



**HONOURABLE VIAM PILLAY
ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**

STATEMENT TO THE 41st Session of the IFAD Governing Council

VENUE : ROME, ITALY
DATE : 13TH – 14TH FEBRUARY 2018

Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Governors and Heads of Delegation,
Excellency's,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honored by the invitation to attend the 41st Session of IFADs Governing Council and my being here among you today is a testimony of Fiji's continuous support towards IFAD's mandate to eradicating rural poverty.

Let me foremost convey to the Governing Council warm greetings from the Government and the people of Fiji and wish the council well in its deliberations.

Mr. Chairman, let me acknowledge IFAD's long and cordial relationship with the Government of Fiji, which dates back to when Fiji joined IFAD in 1978. Although IFAD has financed many activities in the country through regional

grants, the first IFAD loan investment was approved in 2015. The Fiji Agricultural Partnership Project (FAPP) in the highlands of Fiji's main island has the overall goal to reduce hardship in remote rural communities, with the development objective of engaging small-scale producers in sustainable farming and business partnerships in remote areas.

Mr Chairman, fragility to long term resilience: investing in sustainable rural incomes as the theme for this conference is certainly appropriate and highly relevant to my country. Fiji and Pacific Islands have fragile ecosystems and some of the most challenging agro-ecological conditions with low soil fertility, salination of agricultural areas, drought and high temperatures. This is exacerbated by natural calamities such as tropical cyclones as experienced in Samoa and Tonga recently.

These realities are undermining the prospects for sustainable development and threatening the livelihoods of rural people with whom IFAD works. Investment in rural livelihoods is central to addressing these challenges and ensuring that people have the capacity to lead sustainable lives.

Mr Chairman, Fiji assumes the Presidency of COP 23 last year and we are determined to maintain the momentum of the 2015 Paris Agreement and the concerted effort to reduce carbon emissions and lower the global temperature, which was reinforced at COP 22 in Marrakesh. As the first COP president from a Small Island Developing State, we have the responsibility to see that every nation is playing its part to combat the

rising sea levels, extreme weather events and changing weather patterns associated with climate change.

Mr Chairman, My country's commitment to IFAD and its activities are well known. We believe that IFAD is fulfilling a unique role in addressing the problems of rural poverty for Fiji and the Pacific Island countries. As a testimony of our commitment, I wish to pledge US\$100,000 on behalf of the Republic of Fiji to the 11th replenishment of IFAD resources.

Thank you Mr Chairman.

Vinaka Vakalevu.

[VP]