

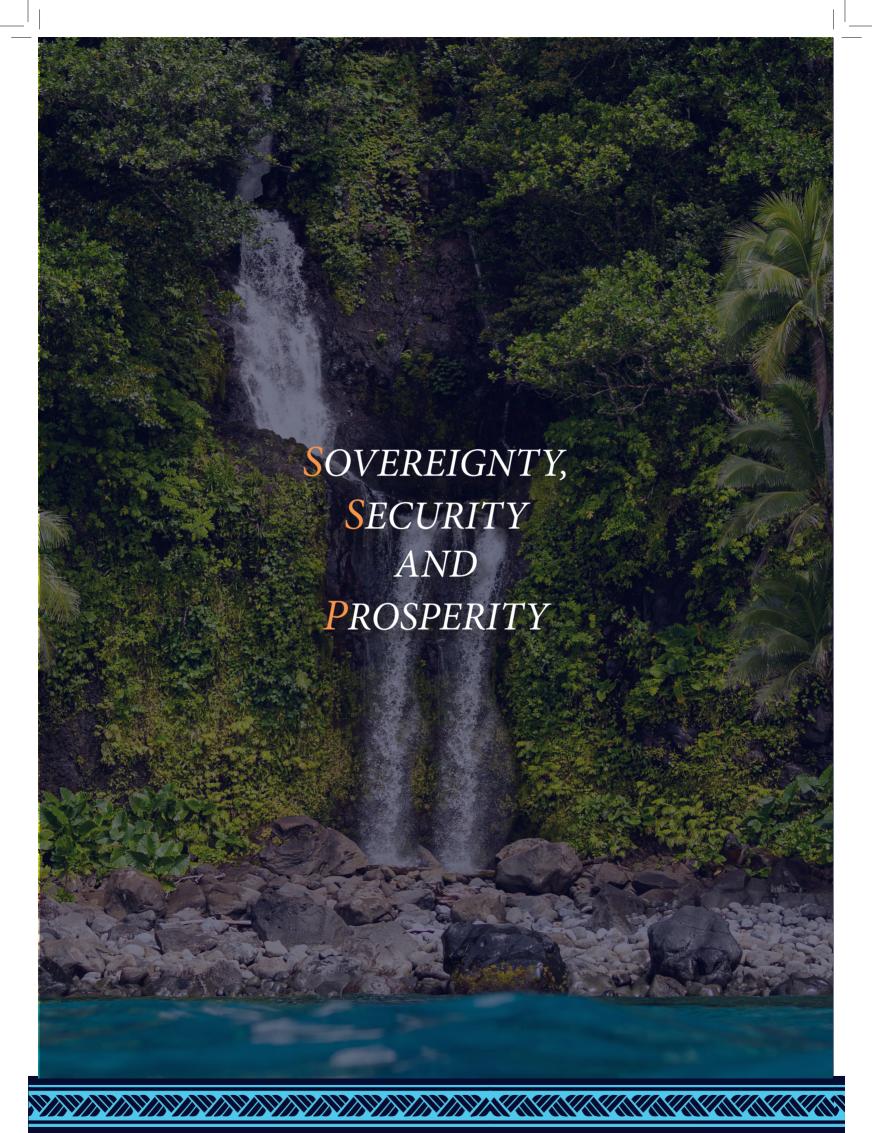
FOREIGN WHITE PAPER **SOVEREIGNTY, SECURITY** AND PROSPERITY

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"Collective efforts are needed to address challenges, not only as individual sovereign nations, but also as regions, and indeed, the whole of humanity".

Prime Minister, Hon. Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka.



ABBREVIATIONS

ADB - Asian Development Bank

AIFFP - Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific

APK - The Asia-Pacific Conference of German Business

ASEAN - Association of Southeast Asian Nations

BBNJ - Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological

Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction

BPO - Business Process Outsourcing

CERT - Computer Emergency Response Team

CIDP - Centre for Integrated Development Pacific

CIP - Country Implementation Plan

EU - European Union

FCLP - Forest Carbon Partnership Facility

FFA - Fiji Football Association GDP - Gross Domestic Product GNI - Gross National Income

IMF - International Monetary Fund
 IPEF - Indo Pacific Economic Framework
 IUU - Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated
 IICA - Japan International Cooperation Agency

MFSPNPD - Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Planning & Development

MHMS - Ministry of Health and Medical Services

MSG - Melanesian Spearhead Group

MSMEs - Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

NBS - Nature-Based Solutions
NCDs - Non-communicable Diseases

NDCs - Nationally Determined Contributions

NDICI - Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument

NPT - Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

NSTF - National Sustainable Tourism Framework

ODF - Official Development Finance
 ODA - Official Development Assistance
 PALM - Pacific Australia Labour Mobility

PFTAC - Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Center

PIDF - Pacific Islands Development Forum

PIF - Pacific Islands Forum

RSE - Recognised Seasonal Employer
SDG - Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS - Small Island Developing States

T2DM - Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus

TPNW - Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
TSOC - Transnational, Serious and Organised Crime

UN - United Nations

USP - University of the South PacificWTO - World Trade Organisation

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Foreword by the Prime Minister of Fiji

HIS is Fiji's first White Paper on Foreign Policy. It sets out the path that Fiji will follow in the next decade to meet the complex foreign policy challenges we face as a nation. It is the definitive statement of the Government's foreign policy and Fiji's place in the world.

The White Paper explains how Fiji sees itself and how we wish to present ourselves to the world. It outlines the Government's foreign policy initiatives, especially the promotion of the Ocean of Peace which is the single most significant contribution that Fiji can make to peace and security in our neighbourhood and the broader Indo Pacific region. The White Paper reaffirms the central position of the Pacific region in our foreign policy calculations. It makes clear that in all we do in foreign policy we will put the Pacific family first.

The foundation of this White Paper is a whole-of-nation approach that integrates all elements of policy, domestic and external, and recognises that our security and prosperity ultimately depend on a clear-eyed view of our national interests and values and how best to advance them.

The Foreign Policy White Paper sits alongside Fiji's National Development Plan and the proposed response to the current National Security and Defence Review as the foundations of the Government's strategy to advance Fiji's strategic and economic interests and strengthen its social cohesion.

This is a headline document. It is not a checklist of all we are doing in our foreign policy. Nor is it a catalogue of all our bilateral and multilateral relationships and activities. Instead, it sets out the underlying principles of Fiji's foreign policy, our overarching objectives, our broad priorities and the way in which domestic and foreign policy are closely intertwined. It is a narrative of where we wish to go and how to get there.

What follows builds on the three interconnecting themes of Fiji's foreign policy: sovereignty, security and prosperity. These are the traditional pillars of foreign policy but the context in which we must pursue them has profoundly changed.

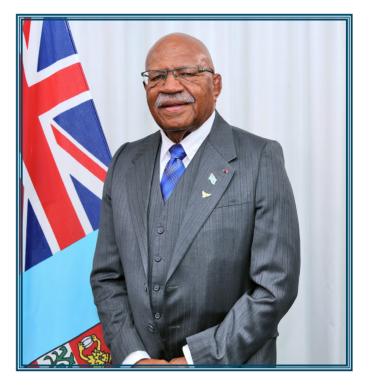
The test of a nation's foreign policy is its ability to recognise change and adapt to it.

The outlook for our region and globally is today more uncertain than at any time since Fiji came to independence. We are in the midst of what is likely to be a long transition from the US-led liberal international order to a more multipolar world.

The old liberal international order, from which Fiji was a beneficiary, and which saw an unprecedented level of global cooperation and economic interdependence, is gone.

In its place is a complicated competition for primacy between the US and China, played out most sharply in our Indo-Pacific region. At its most basic, China aspires to become the predominant power in the region and the US is determined to hold on to its pre-eminence.

How this competition will play out is an open question. The stakes are high. There are significant risks of miscalculation.



A policy of de-risking US-China economic relations could well still spill over into a decoupling of the two economies at the heart of global growth.

In the Indo-Pacific, the project of building region-wide institutions has come to an abrupt halt; the victim of US-China strategic competition. These institutions remain in place but have a stalled agenda and little momentum.

Just as the geopolitical order is shifting, so too is the international economic order. Protectionism is on the rise. Supply chains are being reorganised. Self-reliance has acquired a renewed appeal.

Open economies are considered a vulnerability not an asset. National security concerns increasingly shape economic policy.

This is the context of uncertainty and risk within which Fiji must navigate its foreign policy.

Acknowledgements

I thank all those officials, under the leadership of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Lesikimacuata Korovavala as well as the Secretariat, who have contributed to the preparation of this document. I acknowledge the wise input of the reference group which helped guide its preparation, and I thank the White Paper's principal drafter, Dr Peter Varghese AO.

Hon. Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

September 2024.

Chapter 1 Sovereignty: Identity and Values

OREIGN policy begins with a clear sense of who we are and what we believe. How we present ourselves to the world, the characteristics that define our society and the values that bind it together are at the heart of how we engage with the world.

How we define our interests, prioritise our international relationships, the ideas we bring to building a stronger region, and the reasons we invest in multilateral cooperation, all flow from our sense of self and the values that shape Fijian society.

Fiji is a country of many communities and faiths. Our multiethnic society learns from each other's customs and beliefs. Religion plays a prominent role in our community, but we are a secular state, with no state religion and respect for freedom of religion. We strive to be an inclusive community where everyone, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion or cultural background feels valued and appreciated.

As a nation we must lift all communities. That means improving the economic position of the iTaukei, the indigenous Fijians, and increasing their involvement in commerce. It means recognising and honouring the Girmityas who came to Fiji from India over the last two centuries. It means building an economy which provides employment and raises the living standards of all communities and all Fijians.

Diversity is not a substitute for unity. Unity comes from a shared vision for the country and a shared commitment to core values. Our values draw on ancient traditions and customs. They are given modern form in our shared commitment to the values of a liberal democracy. This is a commitment which should be beyond party politics.

We believe in the equality of our citizens, the accountability of government and the importance of the rule of law. We consider it the duty of government to respect fundamental human rights. We value freedom of expression, a free media and respectful dialogue.

In foreign policy our perspectives are shaped by our Pacific Island identity. A "family first" regionalism is the foundation of our foreign policy priorities. Beyond the region, our values are grounded in the principles of the UN charter, respect for sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

We eschew the coercion of one country over another. We recognise that international cooperation is essential to addressing global challenges from climate change to geopolitical instability and trade and investment.

Our history both defines us and enriches us. But we must also acknowledge that it has not always been perfect. We can move forward as a more united and just society only by facing up to the injustices and mistakes of the past.

In foreign policy our perspectives are shaped by our Pacific Island identity. A "family first" regionalism is the foundation of our foreign policy priorities.

It is precisely because there have been periods in our history where our values have been weakened or ignored that today we hold to them even more deeply.

Fiji's National Interests

At the core of foreign policy sits a clear sense of national interests. Like all countries, Fiji puts its security and prosperity at the centre of its national interests. The policies set out in this White Paper are designed to advance these interests in a considered and integrated way reflecting a whole of nation effort.

A whole of nation effort means that foreign policy cannot exist in isolation. Foreign policy is more than diplomacy, bilateral relationships and multilateral negotiations. It must be closely integrated with domestic policy and coordinated through a whole of government framework.

That is why the White Paper speaks to domestic economic reform, innovation, the digital economy, labour mobility and social cohesion as much as it does to Fiji's bilateral relationships, the central place of the region in our foreign policy and the linkages between foreign policy and international trade and investment.

In advancing its national interests Fiji will be guided by the following principles:

First, a recognition that domestic and foreign policy must be aligned. What we do at home should be consistent with what we wish to achieve abroad

Second, multilateral cooperation is essential to giving Fiji the leverage it simply cannot apply as a small state working on its own. This applies at the global, regional and subregional levels.

Third, Pacific regionalism lies at the heart of our approach to foreign policy. Regionalism defines our maritime environment. It is the foundation of the Pacific Islands Forum and the other institutions that serve our interests from fisheries to economic integration.

Fourth, the strength of domestic institutions is essential to our national strength. Strong institutions buttress our stability. They are the engines of policy making. They underpin our social cohesion, and they guarantee the rule of law. They take time to grow, can quickly weaken and must be carefully nurtured.

Fifth, Fiji must engage in global issues that directly affect its interests. This includes the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the international financial institutions and negotiations on vital issues for Fiji such as climate change, trade liberalisation and access to markets and to finance for development.

Chapter 2 Security

n uncertain times policy clarity is crucial. It serves as an anchor and a focus for marshalling the national effort. Security is about more than our physical security and the protection of our borders. It is also about economic security, environmental sustainability, the capacity to address non-traditional threats to security and challenges to social cohesion.

Fiji is a small state. It does not have the capacity to shape the broader strategic environment in the way larger powers can. However, while a small state may be a strategic price taker, it is not without agency.

