



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

2020-2021 Annual REPORT

Parliamentary Paper No.: 19/2025

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021

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2.0 Vision, Mission and Values

VISION

A Stronger and Prosperous Fiji through Excellence in Foreign Service

MISSION

To advance Fiji's interests through the Effective Formulation and Implementation of its Foreign Policy

VALUES

Accountability

Honesty

Commitment

Loyalty

Courtesy

Professionalism

Integrity

Transparency

3.0 About the Report

This Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with the Financial Management Act 2004 and Regulations 2010 within the Fijian Civil Service and details the Ministry of Foreign Affairs performance(s) and commitment(s) in the key focus areas for the 2020-2021 financial year.

In summary, the Annual Report includes the following:

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Organizational Structure;
- The Bureau and Divisional contributions to the Strategic Focus Objectives; and
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Achievements and Results were aligned to the Operational Plan for the 2020/2021 financial year.

The Annual Report also includes activities that show the shift in priorities given the implications of COVID-19.



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

4.0 Referral Letter from the Permanent Secretary

Date: 05 February 2025

Honourable Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka
Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Minister for Foreign Affairs
Office of the Prime Minister
Government Building
Suva.

Dear Sir,

In accordance with the Financial Management Act of 2004, I hereby submit the 2020-2021 Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for your information and presentation to Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Raijeli Taga'.

Dr. Raijeli Taga
Permanent Secretary

5.0 Permanent Secretary's Foreword

I have the pleasure of presenting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Annual Report for 2020-2021.

The report highlights the key achievements of the Ministry for the period specified, with an overview of consolidated efforts to create opportunities and advance Fiji's foreign policy initiatives.

The COVID-19 pandemic imposed strict restrictions in diplomatic operations worldwide, including Fiji. The Ministry adapted to a new normal, where work meetings transitioned to virtual and office work were relocated to homes.

The pandemic also reiterated the importance of international cooperation and solidarity, particularly as economies were strained under pressure and vaccine access became critical. This was evident when Fiji became the first Pacific country to receive COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility including medical and humanitarian assistance support.

Despite the challenges, the Ministry demonstrated resilience and adaptability, effectively responding to emerging needs. Through innovative solutions, strategic planning and collaboration, it ensured continuity of essential services, supporting the economy, ultimately rising to the occasion with remarkable efficiency and commitment.

I acknowledge with sincere appreciation the Senior Management Team and the dedicated staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The achievements featured in this report are testimony to the unwavering commitment, determination and ability to deliver under an exceptionally challenging period.



Dr. Raijeli Taga
Permanent Secretary.

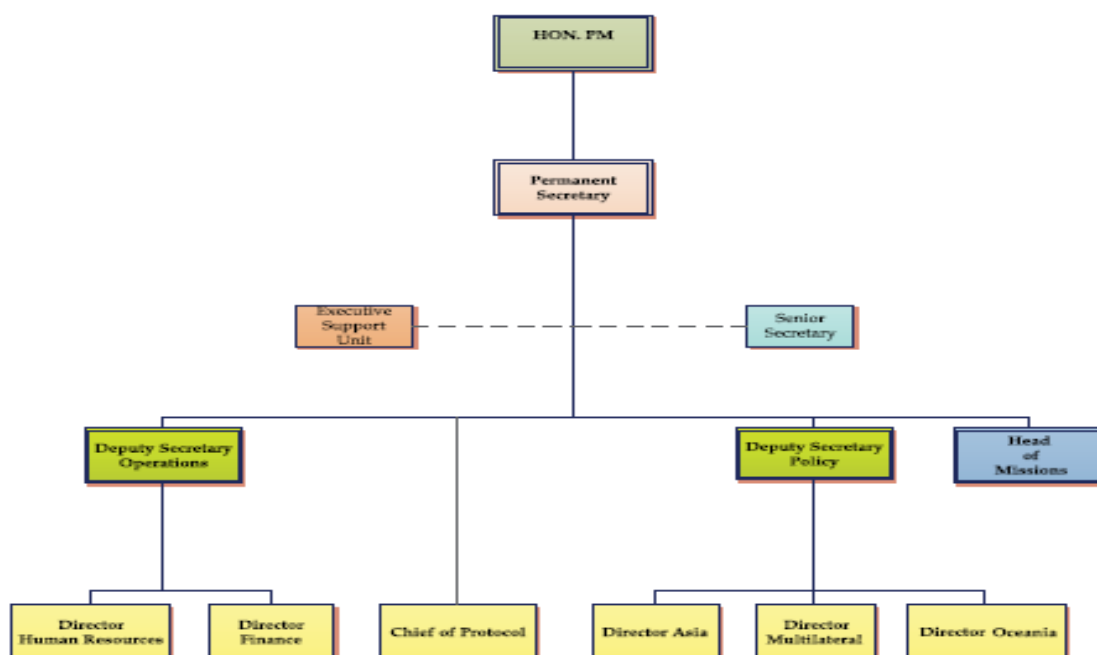
6.0 Abbreviations & Acronyms

Hon. MFA	Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
CAPP	Climate Action Pacific Partnership
FSO	Foreign Service Officer
PFSO	Principal Foreign Service Officer
FFA	Forum Fisheries Agency
WCPFC	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction
ISA	International Seabed Authority
MACC	Maritime Affairs Coordinating Committee
PSIDS	Pacific Small Islands Developing States
DINFO	Department of Information
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
WFP	World Food Programme
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency
UNECA	UN Economic Commission in Africa
ISO	International Sugar Organisation
AU	African Union
PIDF	Pacific Islands Development Forum
RAD	Roving Ambassador's Division
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
MSG	Melanesian Spearhead Group
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
FMIS	Financial Management Information System

7.0 Executive Management Team & Organisational Structure



2020/2021 Organisational Structure



8.0 Report on Key Achievements

8.1 Multilateral Affairs (Europe, Africa, South America & Caribbean) Bureau

8.1.1 Executive Summary

Countries continued the struggle to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. In the wake of mass vaccinations and as borders opened, consumer demand surged in 2021; however, due to global supply chain shortages, companies were short of supplies and production. In March, the container ship *Ever Given* ran aground in the Suez Canal blocking one of the world's major waterways for a week and generating costs estimated at GBP\$9.6 billion a day.

COVID-19 vaccine production surged with consumer demands, with record times in production. More than 7.4 billion vaccine doses were administered in 184 countries in the first eleven months of 2021, with seventy countries making donations both to COVAX facility and directly. Unfortunately, too many people who could have been vaccinated chose not to, and too many people who wanted to get vaccinated couldn't. The Delta variant, first identified in October 2020 in India, soon became the dominant strain around the world. In November 2021, South African scientists identified the emergence of the Omicron variant. Within weeks it had been found around the world.

Geopolitical developments included the election of the 46th President of the USA. President Joseph Biden strengthened relations with American allies by returning the US to the Paris Climate Agreement and the World Health Organization, renewing the New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) between US and Russia for five years. The President sought to revive the Iran nuclear deal. This was contrary to President Trump's America First policies and resulted in a better U.S. image abroad.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban returning to power signaled the end of the US war which began twenty years earlier. President Trump struck a deal with the Taliban that required the withdrawal of all U.S. troops by May 1, 2021. Two weeks before that deadline, President Biden ordered that a complete U.S. withdrawal be concluded by no later than September 11, 2021 - the twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. As the withdrawal proceeded, the Afghanistan national army collapsed, and the Taliban overran the country. Kabul fell on August 15, trapping thousands of foreigners in the capital city. The United States launched a massive withdrawal effort and evacuated the stranded Americans by the deadline set.

In September, US President Biden, Australian Prime Minister Morrison, and British Prime Minister Johnson jointly announced a new trilateral security partnership named **AUKUS**. The most significant part of the deal was the U.S. pledge to provide Australia with technology to build eight nuclear-powered (but not nuclear-armed) submarines. The only other country to receive similar access to U.S. technology was the United Kingdom. AUKUS was widely seen as a response to growing Chinese assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region. Beijing and France were not happy with the partnership and the latter terminated a Euro\$37 billion agreement it struck with Australia in 2016 to build a dozen diesel-electric powered submarines. Paris also recalled its Ambassadors to Canberra and Washington, a move without precedent in bilateral relations with either country.

Extreme weather dominated the news in 2021. Record drought wracked the American southwest. Record flooding devastated Belgium and western Germany. Epic wildfires tore through Greece. Late season monsoons ravaged India and Nepal. While the US rejoined the Paris Climate Agreement, China agreed to discontinue financing coal-fired power plants overseas, and Iceland opened a facility to take carbon dioxide out of the air. At the COP-26 meeting in Glasgow in November countries pledged to take steps to address climate change, including by cutting methane emissions. However, carbon emissions jumped in 2021 as the global economy roared back to life.

The COVID-19 pandemic signposted the centrality of multilateralism to addressing global crisis, political and socio-economic advancements, peace and security, and the promotion and strengthening of human rights.

Fiji became the first Pacific country to receive COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility. The doses supported the vaccination campaign, prioritizing those most at risk. This is multilateralism in action with over FJD 5.4 billion (USD 2.6) committed by Western countries and Organisations to fund the facility. This further allowed low-to-middle-income countries equitable access to COVID-19 tests, therapies, and vaccines.

Fiji's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Geneva, H.E Nazhat Shameem Khan was also elected by the Human Rights Council to serve as its President for 2021 at the Council's 15th annual cycle. As international borders closed, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued with the new norm of conducting business through virtual platforms.

8.1.2 Strategic Priority 1- Global Leadership

United Nations Human Rights Council

Fiji became a Member of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva for the first time in 2019 for the term of three years. This was the first time for a small island developing country to become a member. In 2020, whilst a member of the UNHRC, Fiji was nominated as the Vice President of the UNHRC and Member of Bureau, a critical position which decides the agenda and the administration of the UNHRC under the leadership of the President of the UNHRC. Following which, in 2021, Fiji's Ambassador to the United Nations and Other International Organisations, H.E Nazhat Shameem Khan was nominated at the helm of the UNHRC as President of the UNHRC. The way Fiji has been represented, including its' leadership at the Council, demonstrates Fiji's and SIDS' ability to be recognised as global leaders in multilateral organisations. As President of the Council in 2021, H.E. Ambassador Khan presided over many intercessional meetings including the 46th, 47th and 48th regular sessions of the Council spanning over a total period of approximately 13 weeks, as well as the 37th, 38th and 39th sessions of the Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR).

Trade and Environment

The discussion on plastics pollution within the context of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) was unprecedented. Spearheaded by Fiji and China in 2019, the initiative advocated the fact that the WTO could play a role in administering and controlling the production, supply and the use of plastics globally in view of their harmful effects on the environment. Over the years, the plastics pollution initiative has gained momentum with broad base support from member states wishing to join as co-sponsors and co-chairs. The environmental costs of plastics are exorbitant, and the Pacific basin was a major hub of plastic waste.

It was critical therefore that all avenues to address such concerns are exploited, including within the relevant Committee on Environment in the WTO. In line with the goal on environment and climate change, Fiji ensured the consistent support and co-sponsorship of relevant WTO joint statements such as those related to fossil fuel subsidy reform, trade and environment sustainability and the Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability (ACCTS).

Negotiations of the OACPS-EU New Partnership Agreement

Following intense technical as well as political negotiations held between the OACPS Member States and the European Union for over 2 years, the new OACPS – EU partnership known as the ‘Samoa Agreement’ was concluded in April 2021. To mark the occasion, an initialing ceremony was held in the same month in Brussels, Belgium. The new Agreement sets the framework for political, economic, and sectoral cooperation between the OACPS and EU for the next 20 years. The new Agreement substantially modernised the cooperation and extends the scope and scale of the EU and OACPS ambitions to better address current and future challenges. Partners have raised their commitments in priority areas such as: human rights, democracy and governance, peace and security, human development which encompasses health, education, and gender equality, as well as environmental sustainability, climate change, sustainable development and growth, and migration and mobility. The Agreement also includes a strong new regional focus and governance structure, tailored to each region's needs, a first in over 40 years of collaboration. The signing ceremony of the new Agreement is expected to be held in April 2022 in Apia, Samoa once internal processes are completed by both Parties. It is envisaged that pending entry into force of the entire agreement, provisional application of some parts will commence at the point of signing, in areas which the Parties agree to.

