up to MC13, as well as cooperating bilaterally and regionally on the full and effective implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement and through that more recent Fiji-European Union Trade and Investment Forum.

5.59. To conclude, we thank Fiji for the very constructive participation in this transparent exercise.

## CANADA

5.60. I just wanted to take the opportunity to say share a few short points.

5.61. Deputy Prime Minister, thank you for being here, thank you for the seriousness and the positive spirit in which you have taken this transparency Review, in particular, your remarks this morning that respond the questions and the comments that the Organization posed to you and your country.

5.62. Canada certainly appreciates the immediate feedback that you gave to us today, we too are very excited for the positive steps that you are taking towards the ratification of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement and the seriousness in which you are considering more participation in the Joint Statement Initiatives and the MPIA.

5.63. We agree with Australia and others that this Organization needs more of Fiji and this is a testament to the fact that the positivity that Fiji brings to this house, to the discussions that we need to be having on the future of this Organization, in particular with regard to climate and other issues, is something that we need more of in order for this Organization to continue to be relevant. In that regard, I would be remiss if I did not say a personal thank to your Ambassador, my friend Luke Daunivalu, and his team in Geneva, the team's ability to be everywhere at once and to provide leadership on different discussions is appreciated very much.

5.64. Lastly, I would just like to say on a bilateral note that Canada really does look forward to strengthening our bilateral relationship with Fiji. The fact that we are opening our first Mission is a testament to Canada's desire to strengthen and further deepen our relationship between our two nations.

## REPUBLIC OF KOREA

5.65. The Republic of Korea would like to thank the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, Manoa Seru Kamikamica, and the Fijian delegation for your dedication on presenting Fiji's trade policy and comprehensive overview. The Republic of Korea appreciates the leadership of the Chair and the insightful and thoughtful comments of the discussant, H.E. Ambassador George Mina, and the hard work of the Secretariat in organizing this Trade Policy Review.

5.66. This meeting is extremely informative as it provides a platform to share not only the Fiji's trade policies but also the world economic landscape. The Republic of Korea is immensely pleased to witness Fiji's economy overcoming the adversity of the COVID-19 pandemic. We wish a swiftly and robust recovery going forward.

5.67. The Republic of Korea also anticipates Fiji's active engagement and contribution to the multilateral trading system, including JSI. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea hopes that Fiji will effectively address the challenges posed by climate change with the WTO Members.

5.68. Lastly, Fiji is a valuable partner of the Republic of Korea and we look forward to continuing our constructive and evolving relationship with Fiji. The Republic of Korea wishes a sustained growth and development for Fiji.

## SAMOA

5.69. We wish to join others in congratulating Fiji on the successful conclusion of its fourth Trade Policy Review. We commend the Fiji for fulfilling its obligations and commitment in upholding the WTO transparency requirements to undertake the Review, as reflected in its country Report. We wish the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and his delegation every success for the remain of this day in Geneva and a safe journey home when the time comes. Thank you.

## 6 CONCLUDING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON

6.1. The fourth Trade Policy Review of Fiji has offered us a good occasion to assess and deepen our understanding of the main developments on the wide range of trade policies and practices of Fiji, and the challenges it faces since its last Review in 2016.

6.2. I would like to thank the delegation of Fiji led by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister Manoa Seru Kamikamica, Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications, for his active role in this exercise. My gratitude also goes to our discussant H.E. Ambassador George Mina, Permanent Representative of Australia to the WTO, for his insightful comments, and to all the 24 delegations who took the floor during the Review.

6.3. Members recognized the trade-related challenges Fiji faced, including its vulnerability to climate change, as well as the impact of recent exogenous shocks on Fiji's economy, including the COVID-19 pandemic, and multiple devastating natural disasters. Members applauded Fiji for the resilience of its economy to respond to external shocks and praised its quick and impressive private sector-led recovery. In particular, they commended Fiji for its quick recovery from the pandemic, having achieved a real GDP growth rate above 15% in 2022.

6.4. Despite these challenges, many Members hailed Fiji's actions in undertaking key reforms to promote investment, trade, and economic growth and development. These have included promoting Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME); facilitating doing business; improving financial accountability, good governance, and public expenditure management; empowering youth and women; and building an environmentally sustainable economy.

6.5. Fiji was commended for its active participation in upholding the multilateral trading system including for its contribution to the MC12 outcomes, its participation in the work of the WTO in different committees, its acceptance and implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and the TRIPS Amendment, as well as its constructive contribution and participation in the plurilateral environmental initiatives in the WTO such as on plastics pollution, the Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured discussions (TESSD) and the Fossil Fuel Subsidies Reform Initiative. Some Members encouraged Fiji to consider joining the Joint Statement Initiative on E-Commerce as well as the Information Technology Agreement (ITA), to complement Fiji's efforts in digital transformation.

6.6. Members recognized that Fiji was making efforts to comply with its WTO commitments and were interested in learning more about Fiji's plans to submit its outstanding notifications to the WTO. Members made a call to provide Fiji with a substantial level of technical assistance in this regard.

6.7. Regarding trade policy, Members appreciated Fiji's efforts in undertaking customs modernization reforms, including the digital and organizational transformation of the Fiji Revenue and Customs Services and noted that Fiji had fulfilled 97% of its implementation commitments under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Fiji was commended for its efforts to reduce the average applied tariff rate from 11% to 6% over the review period, and encouraged to align with their bound rates the few applied tariffs that appear to exceed them.

6.8. Members commended Fiji for its energy transition policy, and the importance granted to MSMEs. Some Members requested additional information on the effectiveness of a tax measure in stimulating agricultural exports; policy measures to help domestic producers of sugar; support to the tourism sector; and measures to promote financial inclusion.

6.9. The strong interest placed by Members in Fiji's trade policies is evident from the 169 advance written questions Fiji received from 14 delegations for this review, out of which 92 were sent within the established deadline, covering a broad range of topics. Prior to this meeting, Fiji already provided written replies to all advance written questions.

6.10. Fiji's delegation has clearly demonstrated that it places a high value on the Trade Policy Review Mechanism and the multilateral trading system as a whole with its active engagement over the two-day meeting. Members commended Fiji's representatives to the WTO for their valuable contributions.

6.11. To conclude, Members have benefited from Fiji's statements and the replies provided to questions raised during this exercise.

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