Fiji will exercise its agency through the clarity of its foreign policy objectives, its leadership role in the South Pacific, the leverage that its position as a regional hub gives it, and the energy and ideas that it can bring to regionalism and broader multilateral cooperation.

Our most significant security threat lies in the prospect of a region which is riven by division, insecurity, and instability.

Fiji does not face a direct external military threat. We do not need to fear invasion. Our most significant security threat lies in the prospect of a region which is riven by division, insecurity, and instability. So, contributing to a stable Indo-Pacific region is Fiji's highest strategic priority.

The largest challenge facing the Indo-Pacific is the construction of a stable balance which can provide an enduring framework to manage the strategic competition between the US and China and which can prepare the ground for the longer-term evolution to a stable multipolar region. That will likely be the work of generations.

The Indo-Pacific is a region where the interests of superpowers, major powers and smaller states intersect. Its diversity demands arrangements which do not shoehorn nations into a single strategic structure such as a bipolar system.

A multipolar region will require adaptable structures where interests are carefully balanced and where strategic space is shared. For now, we are some distance from achieving this.

In the medium term the power distribution of the Indo-Pacific will run mainly along bipolar rails. There will be a significant power gap between the US and China on the one hand and a clutch of major powers such as India, Indonesia and Japan on the other.

In the long term however the distribution of power may be more dispersed, and more states will want the flexibility to navigate this more complex strategic environment without being exclusively tied to one power or another. This is the nature of a multipolar system.

Ocean of Peace

Fiji must find a place within this emerging balance which protects its interests and does not compromise its values.

This does not mean choosing a side. Fiji has no interest in doing so. We want the freedom to pursue our interests and give expression to

our values in a way that does not handcuff our options to one side or the other of the strategic competition that now defines the region. But nor does supporting a stable balance mean keeping equidistant from everyone. Being friends to all and enemies to none does not mean that all relationships matter equally or are equally close. Fiji has traditional friends

We have historical partners with whom we have worked closely since independence. And the ease with which we build our regional relationships will also reflect the depth and texture which shared values lend to any relationship. Fiji is a non-aligned state but it will lean in the direction of states with deeper historical ties and that are closer to us in the liberal democratic values that define our society.

Fiji's most significant contribution to a stable balance in the broader Indo-Pacific is to focus on the challenges of peace and security in our South Pacific neighbourhood. The best way to do this is by pursuing the objective of an Ocean of Peace in the Pacific.

The Ocean of Peace is both an aspiration and a pathway to a regional arrangement crafted by the states in the Pacific Islands Forum but also respected by the other powers of the broader Indo-Pacific region.

The Ocean of Peace cannot survive as a unilateral assertion. It must rest on a shared commitment by all states in the region to put a stable peace at the centre of their strategic calculations.

The Ocean of Peace signals that Fiji seeks a region where strategic competition is managed, stability is the touchstone of regional relationships, coercion is eschewed and differences are resolved peacefully.

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Working through the Pacific Islands Forum and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), and recognising that this is a long-term objective, Fiji will promote an Ocean of Peace based on the following ten principles.

First, a shared commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes based on the Pacific Way of bringing nations together to find common ground and manage disagreements.

Second, respect for international law and norms, especially the UN Charter and non-interference in the internal affairs of states.

Third, rejection of coercion as a means to achieve security, economic or political advantage.

Fourth, each state should have the right to self-defence and the freedom freely to determine its security policies and strategic relationships, always considering the implications of those policies for the broader peace and stability of the region.

Fifth, upholding freedom of navigation and overflight and the Law of the Sea are essential to the stability of a vast maritime environment.

Sixth, a commitment to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and to the principles underpinning the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. **Seventh,** protecting the maritime environment to which the Pacific Island states have deep historical and spiritual connections.

Eighth, a recognition that common challenges, such as climate change, threats to the environment, and other non-traditional threats to security require a collective response to a poly-crisis, in accordance with the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Ninth, respect for human rights and the international conventions which give legal form to the obligation of states to protect the fundamental human rights of their citizens.

Tenth, support for inclusive regional institutions which focus on shared challenges and opportunities, including the closer integration of regional economies.

In advancing the Ocean of Peace, we can draw on the rich history of international peace-making efforts as well as the processes which have underpinned international arms control and disarmament agreements. But the region has an opportunity here to make a distinctive Pacific contribution to the search for consensus and common ground.

Just as Fiji pioneered the Talanoa Dialogue as a new approach to climate change negotiations, so also the distinctively Pacific concept of "talanoa" (storytelling) that leads to consensus-building and decision-making can be adapted to the journey towards an Ocean of Peace. The process is designed to allow for participants to share their stories in an open and inclusive environment, devoid of blame, in the hope that all can learn and benefit from each other's ideas and experiences.

Regional Security and Nuclear Non Proliferation

The Ocean of Peace sits at the centre of Fiji's outlook on the security of the Pacific Islands. It rests on the unity of the region and the vital role that cooperation plays in building and strengthening that unity.

The painful legacy of nuclear testing in the Pacific has instilled a deep awareness of the threats posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Treaty of Rarotonga is a testament to our commitment to a region free from nuclear weapons. Fiji's support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) takes this commitment to the global level.

Fiji recognises the role that nuclear deterrence plays in the security policies of the nuclear weapon states, but we also look to the eventual elimination of these weapons, consistent with the principles of the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The NPT was not just about horizontal proliferation. It also envisaged a broader commitment to disarmament.

Having witnessed first-hand the consequences of nuclear weapons testing, the Pacific region has long supported the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

The Pacific must remain free of nuclear weapons, and we urge all the nuclear weapon states to take decisive steps towards disarmament. They have a particular moral responsibility in this area. The safety and sovereignty of the Pacific are non-negotiable, and we stand united against the threat of nuclear weapons and their proliferation.

Building Regional Institutions

For Fiji the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) is the cornerstone regional institution. It symbolizes the unity and shared destiny of Pacific nations, centred around our one Ocean. Our collaboration within this forum reflects our shared history, culture, and aspirations. This unity is essential as we face global challenges, ensuring that our diverse languages and cultures are bridged by our united spirit and shared values centered around our people, communities, cultures, and traditions. The Ocean is our shared heritage and our future, and our commitment to innovating and sustainably utilising this resource is crucial for our collective well-being.

Our participation in the PIF gives institutional expression to Fiji's "family first' approach. It rests on our belief that regional unity strengthens our ability to protect mutual interests. The overarching principle that a united PIF is more effective than a divided one in safeguarding the interests of all members underpins our approach to regional diplomacy.

The PIF draws strength from its individual members and contributes to their development through regional initiatives and capacity building programs. For example, the University of the South Pacific (USP) plays an important role in educating students from across the region and in helping address the skills needs of regional economies.

The Boe Declaration on Regional Security and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent are fundamental frameworks that guide our approach to regional security and development. These documents underscore the importance of promoting integrity, anti-corruption, and good governance as essential components of our broader strategy for regional collaboration.

The 2050 Strategy articulates our collective vision for the next three decades, offering a strategic framework supported by a detailed implementation plan. This plan will prioritise areas for collective advocacy and identify key priorities, ensuring that our regional efforts are coordinated and effective. The focus on tackling corruption and enhancing transparency and accountability is crucial for utilising our national resources effectively to improve development outcomes and ensure better lives for our citizens.

Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG)

Our strong ties with the Melanesian Spearhead Group are based on our shared Melanesian heritage and a recognition of the economic potential within our bloc. By supporting each other in economic development and strengthening economic cooperation and trade, we unlock our full potential for Melanesia's secure and resilient future.

We are committed to unlocking our full potential as the largest island economies in the region, endowed with rich natural resources. Through mutual support in our journey to economic growth, we aim to strengthen economic cooperation and trade within our bloc, achieving shared prosperity and a secure future for Melanesia.

Our relations with fellow MSG members are grounded in our shared geography, history as colonies, and the contributions of our peoples to each other's nation-building and development. This shared foundation is vital for our continued cooperation and mutual support. Fiji will pursue its MSG agenda within its broader commitment to the unity of the PIF and its recognition of the PIF as the paramount regional institution. MSG unity should complement not weaken PIF unity.

Integrated Development Centre

The precursor organisation the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF) was formed as part of a "Look North" foreign policy in response to Fiji's isolation following the PIF's refusal to support the forceful removal of Fiji's elected government in 2006. Established in 2013, its membership comprised of Pacific Island countries (PIC) with donor support from countries in Europe and the Middle East. PIDF extended its membership to civil society and non-governmental organisations and became a prominent regional body until PIF, the preeminent regional political organisation, mirrored its mandate and thereby diminished the standing of PIDF.

The PIDF has been re-purposed and reorganized as an integrated project implementation organization and has been renamed - the Integrated Development Centre (IDC) - reflecting Fiji's and PIC priorities as an organization focusing on development, the climate change and migration nexus, research and poverty alleviation. IDC's development and programmatic focus makes it the ideal delivery arm that works across the entire government and non-government systems within Fiji and encompassing neighbouring PIC.

We are not insulated from global developments, and we must strive to contribute within our means to global challenges.

Global Security

Fiji's security horizons must extend beyond our immediate Pacific Islands region and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

We are witnessing a long transition to a multipolar world, where the strategic value of our ocean area becomes increasingly significant. As small developing countries, we exercise sovereign authority over vast oceanic territories, underscoring our potential influence in global affairs. This unique position amplifies our voice and role in maintaining regional stability and shaping global policy.

From the outset of our administration, we have been dedicated to enhancing our relationships with development partners. Recognizing that our security challenges are interconnected, we seek an integrated, multilateral response to address these issues effectively. Our development partnerships, bilateral and multilateral, are covered in more detail in Chapter 7.

Peace and security are the cornerstones of sustainable development. Our commitment to sustainable development is reflected in our support for the UN Secretary-General's 'New Agenda for Peace', which envisions a multilateral framework based on international law to manage the complexities of a world in transition.

Fiji actively contributes to global peace by participating in six UN peacekeeping missions, sending more than 300 peacekeepers annually to global hotspots. Per capita, we are one of the largest contributors to these missions, demonstrating our commitment to maintaining

international peace and security. Fiji's engagement with peacekeeping signals our wish to be and to be seen as a good international citizen.

The current global geo-strategic competition is reshaping the world order, reminiscent of the period before the Second World War.

As economies rethink their approach to globalisation and supply chains are realigned, many countries are adopting inward-looking policies to promote self-reliance, even at a higher economic cost. This shift goes beyond economics. It represents a rethinking of the linkages between economic policy and national security and puts economic policy much closer to the centre of strategic policy making.

Soft Power and Sports Diplomacy

In foreign policy, a nation's soft power also measures the capacity to influence and persuade. This power flows not so much from military or economic weight but from how a nation is perceived, the impact of its ideas or the reach of its culture.

Fiji's standing as a constructive contributor to regional cooperation, its ability to attract people from the region to work or study, its reputation as a friendly and welcoming community are all manifestations of Fiji's soft power.

Sport plays a particularly important role in the projection of soft power. It stands out as a distinctive element of our foreign policy. It serves as a bridge across cultural divides, fosters international goodwill, and projects Fiji as a vibrant and confident nation.

Fiji's active sports diplomacy harnesses the universal appeal and inclusivity of sports to strengthen and broaden ties with other nations, especially in the Pacific region. This can be useful in enhancing the willingness of others to listen to Fiji's position on foreign policy issues such as climate change, economic growth, and sustainable development.

Fiji's engagement with regional partners such as Australia and New Zealand through sports clinics and educational exchanges exemplifies how sports diplomacy can contribute to developmental opportunities.

These initiatives nurture local talent and reinforce economic and cultural links, showcasing the potential for sports to help advance social and economic outcomes. For example, the forthcoming Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games will provide a platform for Fiji to showcase its talents to reinforce its regional relationships.

Recent collaborations with countries like Germany and France highlight the role of sports as a catalyst for diplomatic relations. These partnerships not only enhance our sporting capabilities but also facilitate economic and cultural exchanges. Through events such as the Rugby World Cup and various developmental sports programs, we foster a shared spirit of competition and camaraderie, which in turn strengthens our diplomatic ties and enhances our global profile.

Sports diplomacy is particularly potent in empowering communities and individuals by providing opportunities for international exposure and professional growth. Our focus extends beyond mere competition to include capacity building within the sports sector, which helps elevate the standard of living and enhances the professional prospects of athletes and sports professionals.

Integrating sports into our diplomatic strategy aligns with our broader sustainability goals. By promoting sports as a key component of our international engagement, we enrich our cultural exchanges and contribute to the sustainable development of the sports industry.

This approach ensures that the benefits of sports extend beyond the playing field, influencing areas such as youth development, gender equality, and social cohesion.

Cultural Diplomacy

Fijian Cultural diplomacy refers to the use of cultural expressions of traditional protocols like *i sevusevu* and *boka* to promote harmony, friendship and the *Vuvale*, literally 'family' spirit in the Pacific. Its use as a diplomatic tool goes back to the era of modern Fiji's founding father, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara.