EU’s Neighborhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe

The EU Council has approved the establishment of NDICI-Global Europe. NDICI is the EU’s main financial tool to contribute to eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development, prosperity, peace, and stability. The Instrument integrates previously self-standing external funding instruments, including the 11th European Development Fund. In the context of the OACPS-EU relations, the NDICI constitutes the main framework for implementing the Post-Cotonou Agreement (Samoa Agreement) between the OACPS and EU. Funding under the Instrument will be implemented through geographic programmes, thematic programmes, and rapid response actions.

For the Pacific region, a financial envelope of at least EUR 500 million has been allocated for implementation of the instrument for the period of January 2021 to December 2027. Unlike previous arrangements, a majority of the funding under the Instrument will be provided in the form of budget support directly to the OACPS Member States.

Fiji-EU 5th High Level Political Dialogue

Fiji and the EU held their 5th High Level Political Dialogue under article 8 of the ACP - EU Partnership (Cotonou) Agreement in Suva. This was the first time the Political Dialogue was held virtually. The Dialogue provided an opportunity to review recent developments in the EU, Fiji, and the broader region, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on public health and the support provided by the EU under the Team Europe response amounting to € 119 million for the Pacific region.

The meeting took stock of the achievements and discussed concerns relating to the new Partnership Agreement between the ACP countries and the EU, of the EU strategy and commitments on climate action and implementation of the EU Green Deal as well as of the EU priorities for the Our Oceans Conference. The EU and Fiji reviewed bilateral relations, including development cooperation and preparations for the programming of EU assistance to the region from 2021-2027, trade relations, including the operationalization of the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement (IEPA), as well as cooperation on tax, good governance and visa- related issues.

Representation in International Organisations

At the 167th Session of the FAO Council, Fiji was successfully appointed as one of the seven members of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM). Fiji was represented by senior members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the CCLM.

BREXIT negotiation with DFID, ACP-LDC Sugar Industry Group and CWEIC

Advancing Fiji's interests with strategic bilateral partners through political engagements and exchanges. BREXIT negotiation with Department for International Development (DFID), now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), ACP-LDC¹ Sugar Industry Group and Caribbean Water and Energy Institute (CWEIC) in looking into the continuity of existing trade and investment in 2021 and beyond giving hope that opportunities for Sugar, Tourism and other sectors will be a reality for Fiji post COVID-19.

International Maritime Organization (IMO) Engagements

Fiji began aggressively pursuing interest and undertakings in IMO engagement. The interests are essentially for the hosting of the new regional IMO office in Suva, Fiji, as well as through membership in Category C membership of IMO in 2023.

Fiji Called for Stronger Commitment to Climate Action

Fiji called for stronger commitment and collaboration among the Commonwealth nations in driving comprehensive action to combat climate change and the realisation of the future towards net zero emissions and resilient societies. In a statement delivered at the first virtual Commonwealth Parliamentary Forum on Climate Change, Fiji spoke on the challenges faced by the nation in relation to climate change and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Forum was held prior to the 26th UN Conference of Parties on Climate Change. The main objective was to connect parliamentarians and climate experts from across the Commonwealth, to share best practice, identify the strong commitments needed, and highlight the role that parliamentarians play in prioritising the climate agenda.

Robust International Health Architecture in COVID-19 Era

Fiji joined the wave of support together with world leaders for an international treaty for pandemic preparedness and response to build a more robust health architecture that will protect future generations.

¹ African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) and Least Developed Countries (LDC) – ACP/LDC

In a joint op-ed prepared by WHO, the leaders concurred that there will be other pandemics and other major health emergencies, and no single government or multilateral agency can address this threat alone. The focus is to dispel the temptations of isolationism and nationalism, and to address the challenges that could only be achieved together in the spirit of solidarity and cooperation, namely peace, prosperity, health and security.

The main goal of the treaty was to foster an all-of-government and all-of-society approach, strengthening national, regional, and global capacities and resilience to future pandemics. This includes significantly enhancing international cooperation to improve, for example, alert systems, data sharing, research, and local, regional, and global production and distribution of medical and public health counter measures such as vaccines, medicines, diagnostics, and personal protective equipment.

Panel Discussion for the Climate Action Week

Fiji participated in a Panel discussion for the Climate Action Week and Ocean. This was an opportunity to advocate and continuously echo the country's voice and the smaller Pacific islands regarding Oceans and Shipping. Apart from being a high risk, financially burdensome and challenging business in the islands - moving into low carbon vessels was difficult given the non-availability of climate finance. Oceans have a huge impact in resolving our climate problems and restoring our ecosystems and economies. Our Pacific Blue Shipping Partnership (PBSP) maritime ambitious target and commitment of 40 percent in 2030 and 100 percent in 2050 was a reminder to the global community of the importance of committing their shipping zero emissions now for our safety in the future.

Virtual Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers for Women's Affairs and Gender and Development on COVID-19

The first-ever Virtual Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers for Women's Affairs and Gender and Development on COVID-19 was coordinated and chaired by Professor Margaret Kobia, the Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender, Government of Kenya and co-facilitated by the Commonwealth Secretary General. In the Commonwealth, just over 50% of the population comprise of women and girls. Women are at the heart of care and response efforts underway across the Commonwealth. Women are at increased risk of COVID-19 infection and loss of livelihood, and existing trends point to less access to sexual and reproductive health care services.

Underpinning this, there are credible reports of increases in gender-based violence from across the Commonwealth countries. The meeting was initiated given commitment of countries to rebuild calls for a dialogue of Ministers to share their countries' experiences with COVID-19, in particular its impact on women and girls, and how to rebuild in a manner that takes into account our development goals in general, and our gender equality goals specifically. The exchange provided a platform to discuss challenges, issues, gaps, good practice and set some digestible actions which could be achieved over a year.

Fiji Joined WHO at the Launch of Global Diabetes Compact

The "Global Diabetes Compact" (GDC) initiative led by Fiji, was launched virtually in collaboration with, WHO. and other representatives of UN agencies.

Co-hosted by WHO and the Government of Canada, the Compact provides opportunities to strengthen partnerships between Governments and NGOs to support countries to mobilize resources and accelerate structural transformation.

Diabetes is the greatest health crisis in the South Pacific, with no clear end in sight. WHO emphasised the urgent need for action, given the high number of diabetes patients accumulated in the last four decades. The Compact serves to catalyse political action in increasing accessibility and affordability of diagnosis and life-saving medicines.

Fiji joined Pacific Leaders and UK at the High-Level Climate Dialogue

Pacific Island Leaders and the United Kingdom convened a High-Level Climate Dialogue led by the Secretary of State to discuss priorities before COP26. The Leaders were updated on the progress of key issues and the priorities ahead of COP26 and progressive climate action.

The Pacific Leaders called for collective and urgent action to curb climate change. Fiji stated that the global average temperature was higher than the pre-industrial level at 1.2 degrees Celsius, and the Pacific Island nations are facing its full brunt as victims with three destructive tropical cyclones in one year. The COP26 outcome should change the global climate ambitions with a clear emission pathway that will spark a chance to achieve net-zero global emissions by 2050.

Solidarity amongst Small Island States to Respond to Climate Crisis

At the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) Leader's meeting, Fiji emphasized the urgent need for attention on the challenges faced by the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to be the core of global multilateral discussions. The meeting was convened at the margins of UNGA76 and focused on the key SIDS challenges as a direct result of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ahead of the UN's COP26 climate negotiations, the Leaders called for international solidarity and actions in response to the challenges and needs of the SIDS. Fiji called on fellow nations to work closely with each other to pursue a financial framework that recognizes the contribution by carbon-emitting countries and compensating those states impacted by climate change. Expressing similar sentiments, Antigua and Barbuda, and AOSIS called on the UN and its partners to enhance the support provided to SIDS by the UN system, including through on-the-ground presence.

8.1.3 Strategic Priority 2: Trade and Investment

Multilateral Trade Agreements Negotiations

Despite the deadlock, which affected consensus in updating the trade rule book within the context of the WTO, the Fiji continues to negotiate, monitor, and update headquarters on developments in the multilateral trade regime. Efforts in ensuring the country's position are made clear in relevant trade topics and remain a priority and ensures effective representation of Fiji in key areas of the negotiations, such as the fisheries subsidies negotiations, trade and disaster in small island economies, trade, and health (response to COVID-19), e-commerce, agriculture, WTO reforms and service. With the 12th Ministerial Conference further deferred due to the COVID-19 situation, it is expected that Ministers should be able to sign off on some key agreements that would influence the global trade regime.

Bilateral Trade Potential

Fiji explored avenues that would allow Fijian products to enter Switzerland's markets, especially non-perishable goods, and packed food items. It is anticipated to be firmed up soon to establish Switzerland as a viable market for the country's goods. It is also essential in the long term that Fiji tap into industries where Switzerland has a competitive advantage, such as agriculture and livestock, in view of the availability of land resources in the country.

Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) - FEAD

Fiji attended the virtual meeting on securing investments for high-medium income earning countries which are vulnerable to climate change and external shocks such as global economic crisis triggered by collapse of international stock market.

Connecting FBC to BBC

Fiji pursued pathways for assistance and possible formal arrangement for Fiji Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) to connect with BBC. As a start - a list of old documentaries, comedies, short series movies which were provided by the CEO FBC have been given to BBC for possible purchase or hire. Given the limited resources in FBC, Fiji had requested for concessionary rates and fees.

UK's withdrawal from the EU Customs Union

The impact of UK's withdrawal from the EU Customs Union and single market on ACP agriculture sectors including Fiji was intensively negotiated and discussed. There were anticipated problems in clearing goods at major ports in the UK given the impact of Brexit preparations, COVID-19 and the very real prospect these challenges will come into reality from 1 January 2021. The impact of the UK's expulsion from the EU IT systems for trade management will add further stress to the process and manual clearing of imports to the UK. Huge delays are anticipated in the clearance of cargoes and unsustainable extra administrative costs to the process of border clearance particularly from smaller exporters in Fiji.

Deal between UK and the EU

UK and the EU cemented a deal, and it is anticipated that Fiji and other ACP exporters will retain presence in the UK once the dust of the Brexit process settles. It is critical that Fiji exporters were updated quickly by their agents in UK of the new border clearance processes. There is concern from the private sector in the UK of the current shortage of registered customs agents to assist with border operations which results in the clogging of border clearance hence delays in the delivery of goods.

Notwithstanding the Continuation Trade Agreement (UK Pacific IEPA) Fiji signed with the UK in 2019, large amounts of checks on paperwork's, customs clearance and Rules of Origin validation is expected. The UK Government has acknowledged that the readiness of traders and exporters to the UK to deal with the new processes and systems remains its biggest concern. It hoped that the checks will be carried out in a "light touch" basis to ensure a smooth transition into the new system.

BREXIT

Fiji discussed the likely impact of UK's Autonomous Quota System on Fiji's sugar exports for 2021. It was noted that political intervention was necessary to ensure the continuation of sugar exports to UK notwithstanding the likelihood of the 260,000 tons quota being taken up completely by EU exporters and other bigger producers like Brazil. Fiji formally raised its concern to the UK on the impact of a "diagonal cumulation" provision in the UK EU Trade Agreement. Inputs by both UK and EU with exports from ACP countries including Fiji will enjoy duty free access. Inputs would have been allowed and deemed as "originating input". Any Rules of Origin issues will be eliminated and made it easier for the exports. Without diagonal cumulation any Fiji exports to UK and the EU or vice-versa will lose the Fiji "originating status". This resulted in UK Most Favored Nation (MFN) tariffs applied to goods entering the UK market via the EU or EU tariffs applied to Fiji goods entering the EU market. The new rule of origin allows raw sugar exports from Fiji to the UK and the refinement by Tate & Lyle prior for onward trade into EU markets and standard MFN tariffs on entry to EU for further processing into other finished goods. Fiji will need to prepare for this in the future to be competitive.

