The role of diplomats in the modern diplomacy holds the key to nurturing universal peace, unity and global prosperity.

The role is one of great responsibilities and commitment towards striving to advance the interests of his or her country in a competitive global arena.

The significance of the role is well articulated by the Dean of the Fijian Diplomats, Fiji’s Ambassador to Japan, Isikeli Mataitoga.

Ambassador Mataitoga’s work ethics are earnestly based on the principles of solidarity as being the foundation for building the resilient and sustainable societies.

The confidence he exudes is the result of his humble upbringing which has won the admiration and respect of the diplomatic fraternity.

The Fijian envoy’s exemplary dedication as a diplomat is a true reflection of his passion for advancing Fiji’s interests at the global stage.

Ambassador Mataitoga has been based at Fiji’s Diplomatic Mission in Japan since October 2009, and his role as a diplomat is focused on building Fiji’s bilateral relations with Japan and also oversees Fiji’s relations with countries like Russia, Philippines, and Vietnam.

He manages the work at Fiji’s Mission in Tokyo by working actively to strengthen Fiji’s cooperation with Japan which has resulted in several memorandum of understanding (MOUs) and memorandum of agreements (MOAs) being signed and projects being undertaken with the Government of Japan.

The work of Fiji’s 15 Missions abroad is guided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Strategic and Operational Plan that is aligned with the Fijian Government’s National Development Plan 2017-2036.

He says that as a Fijian diplomat, he is proud to say that Fiji’s strong presidency at COP23 and the Talanoa framework led by the Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama, that has raised Fiji’s profile and given Pacific a stronger voice and recognition at the global stage.

Fiji has been able to solicit stronger bilateral and multilateral collaboration that complements the Fijian Government’s vision to transform Fiji into a modern, inclusive, progressive nation and cement its position as the leader in the Pacific Islands.

“The Mission in Japan is working very hard to strengthen and diversify Fiji’s relations with Japan and other countries we are accredited to, and pursue socio-economic development opportunities that will benefit the people of Fiji. And indeed through Fiji’s strong leadership, there is positive spinoff by the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries showing strong interests to broaden their engagements with Fiji, thereby increasing socio-economic opportunities. We have seen an increase in the assistance provided to Fiji in areas of infrastructure, health, education, trade, investment, agriculture,” Ambassador Mataitoga explained.

“The diplomatic channel is a gateway to enhance collaborations and ensure that we maximize on the Official Development Assistance (ODA) and new businesses and trade platforms to market our local goods and products.”

Ambassador Mataitoga who is a lawyer by profession, has served in many leadership roles before taking up the diplomatic posting to Japan. He was appointed as the Director of Public Prosecutions in early 1989, followed by his appointment as the Secretary of Justice and Solicitor General from 1993 to 1996.

His journey in diplomacy began in year 1997 when he was appointed as the High Commissioner to Singapore and Australia where he served for two years.

Later in the 1998, he was appointed as the Ambassador to European Union with bilateral accreditation to 7 European Union (EU) countries.

He was also concurrently appointed as Fiji’s Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organization (WTO), Food and Agriculture Organisations of the United Nations (Fao) and United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

Ambassador Mataitoga was also the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade from 2004 to 2006, following his appointment in Brussels.

Then in the year 2007, he served as the High Court Judge for over two years.

Being one of the most senior Fijian diplomats in the foreign services, he also conducts in-service training of young diplomats in preparation for posting to the overseas missions. In doing so, he has designed the information package for Fiji’s diplomatic training courses.

Being a mentor and inspiration for Fijian diplomats, Ambassador Mataitoga has conducted series of Diplomacy Trainings for the building diplomats in Fiji, and including Pacific Island Countries.

According to him, in diplomacy, one needs to be well tuned with the global geopolitical structure and economic framework to be able to comprehend and conduct effective diplomatic engagements with the international communities.

“Most importantly, one needs to set clear goals and specific timelines and always be prepared to walk the extra mile. Being a diplomat, you need to develop an ambitious agenda that will achieve the maximum benefit for your nation, which has entrusted you with the diplomatic role. It is simply not enough to do the same work with usual approach. The challenge is to do more with same or less resources.”

“Fijian diplomats of the future must develop the ability to respond accordingly to the changes in the international environment and still engage proactively to get the best returns for Fiji,” he said.

Ambassador Mataitoga is determined to further strengthen the Fiji-Japan partnership to generate new areas of cooperation to complement Fiji’s national development.

Having come this far in his diplomatic career, the Fijian envoy is enthusiastic and grateful for all the support given; especially from his wife and family. He has a daughter, who is a lawyer in the Queensland State Government Attorney General’s Department, and a grandson who is in final year law studies as well.

“The Fijian envoy acknowledges the values of honesty, hard work, fairness, accountability and compassion imparted to him by his parents, the values which underpins his leadership skills.

He is grateful to have attended schools in Suva that had teachers and students from all ethnic backgrounds, for it enabled him to develop long and lasting bond of brotherhood and friendship that continues to prosper. More so, it’s these cultural exchanges that have enabled him to appreciate the importance of cultural diversity and oneness.

“My parents had to sacrifice a lot to send me and my siblings to school, and the one thing my father emphasized was on the importance of education.”

Isikeli Mataitoga
Dean of the Fijian Diplomats, Fiji’s Ambassador to Japan

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Fiji’s Ambassador to Japan, Isikeli Mataitoga with Mayor of Kamaishi City, Iwate Prefecture is His Worship Mr Takenori NODA. Kamaishi is the second Fiji’s Ambassador to Japan

Fiji’s Ambassador to Japan, Isikeli Mataitoga with the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Photo: SUPPLIED

Fiji’s Ambassador to Japan, Isikeli Mataitoga with the French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris. Photo: SUPPLIED