It also refers to the use of the rich multi-racial traditions in arts, literature, language, dance, music and education, and other forms of cultural exchanges to foster understanding, promote cooperation and build relationships between communities and nations. It operates on the premise that by sharing aspects of one's culture, mutual understanding and respect can be cultivated, which in turn contributes to peaceful relations and collaboration in various fields.

Key aspects of Fijian cultural diplomacy promote Fijian Independence Day and Girmit day. These dates, October 10th and May 14th, respectively, are important dates in the social calendar of Fijians. Fiji Missions usually involve themselves in varying degrees to promote the values highly cherished by all Fijians such as community, inclusivity, friendship and hospitality.

Cultural diplomacy seeks to build bridges between nations by fostering understanding, mutual respect and appreciation of diversity. It involves facilitating exchanges of cultural artifacts, performances, exhibitions, and educational programs between countries. It assists people of different backgrounds learn each other's cultures, traditions, and values. reduces misunderstandings and conflicts based on cultural differences.

Cultural diplomacy enhances Fiji's soft power; its ability to influence others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. In showcasing the country's cultural achievements and values, Fiji improves its image and reputation globally.

Cultural diplomacy supports broader diplomatic objectives of promoting economic partnerships, addressing global issues like climate change or human rights, minimising and resolving international conflicts through dialogue and mutual understanding. Initiatives such as student exchanges, academic collaborations, and cultural scholarships, help build long-term relationships and networks of cooperation.

Overall, cultural diplomacy plays a significant role in international relations by promoting cultural understanding, fostering goodwill, and contributing to peaceful interactions among nations and peoples.

Chapter 3 Transnational Security

whole of nation foreign policy recognises that national security goes well beyond threats to territorial integrity, national sovereignty or regional stability. It must also wrestle with non-traditional threats to security: threats that emerge from transnational challenges which have the potential to erode social stability, tear at the social fabric of the nation, wreak havoc on livelihoods, and threaten the health of our community or the sustainability of our environment.

This chapter examines these transnational security issues, and the role foreign policy plays in addressing them. Problems without borders can only be addressed through collective action and marshalling that collective action is a priority of Fiji's foreign policy. A separate chapter covers Climate Change, the most consequential of the transnational security threats facing Fiji.

Environmental Challenges

Fiji has had historic leadership in this area at a global level. A Fijian was the first Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority. He played a crucial role in securing 200 nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zones on behalf of the Pacific and African-Asian states, and negotiating the rights of the archipelagic States and the passage through straits for international navigation. He also helped draft the Forum Leaders Declaration on The Law of The Sea. This led to the establishment of the Forum Fisheries Agency.

Fiji was the first to sign the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Reflecting the special importance of the sea in the life of the Fijians, we also became the first State to ratify the Convention.

Nowhere is unity and cooperation more important to the Pacific than in the sustainable use of marine resources. This is as much a security as an economic issue for Fiji and the region.

The ocean, as our vital resource, supports our sustenance, food security, trade, and tourism. It is also a potential major source of renewable energy. Protecting this resource, including from ocean pollution, is crucial for our economic stability and environmental health.

We are dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity, as outlined in the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (the so called BBNJ Treaty).

The BBNJ Treaty is a milestone in the protection of the world's oceans. It provides for the sustainable and fair use of the oceans. It recognises that the high seas are not ungoverned territory and that there is a shared interest in conserving marine biological diversity from over exploitation.

It also plays a crucial role in preventing biodiversity loss in the high seas, areas beyond national jurisdiction that cover nearly half of the planet's surface. By supporting this treaty, we emphasise our dedication to sustainable ocean governance and underscore the importance of collective international efforts to manage these global commons for the benefit of all.

This sense of collaborative security extends to our cultural and historical heritage. Our heritage as ocean navigators and our connection with nature shape our approach to regional security. We emphasise sustainable development to prevent our nations from becoming uninhabitable due to environmental degradation.

Fiji shares the region's strategic vision for the Blue Pacific. Our foreign policy is anchored in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, which captures our vision to foster a region defined by strategic, cultural, and economic unity. The empowerment of Pacific women and girls is central to this vision.

Fiji is dedicated to ending plastic pollution, halting biodiversity loss, and building environmental resilience. These environmental commitments are integral to our national security strategy, acknowledging the interconnection between environmental health and overall security.

Health Security

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected the health of Fijians and our healthcare system, particularly during the surges in 2021 and 2022. The outbreak led to national lockdowns, spikes in hospitalizations, and a significant number of deaths. Our response focused on improving access to essential and quality care, scaling up the vaccination program, and implementing a robust risk communication campaign. By June 2022, 95% of adults had received at least two doses of the COVID vaccine, leading to a substantial decline in hospitalizations and deaths. That being said, Fiji is well aware of the ongoing threat of global pandemics and epidemics.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) Strategic Plan 2020-2025 aims to promote universal health coverage and address social determinants of health, including gender equality. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are a significant concern, with 83% of deaths in 2020 due to NCDs, and obesity rates rapidly increasing due to poor diets and low levels of physical activity. Women are disproportionately affected by obesity and related diseases such as type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), the leading cause of non-traumatic lower extremity amputations and a significant contributor to maternal mortality.

The last census reported that 13.7% of the population has at least one functioning challenge (disability), with significant disparities in how disabilities are experienced due to unequal gender norms. Only 28% of healthcare facilities are physically accessible to persons with disabilities, highlighting a need for improvement in healthcare accessibility and the provision of information in accessible formats.

Fiji's foreign policy will complement the domestic steps we are taking to deal with these health challenges. We will accord health care a priority in our discussions with development partners. We will work through regional and global institutions such as the World Health Organisation to strengthen coordination on health responses as well as to improve the capacity of Fiji's health care system.

Transnational Crime Including Drugs

We support a whole-of-government approach to enhance our border security, particularly against transnational organised crime. Our focus is on investing in technologies to modernise border management systems, including enhanced air and maritime surveillance.

Fiji continues to be a significant transit country for heroin and a major Pacific hub for synthetic drugs, including methamphetamine, leading to increased addiction, corruption, and gang violence. The rise in locally manufactured meth and the role of Fiji as a transit point for cocaine highlight the growing domestic market and the need for robust international cooperation to combat these threats.

Establishing the Transnational, Serious and Organised Crime (TSOC) Pacific Taskforce and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with international partners underscore our commitment to regional collaboration. A new narcotics and drugs bureau will address the surge in drug trafficking and related crimes, emphasizing the importance of regional and international cooperation.

Cyber Security

As a financial and administrative hub in the South Pacific, Fiji is becoming an increasingly attractive target for cybercrimes. Our National Cybersecurity Strategy is under review to address the rapid acceleration of digital technologies and evolving threats.

Developing our National E-Commerce Strategy and establishing the national Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) are proactive measures to enhance our cyber security. These initiatives include tailored capacity-building and information-sharing workshops to strengthen our defences against cyber threats.

Terrorism

Fiji's popularity as a tourist destination and strategic location makes it vulnerable to potential terrorist activities. We are adopting a proactive, multi-faceted approach to counterterrorism to ensure readiness. This includes reviving our counterterrorism efforts through the development of a national strategy and a comprehensive counterterrorism bill, currently under consultation.

The potential spill over effects from terrorist activities in Southeast Asia and the Middle East could influence terrorism and violent extremism in Fiji and the region. The government and security agencies are preparing for worst-case scenarios under a proactive security stance. The fast-tracking of the Draft Counter Terrorism Bill and the organisation of workshops to finalise the bill and draft a national security strategy are steps toward enhancing our preparedness.

Chapter 4 Climate Change

iji's vulnerability as a small island developing state to climate change cannot be overstated. Rising sea levels, increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events, and changes to our ecosystems threaten our homes, communities, and traditional ways of life.

Fiji was the first country to sign the Paris Agreement. Fiji's early signing demonstrated its commitment to addressing climate change and supporting global efforts to limit global warming. It complemented the region's priorities as outlined in the Boe Declaration of 2018.

Fiji's vulnerability as a small island developing state Fiji itself is a marginal contributor to global warming. It would be understandable but wrong to take the view that this is a problem created by others and so must be solved by others. If we want the global community to be serious about climate change, we must be serious about it ourselves. Fiji must contribute to a solution, both in terms of our national policy settings and in the unremitting advocacy for action at the regional and global level

There are three critical components to Fiji's strategic response to climate change.

First, is the Low Emission Development Strategy 2018-2050. Our pathway to a resilient, low-carbon economy is clear. We are focusing on sectors such as the blue carbon sector, particularly mangroves, which are crucial for carbon sequestration and support livelihoods. This strategy is a cornerstone of our long-term emission reduction plans.

Second is the National Oceans Policy 2020-2030. We commit to sustainable ocean management, with a goal to manage 100% of our ocean sustainably by 2030 and designate 30% as protected areas. This commitment supports our economic and environmental priorities.

Third is finance and investment in sustainability. We are leveraging financial instruments like Green and Blue Bonds to fund projects that align with sustainable development and climate resilience. This innovative financing supports our economic transition to sustainable and resilient sectors.

While relocation is a measure of last resort, we are proactively planning for this to ensure that our communities can continue to thrive in the face of these changes.

These measures cannot stand alone. They must be part of an integrated international solution anchored in enhanced international cooperation. Fiji looks to position itself at the forefront of advocating for enhanced global cooperation in climate action, especially for developing countries.

While relocation is a measure of last resort, we are proactively planning for this to ensure that our communities can continue to thrive in the face of these changes. We are relocating some 40 villages to safer grounds and rebuilding infrastructure to withstand climate impacts.

Relocation also looms as a regional challenge should global efforts to restrain climate change fail and some Pacific Island countries have no option but to relocate their population. This is already an issue that Tuvalu has raised with Fiji and Fiji has responded in the spirit of regional cooperation. Tuvalu's approach underlines that climate change is indeed an existential issue for many regional states.

We recognize that the path to mitigating catastrophic climate change lies in transforming our energy systems. We are committed to boosting access to energy that is affordable, reliable, sustainable, and clean. This shift is essential to cut future greenhouse gas emissions by 40-70 percent, considering that energy use and production are the principal contributors to global emissions. Reducing the consumption of diesel fuel will be particularly challenging.

Climate change, while a formidable challenge, also presents an opportunity for us to unite, innovate, and build a more resilient future. We are working in solidarity with fellow Pacific Island states and our civil society to ensure that we are on a path to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Our relentless advocacy for reduced greenhouse gas emissions reflects our commitment to this global goal.

The harsh truth is that the global goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels is looking unlikely to be achieved, despite the reality that a temperature rise of this magnitude could result in a loss of 40 to 80 percent of the land-based economies in the Pacific islands by 2030.

For developing countries, climate action cannot be separated from climate finance. We face structural changes to our economy which require substantial investment. Yet, the financial structures in place globally are insufficient, especially for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), who face economic setbacks with each climate-induced disaster. We support innovative economic solutions like debt-for-nature swaps and advocate for significant international support in climate finance to avoid increasing our debt burden.

Green Economy and Sustainable Development

Fiji has committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals aim to address global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice by 2030.

Fiji has integrated the SDGs into its national development plans and policies. The government has identified specific targets and indicators relevant to Fiji's context and priorities, aligning them with national strategies for sustainable development.

Fiji actively engages with international partners, civil society organizations, and the private sector to mobilize resources, expertise, and knowledge-sharing to support the achievement of the SDGs. This includes partnerships for financing sustainable development projects and initiatives.

Given its vulnerability to climate change and its impact on Small Island developing states (SIDS), Fiji places particular emphasis on SDGs related to climate action (SDG 13), sustainable oceans (SDG 14), and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems (SDG 15). Additionally, goals related to poverty alleviation, education, health, gender equality, and infrastructure are also priorities.

Fiji participates in regional and international mechanisms to monitor progress towards the SDGs. This includes reporting on its efforts and challenges in achieving the goals through national reports submitted to the United Nations. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, work continues to progress our targets.

Fiji's approach to the 2030 Agenda reflects its commitment to sustainable development and addressing global challenges in partnership with the international community. The implementation of the SDGs is integral to Fiji's long-term vision for inclusive and sustainable development, considering its unique vulnerabilities and opportunities as a small island developing state in the Pacific region.

We are establishing partnerships with the private sector to support climate-responsive programs and create a climate-ready workforce. The tourism industry plays a pivotal role in supporting our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) through low-carbon initiatives and natural resource protection.

Our Pacific identity is deeply tied to our lands and waters.

Our participation in the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCLP) and our commitment under the Glasgow Leaders Declaration on Forests and Land Use demonstrate our dedication to halting and reversing deforestation and land degradation by 2030. These actions are part of our broader commitment to the Paris Agreement and our national climate action strategies.