89th International Sugar Organisation (ISO) Administrative Committee

Fiji chaired the 89th ISO Administrative Committee Meeting after the resignation of the FSC Chairman. It was a proud moment for Fiji knowing that it is the smallest player globally but took centre stage. Fiji was the Chair of the Administrative Committee that year and Chair the Board in 2022. Being the Chair of the Board will require Fiji to host the June meeting face to face or virtual depending on COVID-19 and the preparedness to host.

8.1.4 Strategic Priority 3 - Socio Economic Development

Health and Climate Change in Small Island Developing States

Fiji supported and advocated policies and resolutions in the World Health Assembly that promoted climate change and health particularly in the context of small island developing states (SIDS). Critically the promotion of equity in ensuring that no one is left behind.

In 2021, the WHO launched a special initiative to ensure SIDS became the global health priority. Through a range of strategic actions, the WHO worked on strengthening technical capacity, resilient facilities, health workforces, supply platforms and evidence generation and use. Such initiatives for SIDS build on ongoing programmatic work by the WHO on climate change, COVID-19 response, recovery, NCDs and nutrition, health workforce, universal health coverage and primary health care.

Midnight Deadline for the Climate" initiative – COP 26 Dialogue

Fiji participated as one of the speakers (on 30th November) in the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) "Midnight Deadline for the Climate" initiative – COP26 Dialogue. The forum called for all nations to deliver the Paris Agreement with enhanced, updated NDC's by the COP 21 - agreed 2020 deadline, now 31 December, with clear leadership expected by developed, responsible and polluting nations.

Any shortfall of actions to protect the 1.5 degrees Centigrade goal of the Paris Agreement will add further deterioration to the vulnerable communities and nations and appropriate ambitious actions need to be taken in advance of COP26. Meeting and sustaining international climate finance from developed countries at and beyond \$100 billion annual flows from the adaptation and mitigation efforts of developing countries is a clear on-going priority. Climate vulnerable nations look to COP26 to secure the \$100 billion annual funding and anything else would be a failure yet again for the COP to deliver to its agreed core commitments. The adaptation and resilience agenda needs to take center stage at the COP26 alongside the mitigation with clear efforts to strive for maximum resilience. CVF 20 members will be left behind on their own climate actions as they are forced to make painful trade-offs between adaptation, social and economic impacts of COVID-19.

Health and Economic Development

A key priority for Fiji was ensuring equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics, and other COVID-19 related resources to enable equitable access, specifically for small island developing states. COVID-19 had a disproportionate impact on small island developing states, which have very limited ability to absorb the shocks created by the pandemic, most notably on their fragile service and health sectors. With this, Fiji made sure that all avenues were explored to ensure access to COVID-19 tools in an efficient and equitable manner through the World Health Organisation head office in Geneva and the WHO regional office in Manila and representative office in Suva. Fiji was represented at the first SIDS Summit for Health to promote visibility of small island developing states and the urgent need to access vaccines and other relevant COVID-19 tools.

Employment Opportunities for Fiji Nationals

Fiji regularly shares vacancies and internship opportunities available in international organisations in Geneva, Rome, Paris, Brussels, and the Hague as prospects for Fijian nationals to advance their career goals. Qualified Fijian nationals are slowly taking up posts in international organisations in Geneva which are critical for Fiji as it helps establish benchmarks for others who wish to follow suit in future.

Programme in Support for OACPS Agriculture Value Chains Development

The Framework Programme in Support for OACPS Agriculture Value Chains Development under the 'OACPS New Approach' was endorsed for implementation. The Programme aims to empower actors along the OACPS agricultural value chains, specifically family farmers and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). With an added emphasis on women and youth, to participate fully in the transformation and modernisation of the agricultural sector at the national and regional level. It also has the added benefit of contributing to the preparedness of the sector to the impacts of climate change. The Framework Programme, which has a budget of EUR 154 million, will focus on supporting 11 value chains, namely cotton, cocoa, cashew, coffee, coconuts, kava, livestock, maize, rum, sugar, and cassava; focusing on the areas of capacity building, investment, and COVID-19 mitigation measures in OACPS countries. Under the Programme, Fiji will benefit from 6 value chains under the components, namely coconut, cocoa, kava, livestock, sugar, and rum.

OACPS-EU COVID-19 Support to the Pacific

A total of USD 10,489,970 budgetary support from the OACPS-EU was channeled through the WHO to the Pacific region for COVID-19 response as part of the Health Systems Strengthening of Universal Health Coverage Partnership Programme. The objective of the Programme was to enhance capacity and capability within the WHO Suva-based Division of Pacific Technical Support (also known as WHO South Pacific) to support critical health systems and NCD issues in the Pacific. This includes providing direct in-country support and building a sub-regional approach to health systems development where applicable.

International Sugar Organisation (ISO) meetings of the Council

The ISO meetings of the Council, Admin Committee and the seminars were held virtually, and Fiji's pre-recorded speech was the only National Policy Statement during the Council meeting. The Fiji officials stated that the pandemic caused havoc to all sectors of the economy and that the sugar production and exports have been significantly impacted the world over. Fiji stated that the virus has closed borders, created restrictions in trade and negatively affected the distribution means of the country's sugar exports. In terms of Fiji's economic recovery, there will always be reliance on agriculture and the sugar industry to assist in rebuilding the economy. It is significant however, that Fiji will be the Chair of the Admin Committee in 2021, Vice Chair of the Council in 2021 and Chair of the Council in 2022.

Disaster, Environment and Climate Change

Fiji was nominated as Vice President of the Platform for Disaster Displacement (PDD) in 2019 during the French Presidency. The role was of critical importance for the country's given its strategic interests on displacement, climate change and disaster. The role provided the platform for Fiji to showcase its ability to lead and gave the country the opportunity to influence the agenda of the PDD. In 2021, Fiji ascended further to become the President and Chair of the PDD for the first time with the European Union as Vice President. The country's representation was managed specifically by the Fiji Mission in Geneva in close coordination with headquarters. Despite the limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Fiji ensured under its leadership that assigned programmatic schedules were designed and implemented in close consultations with the Bureau members, Member States and the Secretariat.

Training in French Language

The Ministry undertook 12 weeks of French Language training to enhance competencies in the language and cultural diplomacy. The initiative was the outcome of cooperation between Fiji and France with the view to expand the country's relations with more French speaking countries. The 11 MFA participants developed basic French conversational skills, enabling them to excel in their diplomatic roles.

The training marked a milestone achievement that promoted cultural diversity and socioeconomic engagements between Fiji and France. MFA expressed its appreciation to the French Embassy and reiterated the importance and benefits of the cooperation.

Fiji Joined the Global Call for Multilateralism at UN's 75th Anniversary

Over 150 Prime Ministers and Presidents participated at the commemoration of the UN 75th Session anniversary of the UNGA in New York. In his opening remarks to World Leaders, the United Nations Secretary-General reflected on the remarkable progress by the UN and its important role in delivering global peace, justice and equality. The Secretary-General thanked the member states for their support towards the 75th Anniversary Declaration, which was substantive, ambitious and forward looking.

Fiji reflected on its partnership with the UN in advancing its mandate on global prosperity. For 50 years, Fiji's contribution to the UN has been driven by genuine care for those less fortunate. This includes the uncompromising passion towards the protection of the natural world and Fijian Peacekeepers have served diligently for more than 40 years in the World's most conflict-ridden regions.

Collective Efforts and Ambitious Targets Way Forward

At the 75th UN General Assembly, Fiji called for global solidarity and commitment to building a more resilient global economy in the face of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Fiji further added that the two impacts are different, but the iniquities are felt in all SIDS. An update on the country's progress efforts in response to COVID-19 and the devastation caused by Tropical Cyclone Harold was also shared.

Fiji to Benefit from Kiwa, "Nature Based Solutions for Climate Resilience"

The French Ambassador met with MFA, on a new era of innovative partnership in Climate Resilience namely the "KIWA Initiative" which focused on developing Nature Based Solutions for Climate Resilience.

The KIWA initiative aims to strengthen the resilience of Pacific countries and territories by setting up a dedicated one-stop shop for funding projects that promote Nature-Based Solutions. The initiative builds local capacity and promotes approaches to address social vulnerability and gender inequality, and fosters dialogue amongst partners to improve development aid coordination.

Fiji Joined UN Effort to Shape a Global Financing Strategy

Fiji joined Canada, Jamaica and the UN in welcoming policy proposals for financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the margins of the UNGA75 Leaders Event. The meeting focused on the need for concrete solutions to build back better.

The country emphasised that finance was the most critical element for advancing the global goals (SDGs) and urged SIDS to dig deep to respond to the twin crises of climate change and COVID-19. Fiji further stated that sustainability and inclusivity should be at the heart of financing strategies to realise the aspirations of rebuilding stronger.

PSID States at the UN Summit on Biodiversity: Leaders Dialogue 2

Fiji delivered a statement at the UN virtual Summit on Biodiversity on the theme; "Urgent Action on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development".

The country represented the 12 Pacific SIDS and reiterated that with a united Pacific voice, the people demanded urgent action to protect the vast, unique flora and fauna that graces forests and reefs as the world is in a state of planetary emergency and losing nature at an unprecedented rate.

Fiji also stated that biodiversity loss has adverse impacts on humanity, ranging from the collapse of food and health systems to the disruption of entire supply chains. Fiji further called on all Leaders to develop a new, legally binding global agreement that holistically addresses marine litter and plastics.

PSIDS Reaffirmed Commitment to a Nuclear Free World

As the Chair of PSIDS, Fiji called on World Leaders to advance the United Nation's mandate to create a Nuclear Free World at the Commemoration of the International Day against Nuclear Explosions. The country further stated that the PSIDS suffered the impacts of nuclear testing in the region, with more than 300 nuclear tests carried out in the Pacific from 1946 to 1996, in the atmosphere, underground and underwater.

As a result, communities living close to 'ground zero' relocated from their ancestral islands and were restricted from using the ocean resources for their livelihoods, and they faced an increase in related health problems. At the end of these nuclear tests, radio-active waste and machinery were either buried or dumped into the Pacific Ocean.

Accelerating the Realization of Gender Equality and Empowerment

Fiji conveyed its full support for the advancement of women and girls' rights in leadership and National Development priorities at the 25th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women during the UNGA75. The commitment allowed member states to present their actions and commitments towards implementing the platform for action.

Fiji delivered its national statement and spoke of the concrete action undertaken to advance SDG5 on "achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls" and the important gains over the past 25 years. The UNSG called on World leaders and civil society to push back against the delayed advancement of gender equality and women's rights.

Fiji Partner with UNHCR to Address Disaster

At a virtual High-Level Meeting, Fiji spoke on the current regional and national efforts to address the devastating impacts of climate change faced by the region. The country also reaffirmed their commitment to support the work of the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) through strengthening collaboration with the UNHCR to address disaster displacement issues in the Pacific region.

The UNHCR 71st session held in Geneva examined the organization's global emergency response to support refugees, internally displaced persons, host communities and governments during the unprecedented crisis. It discussed the challenges of temporary closed borders during the pandemic and innovative solutions and partnerships among member states.

Stronger Global Commitment for Realization of Climate Actions

Fiji delivered a powerful statement at the UN virtual meeting on “Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) Leaders Event”, held at the margins of UNGA 75, conveying that there is a need for highly developed countries to embrace firm commitments to curb their emissions. Fiji also stated that a stronger multisectoral approach and global commitment play crucial roles in accelerating the actions on addressing climate change.

Fiji Commemorated 50 Years of Membership with the United Nations

To commemorate Fiji’s 50th year of its membership of the UN, the Office of the President in collaboration with Fiji’s Permanent Mission in New York, celebrated the country’s remarkable achievement. In a virtual reception held at the State House, the Fijian President conveyed Fiji’s statement to commemorate the 50 years of the country’s work in the United Nations. The President expressed Fiji’s appreciation to the UN senior officials and the diplomatic and consular representatives for their tremendous contributions to the UN and for advancing the country’s interests.