Our Pacific identity is deeply tied to our lands and waters. The health of our oceans is pivotal in regulating our climate. We advocate for specific efforts to address threats to our oceans and ensure their long-term viability through scientific research, sharing knowledge, and fostering international cooperation. The private sector's role in adopting sustainable practices and supporting responsible fishing and aquaculture is crucial for our ocean's health. Improving land stewardship is also important.

We are strengthening our infrastructure to better withstand climate impacts, focusing on coastal and marine ecosystems. Our legal frameworks and governance structures are being enhanced to manage climate risks effectively. Integrating climate change projections into all sector plans is a key strategy for building resilience across the nation.

The blue economy, with an estimated global value of US\$1.5 trillion annually, is vital for our development.

We are innovating in sectors such as travel, aquaculture, and tourism to make them carbon-neutral and sustainable. Our marine resources, worth over \$2.5 billion annually, are central to our economy and our way of life, particularly for the 70 percent of Fijians living near the coastline. We are revitalizing our aquaculture sector through public-private partnerships, focusing on state-of-the-art facilities and sustainable practices. This diversification aims to reduce our dependence on traditional revenue sources and drive economic growth through new job creation in sustainable industries.

We are committed to operationalising mechanisms such as the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage to address climate impacts. Our advocacy extends to global ocean stewardship and sustainable management as part of our international marine conservation efforts.

Comprehensive Climate Governance

We are institutionalizing climate governance through enhanced legal and regulatory frameworks to manage climate risks. This comprehensive approach ensures that climate considerations are embedded across all sectors, increasing ecosystem protection and environmental resilience.

We are incorporating Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) into our planning to address societal challenges posed by climate change. Our commitment to blending traditional wisdom with modern scientific advancements is key to our innovative solutions for adapting to climate challenges. This approach is supported by national policies that focus on vulnerable sectors such as agriculture, water resources, and coastal management.

Chapter 5

Bilateral Relationships including the Major Powers

or Fiji, multilateralism and regional cooperation are foreign policy force multipliers. However, bilateral relationships remain the bedrock of Fiji's day to day diplomacy. They are the basic building blocks of our engagement with the world.

This chapter sets out Fiji's approach to bilateral relations. It is not a catalogue of all that we do in all our bilateral relationships. Instead, it outlines the principles and outlook we bring to our bilateral relationships.

Development assistance is a major component of virtually all of Fiji's bilateral relationships beyond the Pacific Island nations. These development partnerships are covered in more detail in Chapter 7.

Fiji's starting point is that there are no neat distinctions between bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. Success in one helps build success in the other. Multilateral diplomacy cannot be successfully pursued without strong bilateral relationships. And shared multilateral objectives add depth to our bilateral relationships.

Fiji does not have a strict hierarchy of bilateral relations. We seek constructive relations with all our partners. But geography, history and values inevitably shape the texture and priorities of our bilateral relationships. Our relationships with fellow members of the PIF are, for example, of a different order to our relations with the countries outside the Pacific region.

Indeed, Fiji's most profound bilateral connections are with the countries of the PIF. We look to build strong bilateral ties with each of them. With each there are initiatives we pursue that advance our mutual interests. In all cases a key component of our bilateral relationship is how we can best work together to achieve shared regional objectives. This reflects our "family first" approach to foreign policy and is essential if the PIF's agenda is to grow and succeed.

Australia and New Zealand

Fiji's relationships with Australia and New Zealand capture both the priority we give to PIF members and the reality that these two PIF partners play an important role in regional institutions. Fiji's relationship with Australia also reflects Australia's standing as a top twenty global economy and the region's preeminent strategic power.

As key strategic partners, we continue to strengthen our relationships with Australia and New Zealand. The "Vuvale" Partnership with Australia, based on mutual trust, respect, and understanding, underscores our commitment to common goals including climate change, economic prosperity, sustainable development and regional stability.

The "Vuvale" Partnership is anchored in five pillars: strengthening people-to-people links to foster familial bonds; deepening economic relationships for shared prosperity; enhancing security cooperation to address regional challenges; building cooperation on international and regional issues, emphasising peace and climate action; and partnering for sustainable human development in areas such as healthcare and education.

The "Duavata" partnership with New Zealand highlights our shared vision for resilience, particularly in areas such as climate change resilience, security and sustainable economic recovery. It is a partnership that reflects our shared Pacific identity and strong cultural ties.

Major Powers in the Indo Pacific

Historical ties inevitably influence our relations with countries outside the PIF region. Fiji is a non-aligned state. We do not have a security alliance with any nation. But we are not indifferent to traditional ties and old friendships. We tend to lean more towards countries that we know better through long contact; countries which have lent a helping hand in difficult times and with which we share core values. As noted in chapter 2, friends to all does not mean all relationships are equally important or require equidistance.

Fiji will always decide for itself what weight to place on individual bilateral relationships. Our traditional partners will however inevitably be the ones to whom we first turn, recognising that these are not exclusive relationships. In many cases, especially in the security sector, our partners of first choice will also be those to whom we offer a right of first refusal in relation to requests for assistance which go to the security and economic interests of Fiji.

Japan has been a reliable partner for Fiji over many decades. We welcome the constructive approach that Japan brings to its relationships in the region and the contribution its trade and investment makes to Fiji's economy.

Our enduring relationship with Japan is marked by collaboration in areas such as tourism, trade, infrastructure, and investment. The resumption of direct flights between Nadi and Narita enhances connectivity and supports our tourism sector, highlighting the potential for increased cooperation.

We aim to enhance our relationship with the United States, acknowledging the importance of cooperation in areas such as climate change, economic recovery, and security. The opening of the USAID Office in Suva symbolises a deepening engagement, reflecting our joint efforts to deepen democracy, safeguard health, and boost economic prosperity in the region.

Our relationship with the United Kingdom has moved beyond our colonial past to become a modern partnership. We value the UK's support in improving community livelihoods and well-being, aligning with Fiji's development priorities. The commitment to increase opportunities for Fijians in the British Armed Forces and enhance professional military training reflects our goal to strengthen people-to-people ties and support inclusive socioeconomic development.

India's emergence as a leading power and its diaspora links to Fiji create significant opportunities for our bilateral relationship. It is a relationship which continues to strengthen in various sectors, including agriculture, education, health, and MSMEs. India's support for constructing the Regional Super Cardiology Hospital in Nasinu highlights our collaborative efforts in healthcare and capacity building.

Our relationship with the People's Republic of China respects the 'One China Policy'. There are areas of economic development where China can make a positive contribution to Fiji's development including investment, agriculture, fisheries, and disaster prevention.

With China, as with other major powers, we look to build a relationship anchored in mutual interests and respectful of the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. As in all our relationships, Fiji will apply a national interests test to the scope of our relationship with China. Engagement with China is important not just for bilateral reasons but also as a signal that Fiji wishes to see a region built on inclusion and committed to the rules of international law and the charter of the United Nations

Other Regions

Fiji engages with ASEAN and its member countries on various fronts, including economic cooperation, trade, and diplomatic relations. Fiji has a diplomatic mission in Jakarta with plans to re-open the mission in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Jakarta Mission is accredited to other Asian countries and vice-versa.

South East Asian countries retain a prominent diplomatic presence in Fiji. Engagements with ASEAN countries contribute to fostering relationships and opportunities for collaboration. Fiji continues to seek observer status with ASEAN.

As a major global economic bloc, the EU is an important partner for Fiji. The EU's development assistance program in Fiji strengthens our

economy and development progress. Fiji looks to build its relations with the member countries of the EU, particularly its largest economies Germany and France.

Fiji's peacekeeping role has brought us closer to the Middle East which is also a growing economic partner. We look to build on this through our bilateral relationships in the region and the contribution we can make to peace in a region with deep geopolitical rivalries and a long history of instability.

Our amicable relations with the State of Israel, especially in bilateral cooperation on peace, security, and agriculture, emphasise the need to broaden our diplomatic and cooperative horizons. The new embassy in Israel will further this goal, enhancing our strategic and cooperative engagements.

Fiji's links to Africa and Latin America are less developed but both are regions of economic promise in the longer term. While our interests there are more remote, Fiji will look for niche opportunities in Africa and Latin America to advance our economic interests. Both regions are also important players in the broader multilateral system, especially in the United Nations to which Fiji accords a high priority.



Chapter 6 Prosperity

dvancing the economic interests of Fiji and the prosperity of all Fijians is a core element of foreign policy. A secure Fiji means economic security for all and policies which raise the living standards of our community.

Foreign policy must complement, reinforce and advance economic policy. The National Development Plan is as much a pillar of foreign policy as are our national security and defence policies. Just as the pursuit of trade and investment opportunities should be a priority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and especially of our overseas missions.

Fiji's economic prospects will be shaped by the quality of our domestic economic policy settings, the enterprise of Fijian business, the hard work of Fijian labour and our ability effectively to navigate the regional and global economies and their underpinning institutions.

Fiji does best when its economy is open, taking advantage of a regional and global market, benefiting from multilateral rules which enhance market access and drawing on the capital provided by foreign investment and the international financial institutions to fund initiatives which cannot be funded from domestic savings.

Politics globally is moving away from trade and investment liberalisation and towards a new protectionism characterised by the appeal of self-reliance and the narrowing of supply chains in the name of national security. From Fiji's perspective these are, for the most part, negative trends which defy the historical lesson that economies that turn inward deliver not security but lower growth and declining living standards.

Maintaining macroeconomic stability is essential to Fiji's prosperity, as is ensuring adequate reserves for imports and debt servicing while keeping inflation in check. The National Development Plan sets out the details of Fiji's economic policy and this chapter focuses on where foreign policy intersects with and advances the National Development Plan.

Economic diversification is crucial for sustained and sustainable growth. We aim to expand our economic base beyond tourism by enhancing productivity in resource-based sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry and manufacturing.

Recognising the unique challenges in the Pacific, including our remote location and small domestic markets, we have made trade facilitation a top priority in Fiji's development agenda. By streamlining our trade processes and reducing the time and cost of doing business, we aim to enhance Fiji's competitiveness in the global market and unlock new opportunities. Our policies will support research and development in new technologies to add further value to key sectors.

The government ensures policy transparency in order to build and maintain investor confidence. We aim to create a more attractive environment for commerce and industry, particularly for new investors. This means eliminating bottlenecks in the administrative system that cater to potential investors and cutting through unnecessary red tape.

As an outsourcing destination, Fiji is favoured for its cost efficiency, English language proficiency, infrastructure, expertise, quality assurance, compliance, and culture. While Fiji is renowned for its hospitality industry, our foundation for being a successful outsourcing destination is evident in our ability to understand brand goals and objectives, share strategic vision, and maintain good working relations.

A key lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic and labour mobility is the untapped potential of the Fijian diaspora's contributions in terms of remittances that kept the Fijian economy afloat until the borders opened in 2022.

The importance of the diplomatic missions as the link and interface between the Fiji Government and the Fijian diaspora communities cannot be overstated given our experiences during COVID-19.

The growth of the Fijian diaspora around the world and their economic importance is at the heart of the Government's diaspora policy which guides the role of the diaspora in advancing Fiji's foreign policy.

The Regional and Global Context

To navigate our multifaceted challenges, we remain committed to fostering and strengthening our regional and international partnerships. These relationships are vital for unlocking new trade opportunities and promoting sustainable economic growth. Strengthening our international and regional partnerships is important for unlocking new trade opportunities and promoting sustainable economic growth.

The region, its markets and Fiji's unique position as a regional hub is central to our external economic policies. The Pacific has unique challenges and opportunities, and a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate. We require tailored solutions and an integrated approach that recognises cultural, social, and economic diversity. Fostering regional collaboration is essential to leverage our collective strength and drive innovation. In our regional trade policy, as elsewhere, we will give priority to a "family first" approach.

Fiji looks to be a regional investment hub, leveraging its strategic geography and relatively superior infrastructure. To further boost investor confidence, the government is committed to refining and simplifying the regulatory framework, minimising bureaucracy and facilitating easier access to financial and logistics services.

These measures are designed to create a more dynamic business ecosystem, encouraging private sector engagement and investment. With a commitment to reduce red tape and streamline processes, Fiji looks to foster a conducive environment that accelerates private and foreign investment, making it a more attractive destination for foreign investors.

Our participation in the Indo Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) is a strategic move to stimulate economic activity and investment and promote sustainable and inclusive growth. The IPEF's four pillars—Trade, Supply Chains, Clean Economy, and Fair Economy—are crucial for our engagement in fostering regional and global economic relationships.

To realise Fiji's full blue economy potential and catalyse private sector development, we are collaborating with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the Blue Accelerator Grants Scheme (BAGS). This incubator model supports investment-ready projects, helping businesses secure private financing to scale up their operations.

One significant challenge in international trade is the growing impact of non-tariff barriers, which hinder the smooth flow of goods and services and affect the livelihoods of our trading communities. Addressing these barriers is essential for ensuring fair and equitable participation in the global marketplace.

Inclusive and Sustainable Growth

The backbone of Fiji's economy is our vibrant community of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Empowering these enterprises is fundamental for fostering inclusive growth and reducing income inequality. Through capacity-building programs, improved access to finance, and enhanced market linkages, we aim to nurture the entrepreneurial spirit of our MSMEs, enabling them to thrive in local, regional and international markets. Their scale and regional knowledge mean they can play a particularly important role in supplying Pacific Island markets.

The backbone of Fiji's economy is our vibrant community of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Empowering these enterprises is fundamental for fostering inclusive growth and reducing income inequality.

The expanding role of Fiji Airways in the immediate region also plays an important role in strengthening Fiji's links to regional markets.

Our foreign policy will support creating a conducive environment to attract and retain private sector investment, facilitate public-private partnerships and reduce regulatory barriers. Fiji will further empower MSMEs by providing capacity building programs, improving access to finance and enhancing market linkages.

Fiji faces a "triple threat" that constrains its path to prosperity. **First,** our levels of indebtedness, exceeding 80% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), severely limit our borrowing capacity and our ability to invest in essential infrastructure. This financial strain impacts our ability to develop the roads, power, water supply, hospitals, and schools that are foundational to our economic growth. Investing in infrastructure is essential to support economic growth. Upgrading and maintaining basic infrastructure such as roads, power and water supply are integral to our development strategy.

Second, the same high level of debt diminishes our fiscal space to respond to national disasters, which have become more frequent and intense due to climate change. Cyclones and floods not only devastate homes and lives but also critically damage our infrastructure, setting back economic progress and development.

The **third** threat is the deteriorating state of our infrastructure and essential services, which directly risks our future economic growth. Without reliable access to essential services like power and water, our ability to develop and attract investments in sectors crucial for economic expansion is compromised. We must prioritise upgrading and maintaining our infrastructure to facilitate sustainable economic development.

By 2030 and 2040, we aim to be the regional leader in sustainable financing, addressing critical issues such as poverty, inequality, and climate change - all significant concerns for Small Island Nations. This leadership will involve empowering women economically, recognising that such empowerment lifts entire families and communities out of poverty. Investing in sustainable and environmentally conscious businesses led by women contributes to broader economic development and enhances our climate resilience.

We are committed to leveraging various types of sustainable bonds - including Blue Bonds, Green Bonds, and SDG Bonds - to fund projects that deliver comprehensive environmental, social, and economic benefits. This strategy underlines our commitment to sustainable development and positions Fiji as a pioneer in innovative finance

within the Pacific region. These financial instruments are essential for funding initiatives that address our long-term sustainability goals while providing immediate economic benefits.

Prosperity for all Fijians means ensuring inclusivity by providing equitable access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities, thereby empowering marginalised groups and fostering social protection.

National prosperity extends beyond economic metrics; it relies on enhancing financial literacy among all citizens. By empowering our people with the knowledge to make informed decisions about savings, investments, and financial security, we elevate their capacity for self-reliance and improve overall economic stability. Prosperity for all Fijians means ensuring inclusivity by providing equitable access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities, thereby empowering marginalised groups and fostering social protection.

Achieving equity in economic growth means ensuring inclusivity across all demographics - urban and rural communities, the young and elderly, and all genders. This inclusivity entails equitable access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, essential for balanced national development.

To tackle these long-term challenges, we are committed to returning the government to a sustainable debt position and ensuring the availability of quality public infrastructure. We aim to diversify our economy beyond tourism and remittances by developing high-value agriculture, services, and creative industries and ensuring our education system meets the needs of a 21st-century economy.

In its journey towards sustainable development, Fiji prioritises the protection and sustainable management of its natural resources. The government is committed to enhancing environmental stewardship and integrating sustainable resource management practices across all sectors. We must ensure that prosperity is achieved without compromising the ecological integrity and ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Our strategy includes poverty alleviation programs that support vulnerable households through cash transfers, skill training and enterprise development, all designed to uplift the most disadvantaged.

Addressing health issues like NCDs (non-communicable diseases) and combating the scourge of drugs are also high on our agenda, as these are critical to our social and economic stability. This is dealt with in greater detail under the transnational challenges that Fiji faces.

We recognise the importance of stabilising businesses. A stable economic policy environment is foundational to broader social and economic stability, helping to manage the complex challenge of living costs in a highly import-dependent island state.

By investing in renewable energy, green and blue solutions, commercial and value adding agriculture, aquaculture, manufacturing, the BPO sector, and ICT, we aim to create a more resilient and diverse economy.

A More Diverse and Productive Economy

Our goal is to increase Fiji's trading volume by diversifying our exports across a broader range of products. Building competitive advantages in areas we excel in is crucial, and this involves redirecting incentives and initiatives to support MSMEs in engaging in cross-border trade.

We need to shift from a public sector-led growth model to one driven by the private sector. This involves raising productivity levels, becoming more competitive and innovative, building resilient infrastructure, and empowering our youth and women to lead development initiatives.

We aim to rebuild our nation by promoting economic diversification and growth, positioning Fiji as the Pacific's outsourcing hub. This involves leveraging technology to be part of the growing digital economy, overcoming geographic disadvantages, and fostering innovation in agribusiness and other sectors to strengthen our economic base.

As an island nation, efficient movement of goods and services is paramount for our trade competitiveness.

Strengthening linkages between tourism and other sectors, such as agriculture, can create diverse economic opportunities. Merging agriculture with tourism offers numerous benefits, enhancing economic output, employment, income distribution, and innovation.

As an island nation, efficient movement of goods and services is paramount for our trade competitiveness. We are committed to streamlining customs procedures, enhancing port infrastructure and cost effective operations, 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.

Key Sectors

Tourism

The slogan "Where Happiness Comes Naturally" reflects the increasing desire of visitors for meaningful tourism experiences that resonate with Fiji's rich history and heritage. The *masi* motifs, for instance, beautifully encapsulate Fiji's diverse blend of cultures, contributing significantly to our brand identity. This cultural branding is more than an aesthetic choice; it is a declaration of our values and the unique Fijian way of life we offer to the world.

Tourism is not just a sector; it is the backbone of our economy, contributing approximately 40% to Fiji's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As the largest foreign exchange earner, the tourism industry plays a pivotal role in our economic stability and growth, underpinning numerous other sectors and creating thousands of jobs across the islands

This cultural branding is more than an aesthetic choice; it is a declaration of our values and the unique Fijian way of life we offer to the world.

Investing in tourism related infrastructure that is climate resilient is crucial to cater to increased capacity demand and ensure tourism products are dispersed and accessible. We will also emphasise sustainable practices, promoting ecotourism and agritourism to minimise the environmental impact, while diversifying our tourism offerings.

As the tourism sector grows, so does its environmental footprint. This growth presents a dual challenge: continuing to expand this vital sector while minimising its ecological impact. The concept of sustainability is now inseparable from tourism. Our approach involves developing policies and initiatives that allow for economic growth without compromising the ability of future generations to enjoy our beautiful environment.

We will adhere to the National Sustainable Tourism Framework (NSTF) to transform the tourism sector and ensure a sustainable future. Targeting niche segments such as luxury, health, wellness and medical tourism will further enhance the sector's resilience and growth.

We are committed to reducing the carbon footprint of our tourism industry as part of a broader decarbonisation agenda. The Climate Change Act of 2021 legally binds Fiji to its commitment to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, including developing a national transport decarbonisation strategy. These legislative measures are crucial in aligning our tourism sector with global sustainability standards.

Agriculture

Agriculture remains a fundamental part of Fiji's economy, deeply intertwined with our cultural heritage and daily lives. However, the trading environment for agricultural products has evolved significantly.

We aim to enhance agricultural practices through partnerships with international brands and civil society organisations. Promoting public-private partnerships and integrating modern technologies such as AI and drones will boost productivity and sustainability.

Fiji's clean and green image is a competitive advantage which needs to be carefully nurtured. The regional market for Fiji's agricultural products is growing as is the demand from the Fiji diaspora for food grown and processed in Fiji.

International trade tensions and shifting from tariff barriers to more challenging non-tariff barriers have impacted our agricultural trade. Despite these challenges, trade remains the main engine driving our economic growth.

Our trade policy aims to enhance diversification by introducing new products and markets. This requires building competitive advantages through targeted incentives and initiatives, helping to bring new agricultural products to the market. While we face unique challenges, such as our remote location and limited infrastructure, these can be mitigated by streamlining trade processes to make Fiji a more attractive destination for trade and investment in value adding agriculture.

The Digital Economy and Cybersecurity

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of connectivity and the vulnerabilities it can expose in critical sectors such as trade, supply chains, investments, and tourism. Enhancing the digital economy provides an effective countermeasure, making us more resilient to such shocks. The World Bank estimates that the digital economy contributes to more than 15% of global GDP, growing significantly faster than the global physical economy.

A digital revolution is unfolding in the Pacific region, offering us a unique opportunity to leapfrog traditional development pathways and catch up with the rest of the world. We recognise that technical expertise is necessary to drive the digital economy. Hence, we have invested in training programs and scholarships to build digital skills and capabilities in the workforce. However, more efforts are needed in up-skilling and reskilling, as some existing skills will become obsolete.

The Government strives to improve connectivity and invest in modern, resilient ICT infrastructure. Cybersecurity is pivotal as more of our people become digitally savvy. Cybersecurity ensures sustainable digital transformation and protects development by safeguarding supply chains, financial systems, intellectual property, and critical infrastructure.

In cybersecurity, we confront dynamic and evolving cyber threats that have the potential to disrupt our critical infrastructure, compromise sensitive information, and erode public trust. However, cybersecurity cannot exist in isolation; it must be integrated into broader strategic frameworks that shape our digital future. We must fortify our defences against cyber-attacks and integrate cybersecurity into our broader digital strategy to ensure comprehensive protection.

Investing in digital infrastructure and enhancing cybersecurity are pivotal to Fiji's strategy to build a resilient and adaptable digital economy. Strengthening digital skills and capabilities within the workforce is important to maintain competitiveness in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Labour Mobility and Immigration

The Australian and New Zealand labour mobility schemes are mutually beneficial arrangements. Fijians help to address the skilled and unskilled labour shortage in both countries, contributing to the growth of the Australian and New Zealand economies. These schemes are not just a source of employment for Fiji Nationals but a pathway to economic growth and International cooperation. By participating in these schemes, Fijian workers gain financial benefits and valuable skills and experiences that contribute to personal and national development.

To tackle the challenges of labour shortages and skill migration, we will enhance recruitment in critical sectors such as construction, nursing and other specialist fields. By implementing a skills-based immigration system and partnering with institutions such as the Pacific Polytech, we aim to equip our workforce with the skills we need for the future.

The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme has offered significant opportunities for Fijian citizens to gain employment in Australia and contribute to the economic prosperity of both nations. Through this scheme, there has been a marked increase in remittances sent back by Fijian workers. These remittances play a crucial role in improving the living standards of families in Fiji, supplementing household incomes, supporting local businesses, and bolstering our foreign exchange reserves. The influx of remittances provides stability and economic resilience, especially during challenging times.

While labour mobility schemes offer immediate economic benefits, they also pose challenges, including the serious lack of skilled labour that can arise from the emigration of skilled workers. Pacific Island nations like Fiji grapple with a brain drain due to the attraction of better remuneration and improved education, healthcare, and lifestyle abroad. This has been a persistent issue for over three decades, impacting our ability to sustain a skilled workforce.

Fiji is experiencing a major skills migration, threatening to undermine our fragile post-pandemic economic progress. To address this, we need to rethink how to rebuild the human resource infrastructure across the Pacific. A fully integrated Pacific region with a visa-free arrangement is a crucial part of this solution and should be a short-term goal. We face skills shortages in key areas such as construction, nursing, and specialist fields like telecommunications engineering and aviation safety regulation. The government is losing skilled personnel such as accountants, engineers, and doctors, further complicating our efforts to rebuild and sustain our workforce.

Addressing skills shortages is a critical challenge for our economy. By funding new training entities, we are already producing quick wins by equipping our workforce with the skills needed for immediate and future challenges. In the medium term, we must consider and develop a skills-based immigration system that allows us to import scarce skills

selectively but systematically. This approach will help fill the critical skills gaps hindering economic development. Helping craft and implementing a skilled migration program will be a crucial focus of Fiji foreign policy.

Australia's commitment to quadruple the number of Australia Award Pacific Scholarships offered annually to Fijian students is welcomed. By 2025, up to 50 Fijian students will receive these scholarships, focusing on courses that address critical skills gaps in the Fiji economy, such as healthcare, engineering, and technical trades. These courses will be delivered through an ongoing partnership with Fiji National University, enhancing our educational infrastructure and workforce readiness.

As we adapt to the evolving economic landscape, we must change how we think about our economy. Like our neighbours, Australia and New Zealand, we must learn to rely on importing skills to meet our shortages. The Ministry of Home Affairs is working to reduce the processing time for work permits and deliver new process improvements to make Fiji an attractive destination for skilled migrants. This strategic shift will help us meet our immediate skill needs and support long-term economic stability.