UN and Fiji Partnership Commended at the UN75 Anniversary

The UN in collaboration with Fiji organized a commemorative program in recognition of its 75th Anniversary in Suva to mark the remarkable association between the two partners in advancing the global mandates on universal peace and prosperity. The program was attended by UN officials, senior government officials, diplomatic corps, multilateral development partners in Fiji and the region featuring highlights on Fiji’s UN Peacekeeping Legacy and Testimonies and Intergenerational Dialogue on “The Future We Want, The UN We Need.”

Fiji and the UN also formalized the innovative partnership through the official signing of the Commitment of Partnership on the Book on Fiji’s UN Peacekeeping Project.

Healthy Ocean to accelerate Economic Recovery

Fiji joined the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy which put forward a new ocean action agenda with promising commitments and new research. The 14 world leaders of the Ocean Panel committed to sustainably manage 100% of the ocean area under national jurisdiction by 2025. The leaders of Australia, Canada, Chile, Fiji, Ghana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Namibia, Portugal and Ocean Panel co-chairs Norway and Palau released the Transformations for a Sustainable Ocean Economy: A Vision for Protection, Production and Prosperity recognizing that the ocean’s health was at risk from adversities of pollution, overfishing and climate change.

The Ocean Panel also urged leaders of coastal and ocean states across the globe to join in committing to the 100% goal so that all Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) are sustainably managed by 2030.

UN's Highest Environmental Award

The UN announced six laureates of the 2020 Champions of the Earth award, the UN's highest environmental honour. The Champions were chosen for their transformative impact on the environment and their leadership in urging bold and decisive action on behalf of the planet and its inhabitants. Fiji was named as a recipient in the Policy Leadership category for the global climate action work and commitment to climate-responsive national development. The Champions of the Earth award annually recognized outstanding leaders from government, civil society and the greatest environmental challenges of our time.

State of Tropical Cyclone Yasa Rehabilitation and Rebuilding

The United Nations, Diplomatic Missions and International Agencies were briefed by the senior officials of the Fijian Government in a meeting held at MFA Suva on the state of rehabilitation and rebuilding work after Tropical Cyclone Yasa. The agenda of the meeting included situational reports, updates from the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC), operational focus, and the Fijian Government's assessment of the needs and priorities. Fiji thanked their development partners and acknowledged the consolidated approach required to cohesively coordinate the support needed to rebuild the lives of those affected by TC Yasa. The UN Resident Coordinator commended the swift actions and coordinated approach taken by the Fijian Government and development partners to assist the families who were affected.

First Pacific country to receive COVID-19 vaccine through the COVAX Facility

The first consignment of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines from the multilateral COVAX Facility was delivered to Fiji, making it the first Pacific Island country to receive the vaccines through the facility. The doses enabled the vaccination campaign in Fiji to commence with those most at risk. The COVAX Facility is a great illustration of global solidarity and is multilateralism in action with over FJD \$5.4 billion (USD 2.6 billion) funded for this facility to ensure international vaccine solidarity.

Fiji Affirmed Commitment to Building Resilient Infrastructure

Fiji is at the forefront of global efforts to strengthen disaster and climate resilience by pursuing resilient infrastructure development. This message was conveyed at the virtual International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (ICDRI 2021), an annual international conference of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) attended by India, Fiji, UK and Italy,

Fiji highlighted the impact of the climate crisis on the country's infrastructure development and the rapidly strengthening disaster readiness that led Fiji to become the first nation to achieve Target E of the Sendai Framework. Launched by India, at the 2019 UN Climate Summit, the CDRI comprises 22 member countries including Fiji and four member organisations.

Fiji and Venezuela Relations

In commemorating 38 years of diplomatic relations, Fiji and Venezuela reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening relations on shared interests and priorities. This was undertaken through a virtual meeting held between the Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary counterparts.

The two countries acknowledged the potential for enhanced cooperation and strengthened international solidarity in addressing challenges imposed by COVID-19. Venezuela is an observer member with the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF) and has interest in establishing its first Diplomatic Mission in Fiji.

Fiji Called for International Solidarity on Battle against COVID-19

Fiji delivered a statement at the 74th Session of the World Health Assembly held via a virtual platform and reflected on the impact of the pandemic globally and the greater need to work in solidarity. The country reaffirmed commitment to working with WHO to advance shared aspirations and priorities. Fiji further highlighted the need for a clean and resilient global recovery for the long-term success of public health, economies, and the natural environment.

WFP Assist Fiji with Logistical Support and Equipment worth USD \$600,000

The UN WFP assisted Fiji with equipment and logistical support to transport 1.6 million medical supplies with 9,450 diagnostic testing kits. The assistance valued at USD \$600,000 supported Fiji's national response to the second wave of the COVID-19. The logistics capacity support included a donation of a Mobile Warehouse and Forklift for MHMS to enhance the efficiency of PPE storage and coordination.

The timely and generous assistance greatly assisted health care professionals and health institutions to safely and effectively deliver an enhanced public health response to trace and contain the transmission of the virus in communities and protect the lives of Fijians.

WFP stated that the assistance was provided in appreciation of the Fijian Government's national response to contain COVID-19. WFP further acknowledged the generous funding support from the Governments of Australia, USA, and the European Union to transport in excess of 2300 cubic metres of essential cargo across the Pacific.

Austria, Team Europe, Provided Medical Facemasks and Blankets

The Government of Austria in collaboration with the European Union in the Pacific provided PPEs valued over FJD \$156,270.00 to assist the Fijian Government's efforts to contain the second wave of COVID-19.

The consignment consisted of 250,000 medical facemasks and 250 woven blankets and was coordinated collaboratively by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) Emergency Response Coordination Centre with the Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific and the Fijian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The European Union Ambassador to Fiji and for the Pacific reiterated commitment to supporting Fiji and the region and the enhanced levels of cooperation between Fiji and Team Europe.

Humanitarian Assistance from Fijian diaspora in America and Canada

The Fijian Diaspora in the United States through the Fiji American National Association (FANA) donated FJD\$42,000 towards the Fiji PM's National Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation Fund in support of the Fijian Government's efforts towards rebuilding lives of communities affected by TC Yasa.

The Fiji officials offered heartfelt appreciation to the FANA executives and the Fijians in the US for their generosity and commitment to rebuilding their home country and maintaining the great spirit of service with the offer to readily help during tough times. The officials further added that the destruction and devastation caused by TC Yasa was extensive, and that recovery and rehabilitation will be long and difficult. Reassurance was also given to FANA and the Fijian diaspora across the world that the Fiji PM's National Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation Fund provided support in a highly transparent and accountable manner to ensure that no family was left behind. The FANA members collectively reaffirmed their continued support to mobilise further assistance to Fiji.

Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Programme (PICAP)

The PICAP program objective was to improve the financial preparedness of “Pacific households, communities, small businesses, organisations and governments towards climate change and natural hazards” through a combination of stakeholder engagement, co-creation of solutions, awareness and capacity building, innovative financing options and digital linkages – with a robust interface to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) are highly vulnerable to natural hazards and each year face huge economic losses due to cyclones, droughts, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and other natural disasters.

Blockchain Climate Institute

The work on the Commonwealth led Blockchain Climate Institute (BCI) insurance program is progressing well. The Economic Feasibility Questionnaire from BCI was sent to Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Programme (PICAP) for comments given the intention for possible sharing of data. Lot of data have already been collected by the field work undertaken by the PICAP. There are certainly possible synergies in processes and outcomes between BCI and PICAP and resources and information can be shared. In fact, PICAP studied 400 farmers – sugarcane, rice, copra, root crops and also include woman farmers. The Mission met regularly with PICAP, Ministry of Economy – Climate Change team, BCI and the Commonwealth. The suitability and viability of BCI to the Pacific and Fiji in terms of Costs/Benefit analysis is paramount.

CHOGM OEWG

The Commonwealth Secretariat and CHOGM host, Rwanda, convened a 2-day Open-Ended Working Groups Meeting to finalise and look at the 5 main pillars of the upcoming CHOGM. The 5 pillars include Governance and the Rule of Law; Sustainability which is a new sub-theme; Health – another new subtheme; Youth; and Technology & Innovation. The 2 days of discussion amongst diplomats were another opportunity to analyse and make appropriate Policy changes (rather than drafting changes) before these pillars are finalised. Reference was also made to the zero draft Communique for the leaders from the June meeting. A lot of discussions were centred on the 2 new sub-themes - Sustainability and Health.

HRH Roundtable

The Prince of Wales Roundtable with the Pacific Islands Heads of Government. The HRH was keen to hear from the Pacific Islands Heads the challenges they continuously face today in terms of the pandemic, economic recovery, climate change and other environmental challenges, accessibility to concessional funds and the like. It was unfortunate that only the Heads of Governments for Fiji, PNG, Tuvalu and Vanuatu attended. The Heads were able to hear directly from HRH about his own Sustainable Markets Initiative (SMI) program covering biodiversity, climate, green economic growth and sustainable markets and the work with Governments that needed his SMI program. Essentially HRH's SMI is working to leverage the power of the private sector and private finance to accelerate global progress for a sustainable future with a focus on climate, oceans, biodiversity, land use and desertification. The Heads took the opportunity to highlight other similar challenging issues like concessional finance, risk capital, debt, and others.

8.1.5 Strategic Priority 4: Public Diplomacy

Reaching out to Diaspora via Digital means

Despite the constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic on physical contacts, the Fiji Missions worldwide continued to reach out to the diaspora via digital means and physical means where possible to remain closely connected. Whilst in the established connection space, the Missions encouraged the diaspora to continue to provide direct support to their families in Fiji especially through remittance. On the same note, consular enquiries such as passport processing and travel advisories were also processed and attended. This was further strengthened by the service of Fiji's Honorary Consuls.

Consultative Process for Diaspora Finance project

Fiji was invited by the Commonwealth Secretariat to be part of a consultative process to review the Diaspora Finance project for the purpose of leveraging finance for investment purpose. The proposed technical assistance project was aimed at assisting member states in locating technical experts to help in the setting up of diaspora policies and strategies. The project also focused on engaging experts to undertake the following tasks which included economic and legal background papers, advice, reports, and negotiation briefs, deliver capacity building and training to Commonwealth member Governments in diaspora financing and investment issues, provide expert advice on technical issues where required and prepare drafting instructions, draft legislation and regulations, and related legal advice. The project was expected to commence in 6 pilot countries.

8.1.6 Strategic Priority 5 - Peace and Security

Fiji calls for a Cohesive Response to Peace and Security

Fiji called on the Permanent Members of the UNSC to pursue a cohesive global response to address threats to international peace and security arising from the climate crisis. This was conveyed at the UN Security Council's Open Debate on Peace and Security implications of the Climate Crisis. Speaking at this special meeting of UNSC, the Secretary-General shared a timely reminder in that while efforts are focused on COVID-19, the Climate Action agenda must not be postponed. Fiji further stated that the impacts and consequences of the climate crisis on SIDS continues to be a growing threat.

UK/Fiji Defense MOU

Following on from the signing of the UK/Fiji Defense MOU, Fiji Defense Minister and Rt Hon Earl Howe the Minister of State for Defence, held discussions with senior officials of the Ministry of Defense and the Fiji High Commission in London. There were many activities and high-level visits earmarked to coincide with the 50th anniversary celebrations but were put aside because of COVID-19. The MOU which covers the training of military personnel in Fiji as well as the general principles of conducting exercises of training aims to strengthen and deepen the relations for the two countries in Defence cooperation. It is anticipated that the UK Naval vessels will visit Fiji to conduct training with Fiji's Navy and the Military. Various courses were earmarked with military and naval personnel from Fiji attending training programs in UK at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) and the UK Navy base including Fiji's Commissioner of Police. The signing of the Sea Rider MOU between UK and Fiji was proposed and this should further elevate relations.

Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

Fiji worked closely with the Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). UNODA provided technical assistance and capacity building programs, for instance under the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). As for the BWC, Fiji remains a key partner and leader in the Pacific's universalization efforts and has been benefiting from workshops and other technical assistance. Regarding the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), although Fiji is not a party yet, it has continued to receive technical support under the ATT's Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF).

8.1.7 Strategic Priority 6 - Human Rights and Democratic Values

Human Rights Council elected Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan as President

The Human Rights Council elected H.E. Nazhat Shameem Khan, Fiji's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Geneva, to serve as its President for 2021. Fiji joined the Ambassadors of the Bahamas, Sudan and Netherlands, who were elected vice-presidents of the Council in December. The election of the fourth vice-president, from the Eastern European Group, took place following negotiations within the Group. Fiji welcomed the election as a victory for the basic rights of all climate-vulnerable people. Fiji further stated that the leadership of the Council comes at a critical time for humanity, as the climate emergency threatens human rights on a global and generational scale.

Conclusion of United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) term

The Fiji Mission in Geneva continued to negotiate, monitor and pursue Fiji's interests, priorities and pledges during its membership of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) which ended in 2021. Despite the conclusion of Fiji's membership, work continues in ensuring that the Mission fulfils and implements Fiji's human rights obligations and commitments undertaken through the ratification and accession to international human rights treaties and protocols. This is a key area that would strengthen Fiji's visibility not only as having ratified Conventions, but also in honoring the relevant obligations.

8.2 Asia Bureau (Asia, Middle East & Russia)

8.2.1 Executive Summary

The Bureau's progress for the 2020 to 2021 period were marked by significant diplomatic achievements which included a series of successful high-level diplomatic engagements and visits between Fiji and countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Russia. These interactions strengthened bilateral ties and promoted dialogue on key regional and global issues.

The team's economic focus further yielded increased trade relations and investment opportunities with partners aimed at market access and business partnerships for enhanced economic growth and diversification. Multilateral initiatives also showcased Fiji's commitment to addressing pressing regional challenges, climate change, sustainable development, and security concerns.

The Bureau navigated complex geopolitical dynamics and regional tensions that posed challenges to diplomatic efforts and initiatives and build on past achievements through strengthened diplomatic ties, expanded economic partnerships, and innovative approaches to regional challenges. Embracing digital diplomacy, enhancing people-to-people exchanges, and advancing sustainable development goals were also central to future strategies. Despite the challenges, the division's proactive engagements and partnerships have positioned Fiji as a key player in regional and global affairs, laying the foundation for continued success in the years to come.

8.2.2 Strategic Priority 1- Global Leadership

Chair for Eighth Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Fiji chaired the eighth Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) with delegates represented through virtual platform from the Asia Pacific region and in person in Bangkok. As chair of the eighth APFSD, Fiji called for international solidarity and partnership at the regional, sub-regional and national levels to recover better together through exploring solutions with urgency to accelerate the achievement of SDG's.

Fiji's participation at the APFSD aligns with its commitment to the 2030 Agenda, which was also the foundational principles of the National Development Plan. The meeting was convened by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for the timely assessment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Ministerial Interim Meeting (MIM) of the PALM-9

Fiji's leadership was demonstrated at the forefront of engagements at the PALM Ministerial Interim Meeting (MIM) for PALM 9, which was held virtually. Fiji commended the efforts of Japan in forging stronger levels of partnership and enhanced cooperation afforded to the Pacific region through the PALM process. Fiji further stated that it is a clear demonstration of Japan's commitment to the region and emphasised on the importance of PIF's role in shaping the regional architecture that is relevant and responsive, coupled with effective development partnerships to respond to the regional priorities.

Fiji's Participation in Green Growth and Global Goals 2030 (P4G) Summit

Fiji joined its international and regional development partners at the 2nd P4G Summit, 'Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030' hosted by the Government of the Republic of Korea. The theme was "Inclusive Green Recovery towards Carbon Neutrality," as P4G is a global initiative which, aspires to become the world's leading multilateral forum for developing public-private partnerships to advance Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and the Paris Climate Agreement.

At the Leaders Session, Fiji joined the global leaders from respective governments, international organisations, businesses, and civil societies worldwide with a collective resolve to Build Back Better and Greener. Through the Summit, Fiji affirmed its commitment to enhance engagement opportunities for shared goals on climate change and SDGs. The 2021 P4G Seoul Summit included 5 five key sectors of "Clean Water, Food and Agriculture, Clean Energy, Sustainable Cities and Circular Economy" and other various Green Future sessions on other pertinent issues such as oceans, forestry, green technology, green and finance. The Summit concluded with the adoption of the Seoul Declaration, which embodied the outcomes and reflected the collective will and innovative solutions to deal with climate change and achieve the SDGs.

China-PICs Political Leadership Dialogue

Fiji joined the Pacific Island Countries and the People's Republic of China at the China-Pacific Islands Countries (PICs) Political Leadership Dialogue convened via virtual platform. The meeting focused on the theme 'Working together to build consensus across the ocean and pursue shared development'. Fiji made a statement declaring its perspective on the opportunities and challenges for China-PICs Cooperation in the post-COVID era and stated that the pandemic further exacerbated the challenges imposed by the climate crisis. Fiji also reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening the bond of friendship and partnership with China and the Pacific Island Countries; and advancing a comprehensive partnership based on the principles of mutual respect and common development.

UAE Government Grant for Fiji Embassy

The UAE government presented a 2021 annual grant check of AED 500,000 (equivalent to FJ\$279,106) to the Fijian Embassy in Abu Dhabi. The annual grant provided since the Embassy's establishment in 2012, was committed to support the operations of the Fiji Embassy. The collaboration reaffirmed Fiji and UAE's unwavering commitment to advancing global solidarity and mutual interests and an elevated bilateral engagement and cooperation. The UAE Government also supported the Fijian Government's pursuit of providing alternative energy supply through funding of a renewable energy project worth US\$5m, which eventuated from the Solar Project Agreement signed between the two Governments in 2014.

8.2.3 Strategic Priority 2 - Trade and Investment

Largest-Ever Private Sector Investment from Japan

Fiji entered into an agreement under which a consortium, namely Sevens Pacific Pte Limited, owned by Chugoku Electric Power Company and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation acquired a 44% shareholding in Energy Fiji Limited. The investment is the culmination of an exhaustive process to identify a highly experienced and credentialed international utility to acquire a shareholding in EFL.

It was a critical objective of any transaction that the investor not only offered a financial investment to Fiji but contributed deep operational expertise and experience in electricity generation and networks.

The Power Company's exceptional track record as an international, integrated electricity utility made them the ideal candidate for the divestment. EFL now have the ability to tap into world-leading operational expertise, project delivery experience, technology and financial capacity to support the company in meeting the growing electricity demands of the nation and its renewable energy targets, while also providing reliable, renewable and affordable electricity to all Fijians.

Fiji is wholly committed to an ambitious net-zero carbon emissions target and plans to transition away from fossil fuels and to utilise exclusively renewable energy sources by 2050. With over 50% of EFL's electricity already generated by renewable sources of hydro, wind and biomass, Fiji is well placed to achieve its long-term targets.

Launch of the Fiji-China Online Trade Expo

The Fiji Embassy in China collaborated with the Pacific Trade and Invest Office (PIFS Investment Arm in China) for the launch event which focused on Fiji's Investment Marketing Strategy post-COVID for the China Market. The Embassy assisted in soliciting the support of the National Development Reform Commission [NDRC] which thus resulted in the presence and presentation by the Deputy Director General of the International Cooperation Centre of the NDRC, Mr. Chang Hao, who provided a heightened insight at the margins of the event, on the opportunities and prospects that exist within the Belt and Road Cooperation between Fiji and China.

Asia Investment Infrastructure Bank

At the invitation of Mr. Lin Liqun, President of the Asian Investment Infrastructure Bank (AIIB), Fiji attended the Bank's New Year Reception at the AIIB Headquarters in Beijing on 4 December 2020. AIIB had approved a USD50 million co-funding with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for Fiji on August 13, 2020; co-funding through a policy-based loan under ADB's Sustained Private Sector-Led Growth Reform Program to be directed as the Fijian Government's response to COVID-19 to mitigate the extreme public health emergency and ensuing unprecedented economic crisis. The 'Program' was supported under the COVID-19 Crisis Recovery Facility of the Bank.

International Bamboo & Rattan Industry

In accordance with the Agreement on the Establishment of INBAR, Fiji's application for membership to the latter did not receive any objections from the current Fijis membership at World stage. INBAR Council therefore approved Fiji's membership and noting that the original Instrument of Accession and Application for Membership to INBAR had been deposited to the Depository: Department of Treaty and Law of the MFA.

1st INDO ASEAN Oceanic Business Summit and Expo

The Confederation of Indian Industry organized the "1st INDO ASEAN Oceanic Business Summit and Expo" from 4-6 August 2020. Fiji attended the Summit virtually. India's bilateral trade with ASEAN economies presently estimated to be more than USD 142 billion and on the other hand India and Oceanic countries have grown significantly in the last decade. CII strongly sees India to take the leadership role in reaffirming India's Act East and Indo Pacific Policy on the Economic Front as well.

The Summit and Expo was the first of its kind involving prominent countries from ASEAN and Oceanic Region and had participation of Government, Enterprises, Business Chambers, and Think Tanks and Academia from all the countries in the region.

8.2.4 Strategic Priority 3 - Socio Economic Development

India donates to Fiji PM's Relief Fund

India presented a donation of FJD\$15,000 to the Fiji Prime Minister's Relief Fund. The assistance was initiated through the concerted effort between India's High Commission in Fiji, and India's renowned Public Sector Undertakings namely Bank of Baroda, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and the New India Assurance Co. Ltd (NIA). The High Commission further stated that the timely contribution was also in recognition of the commendable work undertaken by the Fijian Government to increase outreach to revive the livelihood of communities who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fijian Student Benefits from Malaysia's Education Sector

The collaboration between Fiji and Malaysia in the education sector resulted in Fijian students pursuing programs specializing in Aviation and Technology. The success of such programs was demonstrated through the accomplishments of Fijian students who graduated in the Bachelor of Aircraft Engineering Technology in Avionics after 4 years of studies at the Kuala Lumpur University in Malaysia.

Malaysia Supports Fiji's Efforts in Building Back Better

In a new initiative to promote cultural diplomacy, Malaysia through its partnership with the Fijian Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) produced a 13-episode program that featured Malaysian cuisine made using Fiji's local resources. The program was later televised on FBC. Malaysia reaffirmed its commitment to strengthen engagements with Fiji and the region in pursuing shared priorities and interest.

Japan provides assistance towards Fiji's COVID-19 Response

Fiji signed a \$200million Emergency Loan for COVID-19 Response with Japan to support Government's efforts to stabilize and revitalize the economy, in addition to strengthening the health care system. Fiji relayed appreciation to the Government and people of Japan for the solidarity shown to Fijians at a time when the pandemic brought down Fiji's tourism industry. The support from the Japanese Government strengthened the country's COVID defences, particularly for public health systems and equipped frontline workers to step through the door of a post-pandemic future. Japan stated that further support demonstrates close friendship and collaboration that Fiji and Japan have established over 50 years of diplomatic relations.

India Provides 100,000 Doses of COVID-19 Vaccines to Fiji

A consignment of 100,000 doses of Made in India Covishield (AstraZeneca) vaccines was formally handed over to Fiji. The vaccines were supplied by the Government of India through its grant assistance in appreciation of the friendship and solidarity between the two nations, consistent with India's stated commitment to use India's vaccine production and delivery capacity to help partner countries in the fight against COVID pandemic.

Fiji conveyed its appreciation for the timely support and commitment in the global fight against COVID pandemic and stated that the next batch of doses received will be assigned towards the protection of the remainder of front liners workers; doctors, nurses, quarantine and hotel workers, and members of Fiji's Disciplined Forces. India reiterated that Fiji was an important partner for realizing the Indo-Pacific vision that envisages a free, open and inclusive region in a common pursuit of progress and prosperity and the supply of these vaccines marks another milestone in the bilateral relations between the two countries.