Chapter 7

Foreign Policy and Development Assistance

entral to a whole-of-government approach to foreign policy is the place that development assistance holds in Fiji's economic plans. Fiji accepts that its economic and social development ultimately depends on its own policies and efforts. But development assistance from international partners plays an important role if we are to succeed.

How we work with our development partners, the coordination of development assistance from all sources, and the distinctive contribution from multilateral institutions, are all vital to our capacity to achieve strong but sustainable economic growth, which lifts the standard of living of all Fijians and ensures that the benefits of growth are equitably shared across the community.

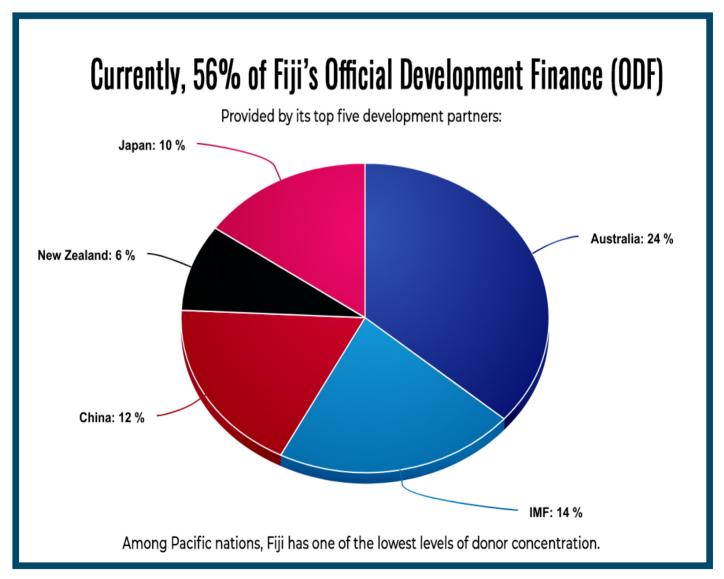
Managing our relationships with development partners across government is a core function of foreign and economic policy.

Fiji traditionally had one of the lowest ratios of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Gross National Income (GNI) in the Pacific Islands, with aid making up only 2.5% of its national income from 2008 to 2020.

How we work with our development partners, the coordination of development assistance from all sources, and the distinctive contribution from multilateral institutions, are all vital to our capacity to achieve strong but sustainable economic growth.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic substantially increased this ratio, raising it to 15%. Globally, this shift has made Fiji one of the most aidreliant nations, ranking 15th out of 134 developing countries for its ODA/GNI ratio.

Currently, 56% of Fiji's Official Development Finance (ODF) is provided by its top five development partners: Australia (24%), IMF (14%), China (12%), Japan (10%), and New Zealand (6%). Among Pacific nations, Fiji has one of the lowest levels of donor concentration.



	ODA (Grants and Loans)	% of Total
AUSTRALIA	\$814.83M	24%
IMF (CONCESSIONAL TRUST FUNDS)	\$485.05M	14%
CHINA	\$419.82M	12%
JAPAN	\$360.59M	10%
NEW ZEALAND	\$218.06M	6%
EU INSTITUTIONS	\$198.06M	6%
WORLD BANK	\$185.77M	5%
CLIMATE INVESTMENT FUNDS	\$112.11M	3%
GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR VACCINES AND IMMUNIZATION	\$73.00M	2%
UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND	\$60.29M	2%
SOUTH KOREA	\$46.52M	1%
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY	\$35.63M	1%
UNITED STATES	\$33.81M	1.00%
GREEN CLIMATE FUND	\$33.23M	1.00%
UN PEACEBUILDING FUND	\$31.63M	0.90%
OPEC FUND FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	\$29.30M	0.90%
INDIA	\$25.11M	0.70%
GERMANY	\$23.60M	0.70%
UNITED KINGDOM	\$22.60M	0.70%
UNITED NATIONS CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND	\$21.86M	0.60%
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME	\$21.55M	0.60%
THE GLOBAL FUND TO FIGHT AIDS, TUBERCULOSIS AND MALARIA	\$20.14M	0.60%
WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION	\$14.98M	0.40%
WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION	\$12.90M	0.40%
FRANCE	\$12.07M	0.40%
ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK	\$12.01M	0.30%
UN WOMEN	\$11.29M	0.30%
SPAIN	\$9.35M	0.30%
UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME	\$8.16M	0.20%
TAIWAN**	\$7.99M	0.20%
GLOBAL GREEN GROWTH INSTITUTE	\$7.63M	0.20%
INDONESIA	\$7.42M	0.20%
JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV AND AIDS	\$6.84M	0.20%
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	\$5.37M	0.20%
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION	\$4.70M	0.10%
CANADA	\$4.23M	0.10%
GREECE	\$4.05M	0.10%
SWEDEN	\$3.95M	0.10%
WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME	\$3.39M	0.10%
NETHERLANDS	\$3.33M	0.10%

Source: https://pacificaidmap.lowyinstitute.org

BY SECTOR

Sector	Amount	%
GOVERNMENT & CIVIL SOCIETY	\$340.64M	55%
INDUSTRY, MINING & CONSTRUCTION	\$85.74M	14%
MULTISECTOR/CROSS-CUTTING	\$53.70M	9%
HEALTH	\$40.10M	7%
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & FISHING	\$29.97M	5%
HUMANITARIAN AID	\$28.58M	5%
EDUCATION	\$13.51M	2%
WATER & SANITATION	\$12.77M	2%
OTHER/UNSPECIFIED	\$9.57M	2%
ENERGY	\$2.80M	0.50%
TRANSPORT	\$557K	0.10%
COMMUNICATION	\$206K	0%

Source: Pacific Aid Map, Lowy Institute. https://pacificaidmap.lowyinstitute.org

<u>Bilateral Development Partners</u> Australia

Australia is Fiji's most significant development partner, mainly through the renewed and elevated "Vuvale" Partnership. This partnership fosters cooperation across various sectors, including infrastructure, economic development, climate resilience, and cultural exchange. The partnership is built on mutual respect, shared values, and a long history of collaboration.

Fiji has five major priorities in its development assistance with Australia.

First is addressing climate change. Australia supports Fiji's climate action initiatives and aims to help Fiji become more resilient to climate-related impacts through sustainable infrastructure development and disaster risk reduction. Both countries are committed to tackling challenges in the Blue Pacific Continent, including climate change and regional security.

Australia has announced additional funding to rebuild schools in Fiji's northern division, making them resilient to Category 5 cyclones. The partnership also emphasizes cooperation on climate resilience and environmental justice.

Second is enhancing economic and social well-being. Australia supports Fiji's efforts to improve economic opportunities, social inclusion, and poverty reduction through quality infrastructure projects and social programs.

The partnership aims to expand opportunities for two-way investment and support private sector growth. Australia's PALM Visa Scheme and the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP) play significant roles in this area.

The partnership focuses on strengthening health systems, education cooperation, gender equality, and social inclusion. This includes a \$14.7 million infrastructure master plan for the Colonial War Memorial Hospital.

Australia has committed to increasing the number of scholarships for Fijian students, focusing on critical skills gaps in the Fiji economy. These scholarships will support studies in healthcare, engineering, and technical trades.

Third, Fiji prioritizes expanding labour mobility schemes with Australia to create more opportunities for Fijians. The partnership also focuses on sustainable human development, including healthcare, education, gender equality, and sports development.

The Pacific Engagement Visa Program facilitates more accessible two-way travel and strengthens people-to-people links, including engagement between First Nations Peoples.

Fourth is enhancing security cooperation to address common challenges and maintain regional stability. This includes cooperation on cyber security, maritime security, and broader defence collaboration.

Australia has agreed to service and maintain patrol boats under the Pacific Patrol Boat Program at Fiji's revitalized shipbuilding and repair facilities. This initiative enhances Fiji's role as a regional hub and supports regional maritime needs.

Fiji and Australia are working closely on defence, border security, and cybersecurity. Australia has donated additional Protected Mobility Vehicles to support Fiji's international peacekeeping operations.

Regional security also requires more robust regional capacity. For example, the redevelopment of Blackrock Camp, part of the Australian Government's Pacific Step-up programme, represents a \$AU100 million investment in a future training and regional response hub.

The Blackrock Camp is more than a facility. It is a strategic asset for the Pacific region. It is designed to address both natural and man-made disasters in the Pacific, symbolising Fiji's dedication to an international rules-based order.

Finally, strengthening people-to-people connections is important to our development cooperation with Australia. Initiatives such as the PacificAus Sports program promote cultural and social linkages between Fijians and Australians.

New Zealand

The "Duavata" Partnership with New Zealand illustrates a shared commitment and vision for regional solidarity. New Zealand is an important partner in supporting Fiji's development priorities:

New Zealand supports Fiji's efforts to build resilience against climate change and promote sustainable economic recovery from COVID-19. This includes investments in renewable energy and climate adaptation projects.

The partnership strengthens interoperability between the Fiji Military Forces and the New Zealand Defence Force, facilitating exchanges, deployments, and joint exercises to enhance Fiji's defence capabilities.

Strengthening defence and security cooperation is a key priority. This includes joint efforts in counterterrorism, cyber defence, protection of critical infrastructure, and maritime security. New Zealand's support for Fiji's defence initiatives, such as deploying Royal Navy vessels to Fiji, highlights the deepening security collaboration.

Fiji and New Zealand work together to boost trade, investment, and infrastructure development. The partnership aims to enhance economic ties and create new opportunities for business collaboration.

The Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme will provide additional labour mobility support to Fiji over the next five years, creating opportunities for Fijian workers in New Zealand. This scheme, along with other initiatives, aims to improve the livelihoods and wellbeing of Fijian communities, reflecting the shared commitment to social development.

The strong people-to-people links between Fiji and New Zealand are fostered through cultural, educational, and sports exchanges, reflecting a common Pacific identity. The large Fijian diaspora in New Zealand and the participation of Fijians in the New Zealand Armed Forces further enhance these connections, promoting mutual understanding and cooperation.

Japan

Japan remains a steadfast partner for Fiji, significantly contributing to its development through various initiatives led by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The long-standing relationship between Fiji and Japan, which has endured for over five decades, continues to strengthen through consistent bilateral, regional, and international engagements. The development cooperation dialogue convened in March 2024 underscores the depth of this relationship and highlights several key priorities for development assistance from Japan.

Japan supports key infrastructure projects to improve connectivity and foster economic growth in Fiji. This includes investments in transport infrastructure, which are critical for enhancing the movement of goods and people, thereby boosting economic activities.

Enhancing tourism and trade relations is a significant focus. The resumption of direct flights between Nadi and Narita reflects efforts to strengthen ties and boost tourism, a vital contributor to Fiji's economy. This initiative underscores Fiji's commitment to deepening its engagement with the Japanese trade market, which plays a crucial role in Fiji's tourism growth trajectory.

Japan invests in humanitarian assistance and disaster risk reduction, ensuring Fiji is better prepared to handle natural disasters. Additionally,

capacity-building programs supported by Japan aim to enhance Fiji's development capacity, particularly in areas such as education and healthcare.

Strengthening people-to-people links through educational and cultural exchanges is a key aspect of the Fiji-Japan relationship. These exchanges help foster mutual understanding and enhance the bonds between the peoples of both nations.

The development cooperation dialogue between Fiji and Japan has highlighted prospects for deepened cooperation leading to the 10th triennial Pacific Island Leaders Meeting (PALM10). The dialogue underscored Japan's commitment to advancing relations with Fiji through the revised Development Cooperation Charter, focusing on shared priorities such as tackling climate change and strengthening the foundations for economic development.

China

Fiji's relationship with China is characterized by mutual respect and cooperation under the One China Policy.

China supports Fiji's infrastructure development through transport, agriculture, fisheries, and poverty reduction projects. These initiatives aim to boost economic recovery and growth.

Collaborative efforts in climate response and disaster prevention are vital. China provides technical and financial support for climate adaptation and disaster resilience projects.

China has initiated a feasibility study for a major road upgrade project in Vanua Levu. With an estimated budget of FJD \$300 million, this China Aid project aims to upgrade 80 kilometres of rural roads, construct 22 bridges, and improve access to essential services for 61 communities.

China has expressed its readiness to support Fiji's climate resilience efforts. The China-Pacific Island Countries Juncao Technology Demonstration Centre in Fiji aims to support sustainable agriculture and provide livelihood programs for vulnerable communities.

People-to-people exchanges, and capacity-building initiatives are integral to the Fiji-China relationship. China's support in education, through scholarships and training programs, has significantly contributed to building local capacities in Fiji. The collaboration extends to cultural exchanges that foster mutual understanding and strengthen the bonds between the two nations.

United States

The partnership with the United States focuses on deepening engagement and cooperation across key sectors.

The US has contributed significantly to Fiji's climate adaptation efforts. Initiatives include funding for disaster risk reduction and resilience programming to help Fiji prepare for and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Supporting Fiji's economic recovery post-COVID-19, the US assists in trade, tourism, and economic diversification projects. Establishing the USAID Mission in Fiji underscores a commitment to facilitating effective cooperation.

Investments in health and governance are crucial. USAID's programs focus on improving healthcare systems, promoting democracy, and supporting good governance practices.

The US supports initiatives that promote regional stability, democracy, and human rights, reinforcing the long-standing commitment to shared values and strategic interests.

Defence and security are key areas of collaboration between Fiji and the United States. The U.S. has expanded security cooperation activities with Fiji, including training opportunities and equipping Fiji's military. Joint maritime law enforcement initiatives and humanitarian assistance during disasters are also integral to this partnership. The recent Memorandum of Understanding on fishing access further illustrates the cooperative efforts in managing and protecting maritime resources.

The strong people-to-people ties between Fiji and the United States are reinforced through programs such as the Peace Corps and the new U.S. Pacific Institute for Rising Leaders program. These initiatives aim to build capacity and foster leadership among Pacific communities. The U.S. commitment to academic and professional training opportunities further strengthens the bilateral relationship.

India

India is a long-standing friend and trusted partner of Fiji. India's support includes constructing a regional super cardiology specialty hospital and providing equipment and human resources for its operation. Additionally, India invests in educational initiatives to build capacity and enhance skills development.

India assists Fiji in developing agriculture and MSMEs, promoting training, capacity building, and capability development to achieve sustainable economic growth. India's cooperation extends to infrastructure projects and climate resilience initiatives, supporting Fiji's sustainable development goals.

United Kingdom

Fiji and the UK share strong historical and cultural ties, which continue to influence their bilateral relationship. The presence of a significant Fijian diaspora in the UK and the contributions of Fijians in the British Armed Forces highlight the deep-rooted connections between the two nations. These ties are further strengthened through cultural and educational exchanges.

One notable development is the formation of a new strategic communications partnership, which underscores the evolving nature of this relationship. This partnership aims to tackle common challenges in public communication. It will provide strategic communication capacity building and professional development training opportunities, aligning with Fiji's national development priorities.

Strengthening defence cooperation is a key focus of the Fiji-UK relationship. This includes collaboration in areas such as counterterrorism, cyber defence, protection of critical infrastructure, and maritime security. The UK has strongly supported Fiji's defence initiatives, including deploying Royal Navy vessels to Fiji and the potential refurbishment and expansion of the Blackrock Peacekeeping and Humanitarian & Disaster Relief Camp in Nadi.

The UK continues to support Fiji's development through various initiatives to improve community livelihoods and well-being. This includes opportunities for Fijians to join the British Armed Forces, professional military training in the UK, and educational exchanges such as the Chevening scholarships. These efforts contribute to Fiji's socioeconomic development and strengthen people-to-people ties.

The UK's commitment to climate resilience and sustainable development is evident through its support for Fiji's climate action initiatives. The

partnership focuses on enhancing Fiji's capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts, aligning with the goals of the National Development Plan. This cooperation is crucial for building a sustainable and resilient future for Fiji.

Enhancing trade and economic cooperation is another priority in the Fiji-UK relationship. The UK supports initiatives that boost Fiji's trade, investment, and economic growth. This includes improving trade relations and supporting Fiji's industries and infrastructure.

Germany

The relationship between Fiji and Germany continues to grow stronger, characterised by mutual respect and cooperation in various development areas. Establishing a German Diplomatic Mission in Fiji marks a significant step in enhancing bilateral relations.

Germany is committed to enhancing cooperation in sports development, recognizing the role of sports in promoting inclusivity and diversity. The partnership includes support for the Fiji Football Association (FFA) and the development of sports facilities, which will provide young athletes with opportunities to excel and represent Fiji internationally.

Germany has pledged support to Fiji in addressing the impacts of climate change, which is a top priority for both nations. This includes new financing mechanisms for loss and damage, as discussed at COP27, and ongoing support for community relocation and climate adaptation efforts.

The partnership between Fiji and Germany extends to enhancing economic resilience and promoting sustainable development. Germany's support includes initiatives to boost Fiji's trade, investment, and economic growth. The Asia-Pacific Conference of German Business (APK) serves as a platform to nurture economic relations and explore new opportunities for cooperation.

Strengthening defence and security cooperation is a key aspect of the Fiji-Germany relationship. This includes collaboration on counterterrorism, cyber defence, and maritime security.

Germany supports Fiji's efforts to build an inclusive and sustainable future. This includes realigning Official Development Assistance (ODA) to meet Fiji's development needs, particularly in climate adaptation, economic development, and social resilience.

European Union

The relationship between Fiji and the European Union (EU) is characterized by strong political and economic cooperation, mutual support in addressing global challenges, and a shared commitment to promoting sustainable development.

The first Partnership Dialogue held in 2024 marks a significant step in implementing the EU-Fiji development cooperation agenda for 2021-2027 under the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).

The EU supports Fiji's goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050. This includes cooperation on implementing the COP28 Dubai Consensus and defining a new post-2025 climate finance goal. The EU's commitment to climate action is also reflected in its support for Fiji's National Development Plan and initiatives to build climate resilience.

The EU and Fiji work together to enhance economic growth and trade opportunities. Discussions on the interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA) between the EU and Pacific States aim to increase

Fiji's trade with the EU. Fiji's commitment to ratify and implement the agreement will open new markets for Fijian products in Europe, fostering economic development.

The EU and Fiji are committed to promoting democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Fiji has made significant progress in good governance, fighting corruption, and promoting gender equality. The EU supports Fiji's efforts to tackle gender-based violence, transnational organised crime, and ratify international human rights instruments.

Enhancing regional and transnational security is a key focus of the EU-Fiji partnership. This includes cooperation on cyber and maritime security, and combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. The EU also supports initiatives to strengthen regional fisheries governance and ocean conservation.

The EU's development assistance complements Fiji's priorities in the education, healthcare, and social welfare sectors. Initiatives aimed at improving the livelihoods and well-being of Fijian communities are integral to this partnership. The EU's support for humanitarian aid, emergency supplies, and technical assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic and climate crises has been important in Fiji's recovery efforts

UN Agencies

Engagement with UN agencies is important for supporting key development initiatives and leveraging technical expertise and funding. Fiji's involvement with the UN includes hosting several UN organisations that use the country as a regional base to aid Pacific Island countries. This enhances Fiji's role in regional development and facilitates access to UN resources.

Working within the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), Fiji ensures that UN support aligns with national development priorities. This involves regular consultations and joint planning with UN agencies. Collaboration with institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is essential for securing financial support and technical assistance for major development projects.

Without stronger institutional capacity, Fiji cannot meet its development objectives.

These partnerships involve securing loans and grants for critical infrastructure projects, such as transport, energy, and water supply which are vital for supporting economic growth and improving living standards.

Without stronger institutional capacity, Fiji cannot meet its development objectives. We look to our development partners for technical assistance and capacity-building support to enhance the implementation of development projects and improve governance and institutional capacity. This includes training for government officials and support for policy reforms.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023-2027 and the Fiji Country Implementation Plan (CIP) 2023-2024 outline the UN's development activities in Fiji. These frameworks were developed through extensive consultations with the Government of Fiji and various UN entities. The CIP aims to define the UN's actions and deliverables in Fiji to achieve the UNSDCF outcomes aligned with Fiji's national development priorities, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other international treaty obligations.

Protection of the environment is a high priority in Fiji's work with international organisations. Fiji is an active member of the World Conservation Union which has an office in Fiji. International civil society organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund and Birdlife International are also active in Fiji and reinforce the importance of the natural environment, not just to our way of life but also for tourism and the broader economy.

Economic development must go hand in hand with social development. Enhancing education, healthcare, housing, and social protection programs to reduce inequalities and support vulnerable populations is at the heart of Fiji's social development plans. Key initiatives include improving child protection services and expanding social protection systems.

Social protection also involves promoting women's empowerment and gender equality and addressing gender-based violence to ensure equal opportunities and rights.

Asian Development Bank

Since joining the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1970, Fiji has benefited significantly from ADB's financial and technical assistance, aimed at promoting sustainable economic growth and resilience. ADB's involvement in Fiji spans several decades, focusing on infrastructure development, public sector management, water supply and sanitation, and private sector growth. The relationship between ADB and Fiji has been crucial in navigating economic challenges, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, ADB committed \$150 million to a recovery program to restore fiscal sustainability and promote inclusive, climate-resilient economic growth.

The ADB's first private sector operation in Fiji, the \$65-million Fiji Airways COVID-19 Liquidity Support Facility, was established in 2021 to help the airline navigate the downturn in international travel caused by the pandemic.

ADB has been investing in upgrading and rehabilitating Fiji's roads since the 1980s. Since 2014, co-financed with the World Bank, ADB has supported the rehabilitation and resealing of over 300 kilometres of roads and the preparation of detailed designs for jetties and bridges. ADB also reviewed development options for the Suva Port, including potential relocation.

ADB is helping expand access to sustainable water supply in Greater Suva through a \$42-million loan co-financed by the European Investment Bank and the Green Climate Fund.

Recognising Fiji's vulnerabilities as a small island developing state, ADB has introduced more favourable concessional lending terms to help Fiji meet its infrastructure needs, strengthen social services, and scale up climate action and disaster risk reduction efforts. In 2023, ADB committed a \$3 million grant for a rural electrification project funded by the Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific.

ADB has committed 117 public sector loans, grants, and technical assistance totalling \$991 million to Fiji. This includes cumulative sovereign and non-sovereign loans and grant disbursements amounting to \$923.37 million, financed by regular ordinary capital resources and other special funds. ADB's current sovereign portfolio in Fiji includes two loans worth \$142.1 million.

ADB has committed significant investments in transport infrastructure, supporting the rehabilitation of roads and preparing detailed designs for jetties and bridges.

IMF

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has maintained a longstanding relationship with Fiji since the country joined the IMF in 1971. Fiji's cooperation with the IMF primarily revolves around the IMF's surveillance and capacity development activities, designed to support the country's macroeconomic stability and growth.

The IMF conducts annual Article IV consultations with Fiji, during which it engages in detailed discussions with Fijian authorities on the country's economic development and policies. The most recent consultation, concluded in May 2024, highlighted Fiji's robust economic recovery from the pandemic, with GDP growth rebounding by around 30% cumulatively over 2022-2023, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. The consultations emphasise the importance of maintaining sound macroeconomic policies to manage risks and sustain growth.

Although Fiji currently has no outstanding purchases or loans from the IMF, the IMF continues to support Fiji through capacity development initiatives. These efforts are facilitated by the IMF's Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Center (PFTAC), which provides technical assistance in macroeconomic analysis, public financial management, and financial supervision.

IMF's engagement with Fiji underscores a collaborative effort to sustain economic recovery, strengthen financial stability, and implement growthenhancing reforms. The ongoing capacity development initiatives and policy recommendations aim to ensure Fiji's macroeconomic stability and resilience in the face of future challenges.

Coordination, Implementation and Evaluation

Fiji coordinates development assistance through formal diplomatic channels and resident missions to align aid with national priorities. Specific mechanisms include our High Commissions, Embassies and Trade Commissions in key countries to facilitate market access, investment, and trade facilitation. These missions are crucial in promoting Fiji's economic interests and attracting foreign investment.

Bilateral agreements with development partners to secure funding and technical assistance for priority projects are central. These agreements often include provisions for capacity building, technology transfer, and policy support.

The effective delivery of development assistance requires robust systems for coordinating, monitoring and evaluating development outcomes. This entails ensuring accountability and tracking the progress of development initiatives through regular reporting and performance indicators. Through UN Resident Coordinators and Joint Steering Committees we oversee implementation at the country level, liaising with regional institutions and civil society.

Utilizing the UNINFO planning, monitoring, and reporting system to support joint monitoring allows UN agencies, the Government, and other stakeholders to track progress and make necessary adjustments.

Fiji faces operational and implementation challenges similar to other Pacific Island countries, including limited capacity and frequent staff turnover in key positions. ADB initiatives in Fiji seek to provide appropriate levels of technical assistance to ensure effective implementation and sustainable results.

The Pacific Sub Regional Office in Suva enhances ADB's operations. It supports strong coordination and harmonization with other development partners and regional organizations. This local presence is critical for managing and implementing ADB-funded projects effectively.

Beyond financial assistance, ADB is a knowledge broker, helping Fiji engage in regional issues like climate change and ocean health. ADB's flagship publications, such as the Asian Development Outlook and Pacific Economic Monitor, provide valuable macroeconomic forecasts and assessments that guide national policy development and decision-making

Knowledge solutions through technical assistance support reforms related to fiscal policy, public financial management, state-owned enterprise performance, private sector and financial sector development, and gender equality.