The arrival of the vaccines helped Fiji roll out its National Immunization Programme and in achieving the goals and aspirations of Fiji's recovery plan. India had provided over 63 million doses of vaccines to 76 countries and to UN health peacekeepers and workers, as part of its Vaccine Maitri (Vaccine Friendship) initiative.

People's Republic of China Provides PPEs to Fiji

The People's Republic of China provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE's) valued over F\$500,000 to support Fiji's national response to the second wave of COVID-19. The first consignment consisted of PPEs including 550,000 surgical masks, 2,000 gowns, and 200 thermal guns. The assistance was mobilized in collaboration with the Chinese Embassy in Fiji and People's Government of Guangzhou Municipality, in the Guangdong Province. In acknowledging the assistance, Fiji expressed appreciation to the People's Republic of China for the timely support rendered to Fiji. China conveyed its commitment to continue assisting Fiji at a time of great need.

Humanitarian Assistance from the Indian Government

The Government of India presented a consignment of six tonnes of relief items to assist efforts towards rebuilding and rehabilitation at the aftermath of TC Yasa. Fiji conveyed its appreciation to the Government of India for the assistance which was delivered to families affected in the Northern and Eastern Division. While providing a brief update on the progress of the rehabilitation work, Fiji stated that the key focus was on restoration of essential services and delivery of assistance to communities to rebuild their lives. India stated that the assistance highlighted the commitment to provide Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) support as a first responder despite the challenges posted by the pandemic. The relief supplies were put together in a short span of time by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) of India and were airlifted to Fiji with the help of Air India and Fiji Airways. In reaffirming India's continued support to Fiji, India stated that the country is open to extending assistance as the Initial Damage Assessment and needs of affected communities are identified.

Fiji receives FJD\$1 million dollars in humanitarian aid from Chinese Government

The People's Republic of China donated US\$500,000 (FJD \$1million) in humanitarian aid to Fiji in support of the Fijian Government's rebuilding and recovery works in the aftermath of Severe Tropical Cyclones Yasa and TC Ana. In conveying appreciation, Fiji acknowledged the People's Republic of China for the timely assistance that complemented the Fijian Government's efforts on economic recovery and building climate resilience. Fiji also stated that China's assistance affirmed the strengthened collaboration and is testament of China's commitment to advance the levels of engagements with Fiji.

Humanitarian Assistance from the Fiji Embassy in Beijing and Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce

The Fiji Embassy in Beijing China in collaboration with the Fiji-Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce coordinated assistance of HKD \$100,000, equivalent to around FJD \$25,000 towards the Fiji Prime Minister's National Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation Fund. The donation was received from Fiji's Honorary Consul in Hong Kong who added that the initiative reflects the extraordinary partnership to enhance relations and friendship. The Honorary Consul and members and friends of Fiji in Hong Kong extended their heartfelt sympathy to all Fijians affected by the cyclones and the commitment to assist and support Fiji in any way they can.

First E-Magazine in Hindi to Promote Cultural Diversity and Learning

Fiji's first e-magazine featured in Hindi was launched as an e-learning platform to promote educational empowerment and cultural diversity. The quarterly publication of IFFF will be available online for youths, tertiary institutions, and the wider Indian diaspora. It will disseminate information on the activities of IFFF, raise awareness on the cooperation between Fiji and India, whilst enabling the youths to enhance their knowledge on Hindi language and inculcating a deeper appreciation of cultural and historical links. IFFF is a Fiji registered Non-Profit Charitable Trust Organization established in 2017 and works collaboratively with the Government of Fiji and Indian High Commission in Fiji to deepen the engagements between Fiji and India.

Bilateral meeting with Vice Chairman of China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA)

As part of the Fiji Governments focus on economic recovery post COVID-19, it was a timely meeting with the Chinese Aid arm of the Government of Peoples Republic of China to share and exchange information about Fiji Governments focus post COVID-19, priorities of the Fiji Government post COVID-19, seek progress on current projects funded by CIDCA in Fiji and also put on table Missions sectoral priorities with the focus of ensuring that projects are directly linked to Fiji Governments key strategic thrusts areas of Economic recovery, Public Health, Access to basic necessities, Food Security all working holistically to ensure that every Fijian is able to find hope to stand up again post COVID -19.

Jiangsu Provincial Government and Liaoning Provincial Government COVID-19 support

Tier 1 Strategic Provinces in China, Jiangsu Province and Liaoning Province, donated medical supplies to assist the Fijian Government in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. The support was conveyed to the Fiji Embassy and comprised of 20,000 pieces of masks equivalent to the value of RMB44, 000 and protective suits equivalent to the value of RMB68, 460.

China Executive Leadership Academic Program (CELAP) and Communist Party of China, International Department.

The International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC) in Beijing, and the China Executive Leadership Academy Pudong (CELAP) in Shanghai conducted a Virtual 3-day training for Senior Government of Fiji Civil Servants. The training focused on cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Masters Scholarships to Fiji Civil Servants-Belt and Road Initiative

Fiji was able to negotiate two applicants from Fiji for the Chinese Government Scholarship on Water Professionals - BRI Master's Program 2020, Hohai University, Nanjing. The Fiji students are currently undertaking online classes towards the programme.

Official duty-trip to Guangdong Province

Led by the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Zheng Zeguang with support provided by the Special Envoy for the China-Pacific Islands Forum Dialogue Wang Xuefeng, the fundamental objective of the visit was to enhance and deepen the cooperation and engagement between the Pacific Island Embassies in China and that of the Chinese Government's designated province for the South Pacific.

Hybrid-Signing of two Grant Arrangements with Indonesia

A Hybrid-Signing of two Grant Arrangements supporting Fiji's public health capacity to fight against COVID-19 and the Education sector Phase II Rehab-QVS was undertaken in Suva by the Fijian officials and the Indonesia Ambassador, H.E Ambassador Benyamin Carnadi.

Colombo Plan

Fiji got appointed as Member of the Standing Committee of the Colombo Plan Council on Administrative and Financial Matters for the new financial year 2020/2021 covering the period from 1st July 2020 until 30th June, 2021. Fiji's participation through the India High Commission, New Delhi, continued in the Governing Council Meetings of the Colombo Plan, all being held in virtual mode.

Meeting with the new Director General of the International Solar Alliance

Fiji met the New Director General of ISA Dr Ajay Mathur and the Director Resources, Ms. Fiona Bourne and discussed the Solarization of two Health Centre projects. ISA engaged the services of NTPC to solarize the two Health Centres in Daviqele Kadavu and Dakuibeqa, Beqa Island. ISA Solar Technology and Application Resource Centre (STAR -C) worked closely with SPREP to harness their projects and capacity building for the PICs and the alternative use of Hydro and Diesel Energy Solar. This is the preferred option because the energy source is always available and has cheap maintenance.

International Solar Alliance - First World Solar Technology Summit 2020

The International Solar Alliance hosted the First World Solar Technology Summit on a virtual platform, with a focus on new Technologies and Innovations in the field of Solar. Hon. RK Singh, Minister of Power, New and Renewable Energy and Skill Development, Government of India, and President, International Solar Alliance (ISA) Assembly inaugurated the Summit. Fiji participated in this summit which was also attended by Ministers from several ISA Member Countries, High level dignitaries, Nobel laureates, Senior Government Functionaries, Heads of Global Corporations, Financial, Multilateral and leading Scientific and Research Institutions, Civil Society, Foundations, Think-Tanks and other stakeholders. Agreements signed during the summit included the tripartite agreement between the New and Renewable Energy Ministry the World Bank and the ISA. The World Bank will fund the initiative and explore how energy from one part of the world when the sun is shining can be shared with another part of the world. Other agreements which ISA signed included the International Institute for Refrigeration, Paris, Global Green Growth Institute (Republic of Korea) and NTPC Limited.

TC- Yasa Assistance for Fiji

The Government of India supported the Fiji and provided for the immediate needs and basic items that can sustain the lives of those affected. This was after Fiji provided an update on the impact of TC Yasa, a Category 5 cyclone causing major damages to infrastructure, dwellings, farms and communications networks. A consignment of 6 tons of relief materials consisting of 1000 sleeping mats and dignity kits was airlifted from India and distributed to those affected by the cyclone.

India, Fiji Sign MoU for Cooperation in Agriculture

The Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar and his Fijian counterpart, Fiji's Minister of Agriculture, Waterways & Environment signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation in the field of Agriculture and allied sectors between India and Fiji in a virtual meeting. The MoU provided cooperation in rice, dairy, root crop, water, coconut, food processing, mechanization, animal husbandry, research, pest and disease, cultivation, value adding, marketing, post-harvesting and milling. Under the MoU, a Joint Working Group was established to set procedures and plan and recommend programs of cooperation towards achieving its aims. The Working Group will hold its meetings alternatively in India and Fiji once every two years.

Scholarships at Sharda University, India

Fifty students from Fiji would be eligible to receive scholarships and tuition fees in the Bachelors, Masters and PHD Programmes. The scholarships offered were at 10 at 100% tuition fees, 20 at 50% on tuition fees, 20 at 20 % on tuition fees. The scholarships were available in the disciplines of Engineering and technology, business studies, basic research, architecture and planning, humanities, law, education and allied health services. This materialized after various discussions by Fijian officials with the India Sharda University officials.

Completion of Training – Indonesia and Singapore

Two personals from the Fiji Police completed their training on policing and military cooperation. This was made possible through a MoU between the Indonesian National Police and the Fiji Police Force on cooperation to prevent and combat transnational crimes and enhancing capacity building.

8.2.5 Strategic Priority 4 – Public Diplomacy

50th Anniversary of the Fiji- Japan Relations

October was a notable month for the Fiji Embassy in Tokyo where it celebrated five decades of Independence and the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Fiji. The Mission hosted a Fiji Day celebration at the Fiji Embassy extending invitation to selected stakeholders from the Pacific Island Centre (PIC) Ambassadorial Group, JICA HQ, Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF), private sector, Embassy staff and family members.

Fiji become back-to-back rugby sevens Olympic champions

Fiji become back-to-back rugby sevens Olympic champions after the men's team sealed an emotional second consecutive Olympic gold medal with a 27-12 win over New Zealand at Tokyo Stadium. The Fijiana 7s team on the other hand made remarkable and inspiring achievements and gained bronze with a 21-12 win over Great Britain at Tokyo Stadium on 31 July 2021. Given the pandemic restrictions, the Fiji Embassy Team in Japan were represented at the Tokyo Stadium and marshalled the lung power to support the team.

8.2.6 Strategic Priority 5 – Peace and Security

Training of 2 officials under MoU

A Cooperation framework between the Fiji Navy and the Indonesian Navy was signed and implemented. The MOU focused on preventing and combating of transnational crimes and the enhancement of capacity building between the Fiji Police and the Indonesian Police on Drugs and Narcotics.

8.3 Oceania Bureau (Oceania & Americas)

8.3.1 Executive Summary

The Oceania Bureau provides policy guidance on bilateral, sub-regional and regional matters. This includes but is not limited to providing policy guidance and support to Fiji's Missions in Canberra, Wellington, Papua New Guinea and the Roving Ambassador's Division (RAD). At the regional and sub-regional level, the Bureau provides policy direction in terms of Fiji's engagement with the regional and sub-regional organizations such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Pacific Community (SPC), Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF), Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) as well as other Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies.

The 2020-2021 term was a productive year for the Bureau. With Fiji facing the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau was heavily involved in discussions on securing COVID-19 assistance from development partners and aid following Tropical Cyclones Yasa and Ana.

Increased interest in the region from non-traditional partners resulted in Fiji's traditional partners rethinking engagement with the region. The 'Vuvale Partnership' with Australia was established and discussions commenced on a 'Duavata Partnership' framework for the Fiji-New Zealand bilateral relations. The renewed frameworks of engagement were expected to build on the current bilateral relationship and take it to new heights. Within the wider Pacific region, Fiji continued to engage at the regional level through the regional and sub-regional organizations. Of significance was Fiji's engagement in the Special Leaders Retreat in February 2021 which deliberated on the appointment of the PIF Secretary General as well as the Political Dialogue Mechanism (PDM) which was established to address the political impasse.

8.3.2 Strategic Priority 1 – Global leadership

Engagement at the Pacific Islands Forum

The year was filled with engagements at the PIF, particularly given the appointment of the new Secretary General of the Forum and the political impasse that resulted from it. Fiji put forward its candidate for the Secretary General position and the Oceania Bureau worked closely with the RAD in coordinating the campaign strategy for Fiji's candidate. At the Special Leaders' Summit when the appointment was to be finalised, Fiji withdrew its candidate. This was done to keep the region united and the former Cook Islands Prime Minister, Hon. Henry Puna, was appointed as the Secretary General.

Fiji as a member of the Troika was actively engaged in the Political Dialogue Mechanism (PDM) process and focused on uniting the Forum family. This was after Micronesia threatened to pull out of the forum. The Bureau together with RAD, worked closely with the Forum Secretariat, providing policy support in order to secure an amicable resolution under the PDM. A Special Envoy was appointed by Fiji to lead the country's engagement in the PDM preparations as well as lead the country's preparations for the hosting of the PIF Leaders' Summit in 2022 and the celebration of the Forum's 50 years.

A key undertaking as well for Fiji's engagement with the PIF was the development of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. A Forum Officials Sub-Committee was established to oversee the work which Fiji co-chaired with Vanuatu. The Bureau worked closely with the RAD and were actively involved in the development of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent which was later endorsed when Fiji hosted the Forum Leaders' Summit in 2022.

Policy support was provided by RAD and the Oceania Bureau through the provision of policy advice, briefs, statements, preparation of meeting papers and agenda and the submission of meeting reports. The team also provided logistical support throughout all the PIF-related engagements through the coordination of meetings and events, liaising with relevant line agencies and ensuring appropriate logistics and venue set up for the various forums.

Another notable achievement was Fiji's ratification of the PIF 2005 Agreement. The Bureau provided the necessary policy support with the preparation of the cabinet paper, briefings between the Solicitor General's Office, the Ministry and the Forum Secretariat as well as presentations prepared for the Parliamentary committee.

Engagement at the Pacific Islands Development Forum

The Bureau worked closely with RAD and continued to be actively engaged at the various governance meetings for PIDF. This is especially at Senior-officials level where ongoing priorities of the PIDF were deliberated on, including the establishment of the Regional Development Trust Fund (RDTF), the review of the PIDF Charter and the PIDF Strategic Plan 2020-2030. In addition to this, work continued on the implementation of the Solarisation of the Heads of States Project in which Fiji was a beneficiary.

The Pacific Community (SPC)

The 50th meeting of the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA 50) was conducted virtually and RAD along with the Oceania Bureau provided the necessary policy support with Fiji's delegation being led by MFA. The meeting discussed the Director General's reporting on a year of COVID-19 related challenges and innovations; the progress and development of the SPC Strategic Plan 2021+, Transition Plan and Results Report of the SPC; programmes and budgets and the application of permanent observer status by the European Union. In addition to this, Fiji was part of the selection panel for the two Deputy Director Generals for the SPC that is the Deputy Director General Operations & Integration and the Deputy Director General Science & Capability. Successful appointments were made where the Deputy Director General Science and Capability was appointed and was based at the SPC Suva Office and the Deputy Director General Operations and Integration was appointed and based at the SPC Noumea Office.

Fiji - New Zealand High Level Consultations

The Oceania Bureau worked closely with the New Zealand High Commission to host the first-ever Fiji-New Zealand High-Level Consultations (HLC). Discussions were held with the New Zealand High Commission team on the details of the HLC, as well as with various Fijian agencies to coordinate priorities and requests for New Zealand assistance.

Running concurrently were discussions on the draft statement of partnership that would be the overarching framework that would guide the Fiji – New Zealand bilateral relationship. Five priority areas of cooperation were identified as the bedrock for Fiji and New Zealand’s cooperation and engagement elaborated in the Duavata Partnership. The pillars include: (i) Partnership, Democracy and Values; (ii) Economic Resilience; (iii) Security; (iv) Social Wellbeing; and (v) Climate Change and Disaster Resilience. The hosting of the first ever HLC and concluding negotiations on the Duavata Partnership was a major achievement for the Oceania Bureau. The focus thereafter moved towards the finalization of the Duavata Partnership for its eventual signing.

Establishment of Canada High Commission

As an indication of the growth in bilateral relations, Canada expressed keen interest in establishing a High Commission. The Oceania Bureau carried out the necessary policy work and Cabinet approved the submission for the establishment of the Canadian High Commission in Fiji.

8.3.3 Strategic Priority 3 – Socio-Economic Development

COVID-19 Recovery and Support

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau worked closely with partners, including Australia, New Zealand and the United States on urgent COVID-19 assistance. The Bureau as well as the RAD team were part of the Incident Management Team (IMT) that was established by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services. A COVID-19 donor coordination team was also established consisting of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services. As part of the work, a donor registry was set up and the team coordinated the efforts between agencies and development partners to secure vaccines, PPEs, medical supplies and medical equipment. In addition to this, the Bureau was heavily involved with the efforts to repatriate Fijian nationals living in the Oceania region that wanted to return to Fiji.

As an outcome, Australia committed to providing one million vaccines to Fiji. During the second outbreak of COVID-19 and within the span of eight weeks, Australia provided up to 320,000 vaccines. Furthermore the Australia and New Zealand Medical Assistance Teams were deployed to Fiji to work alongside the Ministry of Health and Medical Services counterparts in managing the COVID-19 outbreak. The timely assistance from Australia highlighted the strong and enduring bilateral relations between Fiji and other nations.

Aid Coordination and Disaster Recovery

Due to the changing weather patterns and the impacts of Climate Change, Fiji was impacted by an increased frequency of tropical cyclones. Within the span of two years coinciding with this report, Fiji faced two tropical cyclones, Tropical Cyclone Yasa in December 2020 and Tropical Cyclone Ana in January 2021. The Oceania Bureau worked closely with Fiji's traditional partners Australia and New Zealand in securing the necessary supplies and support for the country's recovery efforts. A donor coordination team was established in which MFA and the Bureau as well as the RAD were actively involved in securing the necessary assistance for Fiji. Briefings were held for the Diplomatic Corp and staff assisted with the post operations and donor coordination.

Assistance provided by partners include shelter kits, kitchen kits, tarpaulins, blankets, solar lights and hygiene kits. Additionally, assistance was provided towards the rebuilding of schools in Vanua Levu including supplies to support Energy Fiji Limited in their efforts to restore power in Vanua Levu. From the region, neighboring countries like French Polynesia also provided support to Fiji. The Tahiti Nui ship delivered the consignment of relief items provided by French Polynesia to assist Fiji's rebuilding and rehabilitation work in response to TC Yasa. The humanitarian assistance provided by French Polynesia was valued at more than FJD \$428, 000 and coordination was through MFA. The consignment comprised a total of 64 tons of relief supplies namely building materials and construction equipment and tools.

South-South Cooperation

The Bureau continued to look for ways to strengthen Fiji's bilateral cooperation with neighboring countries. An exchange was carried out in which Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBOS) loaned census tablets to the Vanuatu National Statistics Office (VNSO) to provide assistance as Vanuatu prepared for a census exercise. The Oceania Bureau worked closely with the Vanuatu High Commission and FBOS on the initiative. A Memorandum was also signed between FBOS and VNSO on the loan arrangements for the tablets. The arrangement was an example of south-south cooperation in which Fiji was able to provide assistance to neighboring countries in the region.

In addition, MFA facilitated the transfer of one of its officials on secondment to the sub-regional UN Office of South-South Cooperation in Suva to head the Office. The office which opened in 2019 was responsible for all matters relating to Oceania.

High Level Exchanges

Throughout the course of the year, the Oceania Bureau facilitated various congratulatory messages and national day messages conveying the assurances of Fiji's support and strengthened relations. These included messages to the Heads of Governments of Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.

In addition to this, following the successful re-election of Jacinda Ardern as Prime Minister of New Zealand in October 2020, a phone call was arranged between the two Prime Ministers to convey congratulations on the victory and identify opportunities for strengthened relations under her leadership.

There were also a number of high-level exchanges following the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Yasa in which Fiji responded to New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea.

On the passing of the former Prime Minister and a Grand Chief of Papua New Guinea, the Bureau worked closely with other divisions, the PIF Secretariat and the Papua New Guinea High Commission in coordinating a memorial Church service to commemorate his life and legacy. Fiji's Prime Minister delivered the eulogy, and the service was attended by members of the diplomatic corp and friends of Papua New Guinea. The occasion reaffirmed the longstanding relations between Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

During the height of the pandemic, the team and in particular, the Roving Ambassador's Division worked closely with the Protocol team and the Heads of the Resident Polynesian and Micronesian Diplomatic Missions in Suva to provide the required assistance to nationals who were affected by COVID-19.

On cases involving restricted border passages, the team worked closely with the various Governments concerned to pursue transits or passage on humanitarian grounds. The team also attended various meetings with the Permanent Secretary of Health and the Heads of Resident Diplomatic Missions for Micronesia and Polynesia on stranded Pacific Nationals who intended to transit through Fiji. Fiji acted as a transit hub for the region, it was important that open channels of movement were maintained for all nationals.

8.3.4 Strategic Priority 5 – Peace and Security

Fiji is committed to ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security. Fiji values its longstanding defence relationships with key partners. On 7 August 2024, Fiji and the U.S signed the International Military Education and Training (IMET) Agreement. The agreement enabled exchanges between Fiji and the U.S and in particular allowed Fiji to send officers and senior personnel to professional military education and leadership development courses in the United States. It was the first formal signing of such an agreement between the U.S. and Fiji since 1986 and reflected the shared commitment between Fiji and the U.S to defend peace, freedom, and stability in the Pacific. The Bureau assisted in the facilitation of the agreement following its official signing. Further to this, through the agreement, the Bureau facilitated Fiji's participation in the training opportunities and courses in the United States.

8.4 Protocol & Consular Division

8.4.1 Executive Summary

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Fiji through the Protocol and Consular Division plays a crucial role in administering the provisions of the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations (1961), the Vienna Conventions on Consular Relations (1963) and Fiji Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities Act (1971) to ensure the efficient functioning of Diplomatic Missions, Consulates, and their members within the country.

The Division is responsible for managing the administration processes for appointments of Fijian diplomatic and consular representatives overseas, as well as Fijian representatives to Inter-Governmental Organizations. This includes planning conferences and meetings hosted by the Ministry, as well as executing official visits at the Ministerial level. The Division also represents Fiji on the Inter-Agency Committee to plan and execute State, Official, and Working visits to the country, along with State and Official funerals.

Furthermore, the Division provides support to the Office of the Prime Minister in planning and executing state and national ceremonial events. Additionally, the team oversees the process of acquiring visas for officials traveling on government business and provides protocol guidance and assistance to Fiji's Missions, Ministries, Departments, and Agencies.

The Division also handles the notification process for courtesies to be extended locally and overseas to high-level officials traveling in an official capacity, as well as processes requests for the overfly/landing of state aircrafts and the entry of vessels in Fiji's Territorial waters for research, training, or humanitarian purposes.

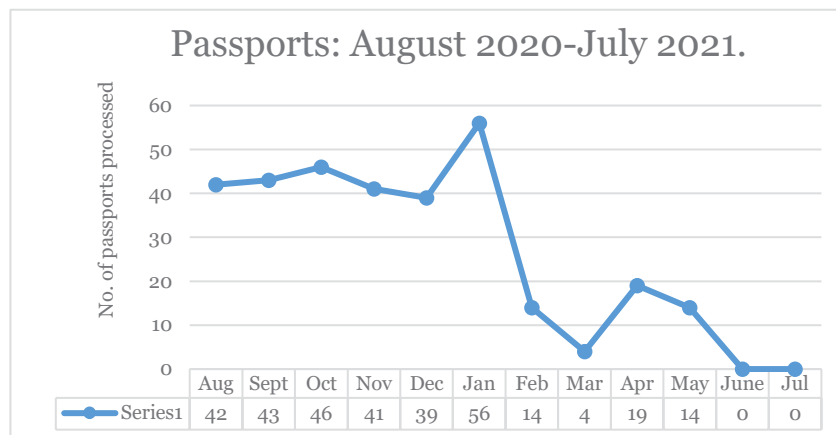
Moreover, it plans and coordinates the execution of incoming correspondence to pertinent Departments and other Ministries, and processes requests for the loan of flags of foreign countries while providing guidance on their use and display.