The coordination of development assistance in Fiji involves a structured and collaborative approach, guided by the National Development Plan (NDP) and other sectoral policies.

ADB's future engagements with Fiji will be guided by the new country partnership strategy for 2024-2028 which is currently being formulated. ADB aims to promote inclusive and resilient growth by investing in infrastructure, providing policy-based loans, and offering technical assistance to support economic reforms. The focus will also include innovative approaches to engage the private sector in renewable energy, financial institutions, transportation infrastructure, agribusiness, and health sectors

The coordination of development assistance in Fiji involves a structured and collaborative approach, guided by the National Development Plan (NDP) and other sectoral policies. These arrangements ensure that the efforts of various development partners are aligned with the country's priorities and that assistance is delivered effectively.

The Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Planning & Development (MFSPNPD) is Fiji's primary focal point for development coordination. It oversees the alignment and integration of development assistance with national priorities, as outlined in the NDP. The MFSPNPD facilitates coordinating public financial management (PFM) reforms and other sectoral initiatives through regular engagements with development partners.

Quarterly PFM Development Partner Coordination Meetings, initiated in 2018, bring together representatives from the MFSPNPD, ADB, the European Union, IMF, PFTAC, World Bank Group, and the governments of Australia, Japan, and New Zealand. These forums provide a platform for sharing information, prioritising reforms, and identifying opportunities for collaboration. The quarterly meetings are instrumental in ensuring that PFM reforms are coherent and mutually reinforcing.

The structured coordination mechanisms, particularly the quarterly PFM development partner coordination meetings, have successfully harmonised development assistance. These efforts ensure that all development partners work in a manner appropriate to Fiji's context and maximise the impact on socioeconomic development.

Using a standard policy reform matrix, particularly in collaboration with ADB, the Government of Australia, and JICA, has improved coordination across several complex reform areas. Joint missions and regular consultations with development partners help reduce transaction costs for the authorities and increase policy impact.

The Government is satisfied that the current coordination mechanisms are appropriate. Despite these successes, Fiji faces operational and implementation challenges, such as limited capacity and frequent staff turnover in key positions. Close coordination is required to manage substantial uncertainties related to climate change, disaster impacts, and global economic fluctuations.

Chapter 8 Implementing Foreign Policy

Foreign policy does not end with defining policy positions. The conceptual framework is important but without effective implementation foreign policy cannot succeed.

This chapter sets out how the Government will approach the implementation of Fiji's foreign policy. It focuses on the systems we will put in place and the resources we will assign to delivering a whole of nation foreign policy.

A whole of nation foreign policy starts with the whole of government machinery which coordinates all the threads of foreign policy and their connection to other Government policies.

The pillars of sovereignty, security and prosperity straddle many portfolios. This requires a structure of coordination across ministries which can ensure that the strategic priorities set out in this White Paper are reflected in policy making, that responsibilities are clearly assigned and that accountability for outcomes is built into the coordination mechanisms.

Coordination Machinery

The Government will establish a Secretaries Committee on National Security (SCNS), chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Office of the Prime Minister, to be the focal point at officials' level for policy coordination and implementation.

It will comprise the Permanent Secretaries of the Prime Minister's office, Foreign Affairs including Climate Change, Home Affairs, Finance, Trade, and Tourism and Civil Aviation. Other officials responsible for national security such as the Commander of the RFMF and the Police Commissioner will participate as required.

This Committee will also be responsible for implementing the Government's response to the Defence and National Security Review once that is finalised.

SCNS will ensure that all papers going to Cabinet are vetted to ensure consistency with this White Paper and that there is a system in place to measure implementation and evaluate progress, thereby creating a transparent line of accountability.

Additional resources will be provided to ensure that SCNS has available to it the necessary skills to enable it to fulfil these functions. These include analytical skills, a capacity to provide Government with succinct assessments of the regional and global environment, evaluation skills and the systems needed regularly to report to Government on progress and impediments. The secretariat for SCNS will be in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and will draw on the reporting from Fiji's overseas posts.

At the Cabinet level, we will set up a National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSC), chaired by the Prime Minister and consisting of all the Cabinet level ministers whose officials are represented on SCNS. The NSC will be the final decision maker on a whole of Government foreign policy. It will replace the National Security Council.

The NSC will meet with SCNS members present to ensure full alignment between the decisions made by Government and their implementation by officials. The presence of SCNS members in a supporting role will help ensure that the NSC is fully briefed and has a clear understanding of the implications of foreign policy decisions for Fiji's broader interests.

Resourcing the MFA and Diplomatic Missions

Fiji faces a large challenge in rebuilding its core institutions. Years of military rule and the loss of institutional knowledge through retirement and migration have weakened many key institutions, eroded their skills base and diminished their capacity to provide frank and knowledgeable advice to Government. Strong institutions are fundamental to good government, and this applies to foreign policy as much as to other areas of government.

An effective foreign policy requires an effective MFA and a network of diplomatic posts with clear objectives, rigorous evaluation of performance and the right tradecraft and analytical skills.

Focused recruitment and skills training to build a cadre of professional and career Fijian diplomats will be put on an expanded footing through the establishment of a Diplomatic Training Centre within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The primary focus of the Diplomatic Training Centre will be to ensure that MFA has the professional skills it needs to prosecute Fiji's foreign policy interests. Over time, the Diplomatic Training Centre could also become a hub for the training of diplomats from across the region, particularly from small island states with limited diplomatic capacity.

An effective foreign policy requires an effective MFA and a network of diplomatic posts with clear objectives, rigorous evaluation of performance and the right tradecraft and analytical skills

Diplomacy is a profession and needs to be recognised as such. Diplomatic tradecraft are the skills needed to define interests, build relationships, assess issues through the prism of Fiji's national interests, use social and other networks to advance interests and alert Government to external developments which impinge on Fiji's interests. These are skills which take time, training and effort to acquire. They require a professional cohort

Of particular importance is the close integration of diplomacy with trade and investment promotion. These too demand specialist skills. Negotiating trade agreements, attracting foreign investment, understanding market access barriers, knowing what foreign investors need are all essential to prosecuting Fiji's international interests. All these skills start with a deep understanding of the structure of Fiji's economy, the drivers of growth, the areas of risk and the way in which domestic policy and international policy intersect.

The work of Fiji's diplomatic posts is central to the success of its foreign policy. We must ensure that our diplomatic missions are adequately staffed and that officers on posting have a clear understanding of their goals and are properly trained to deliver them.

Heads of Mission will be required to enter into a formal whole of government performance agreement which clearly sets out priorities and objectives. The performance agreement will be finalised by the MFA Permanent Secretary but with input from all relevant agencies.

Heads of Mission will be required to undertake an annual performance appraisal conducted by the MFA Permanent Secretary and reported to the Prime Minister.

The performance agreement will cover the full gamut of objectives including managing the diplomatic relationship, providing consular services, promoting trade and investment, engaging in negotiations, identifying opportunities and managing risks. In finalising performance appraisals, the relevant departments in Suva will be required to advise the MFA Permanent Secretary how well Heads of Mission have performed in their areas of portfolio responsibility. This will help ensure that Heads of Mission are seen and utilised not as an extension of the MFA but of the whole government.

Clear reporting lines are important if Fiji's diplomatic missions are to perform effectively. All Heads of Mission, including Consuls General, will report to the Government through the MFA Permanent Secretary.

At the commencement of their posting, all Heads of Mission will receive a charter letter from the Prime Minister, drafted by the MFA Permanent Secretary, which sets out the Government's priorities for the post. This charter letter will form the basis for the Key Performance Indicators set out in the annual performance agreements of Heads of Mission and the priorities will be whole of government priorities negotiated between the MFA Permanent Secretary and other relevant Permanent Secretaries.

These measures will require additional resources that will be addressed around budget funding.

The Government also recognises that to effectively advance Fiji's foreign policy we will need a larger diplomatic footprint. This cannot be achieved overnight but we will work towards establishing new diplomatic missions in strategic regions over time.

The Government will also look to expand the number of Honorary Consuls, especially in the capitals of our Pacific Island neighbours. Honorary Consuls can be a very cost-effective means of lifting Fiji's diplomatic profile and providing consular assistance to Fiji's growing diaspora.

Finally, a durable foreign policy ultimately rests on the support and understanding of the people of Fiji. This requires a well-informed community with a sound grasp of what Fiji's foreign policy seeks to achieve and how it directly advances their security and economic wellbeing.

This White Paper is directed as much to the people of Fiji as it is to our international partners. Its domestic dissemination will be an important part of its implementation and the continuing dialogue between the Government and the community on Fiji's place in the world.

GLOSSARY

White Paper - a document that outlines the policy priorities, preference and direction

of a sovereign Government.

Diplomacy - the art, the science, and the means whereby a nation conducts its

affairs ensuring that its interests are safeguarded and promoted.

Girmityas - a group of people who were brought to Fiji, Mauritius, South Africa,

and other countries from India to work as indentured labourers on

sugar plantations during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Non-proliferation - refers to the controlling of the spread or amount of something,

especially nuclear or chemical weapons.

Sustainable – the capacity to maintain or improve our own needs without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own

needs.

I sevusevu – a ceremony that accords a welcome to visitors and puts them under the

protection of the local chief and land.

Boka – to promote harmony, friendship.

Vuvale - literally means family and signifies the respect and reciprocity of

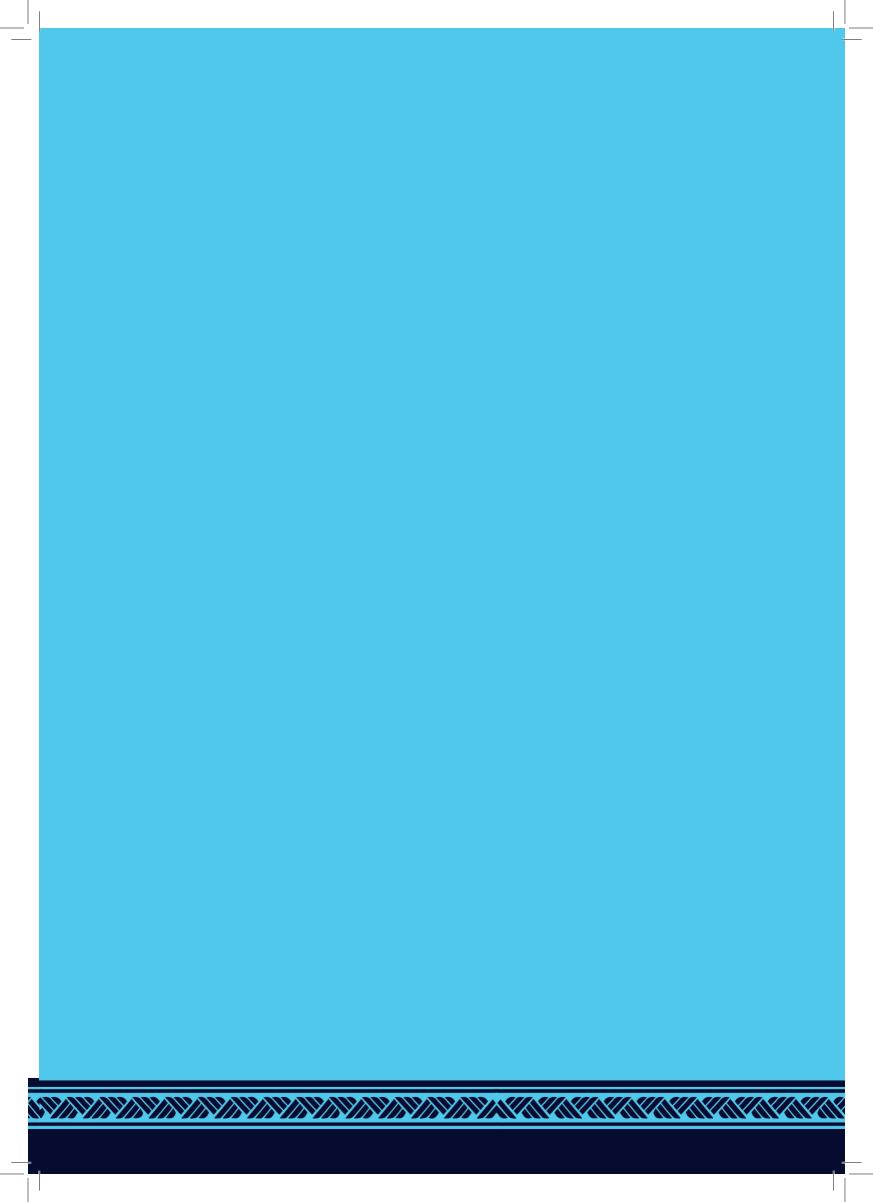
partnership and strengthening relationship.

Duavata – denotes togetherness of all to become one with a common purpose.

Multi-faceted – having many different aspects or features.

Notes	

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