The primary role revolves in the timely provision of Protocol and Consular Services to all Fiji missions abroad, all resident and non- resident diplomatic missions and Honorary Consuls accredited to Fiji which entails:

- 10 Fiji Missions Abroad;
- 22 Diplomatic Missions in Suva;
- 20 Regional & International Organizations in Suva;
- 15 Diplomatic Missions in NZ accredited to Fiji;
- 114 Diplomatic Missions in Australia accredited to Fiji; and
- 18 Honorary Consuls based in Suva.

In addition, the Division provides support to the Israel and Singapore Ambassadors both operating from their respective capitals.

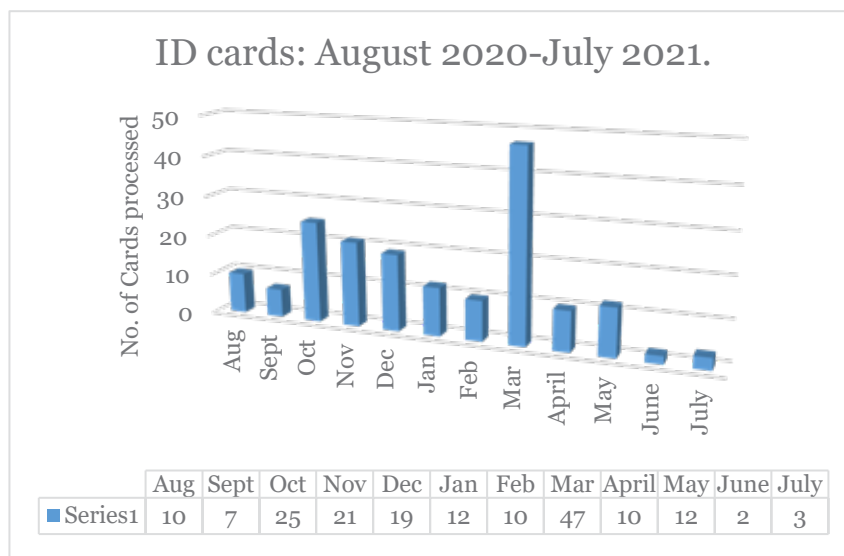
8.4.2 Administering Consular Privileges & Immunities



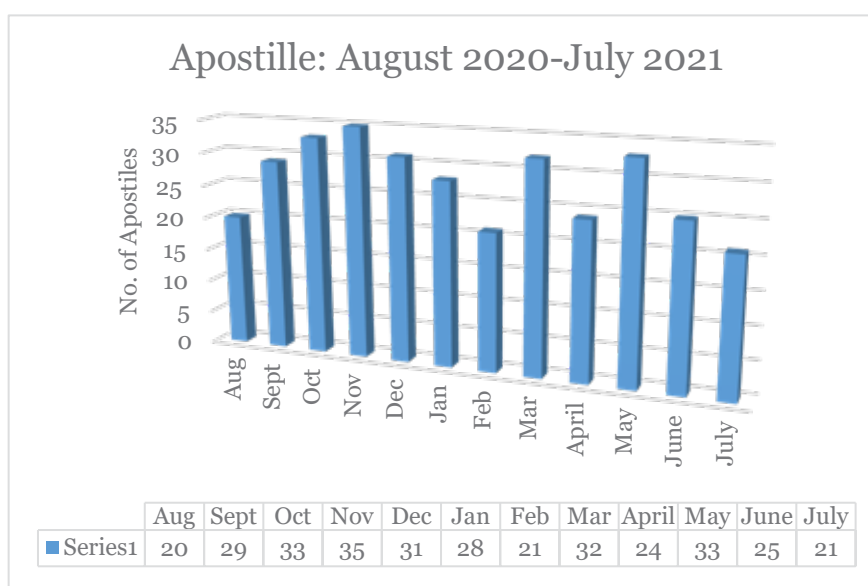
The Request to process passports by diplomats increased in January 2021 given that Fiji came out of the COVID – 19 restrictions and the diplomatic community restored travel plans that were shelved as a result of the lockdown.



The request for Duty Free purchases through the FA 608 forms by the Diplomatic corps averaged around 64 per month. A total of 773 applications for duty free purchases were received and facilitated in this financial year in strict compliance with the Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities (DPI) Act of 1971. The Division continues to thoroughly assess and scrutinize all duty-free requests in close collaboration with the Fiji Customs and Revenue Services.



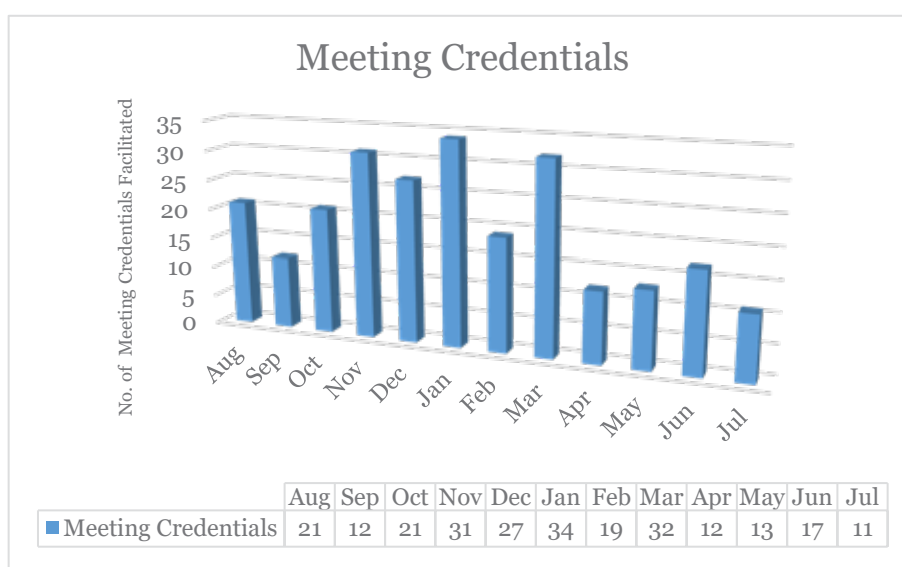
The request for ID cards is regarded as residence permits for their holders. The cards must be presented upon request whilst diplomats are in the country and must be returned to MFA prior to final departure from Fiji. Members of Diplomatic Corp, Consular Missions, and Office of International Organisations are required to apply for an ID with the MFA no more than two weeks after they have taken up their posts in the country.



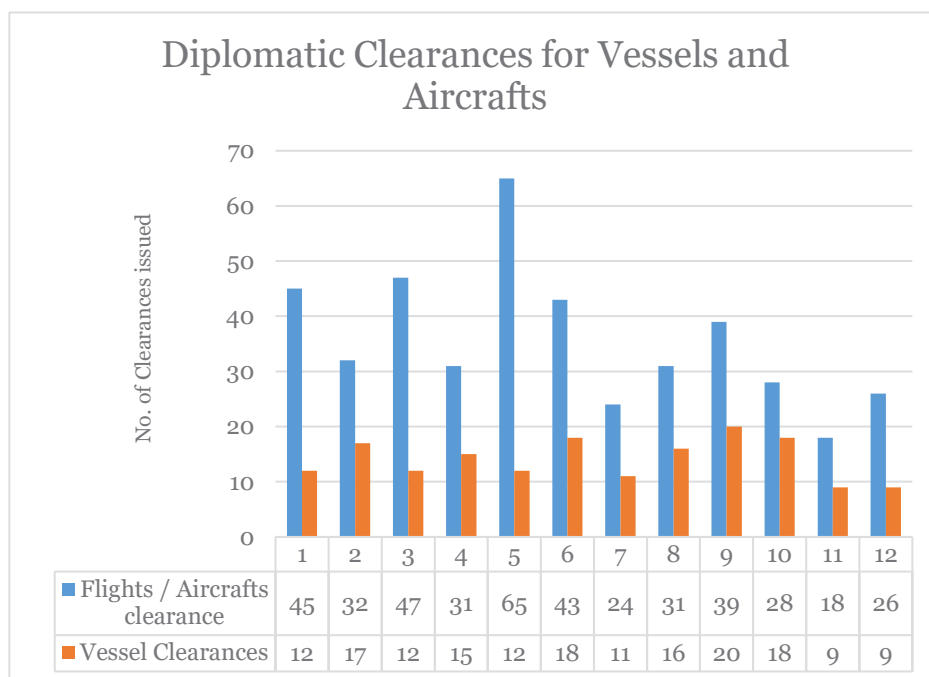
An Apostille certifies a document so countries in the 1961 Hague Convention will recognize it. In Protocol we are committed to providing this service to all intending to travel abroad or need to submit documents abroad for education, employment or legal reasons. The process of legalizing and authenticating public documents through an Apostille is a function that only MOFA is mandated by law to provide.



One-Way entry permit is issued to Diplomats who arrive to undertake paid employment in Fiji. At the end of their tenure, the diplomat organizes the exit and the permit together with the appropriate visa is rescinded upon departure.

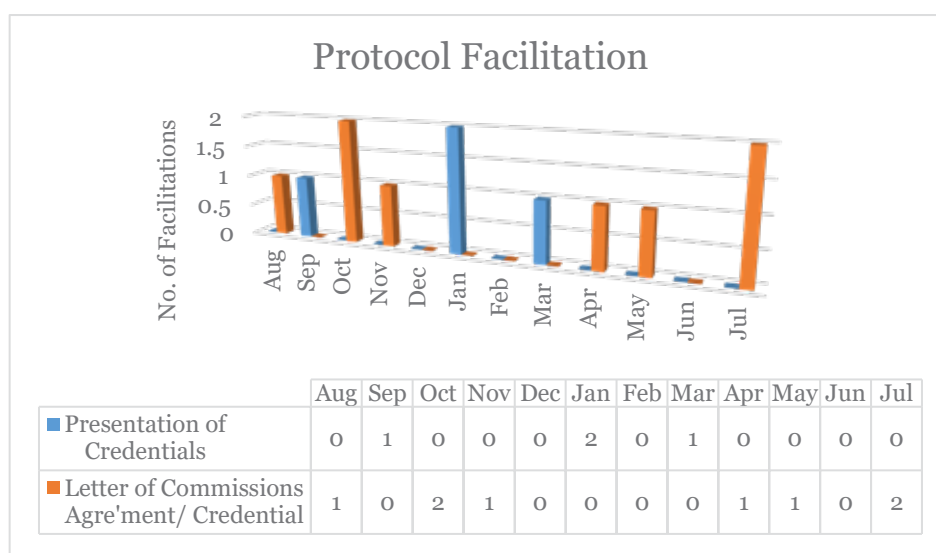


Preparations of meeting credentials is another function that is entrusted to the Protocol Division. The meeting credential is prepared, endorsed by the Prime Minister and conveyed to the meeting organisers. This endorsement provides the delegation with the mandate to negotiate, decide and endorse issues on behalf of the Government during the meeting.



This type of clearance ensures that the aircraft or marine vessel can pass through foreign airspace or territorial waters without encountering diplomatic or political obstacles.

The process of obtaining diplomatic clearance involves communication and coordination with the diplomatic missions or embassies of the countries in question. In this case, missions approach the Division to facilitate such requests.



Fiji noticed a significant drop in presentation of credentials due to the restrictions and this resulted in only 4 recorded for this reporting period.

Acknowledging a new ambassador with credentials is a significant formal and substantive ceremony for the Head of State of a nation. It is only after this ceremony that a new Ambassador is acknowledged as the official representative of their country.

The ceremony fully validates the authority of the new Ambassador and affirms recognition of the Country and Government that he or she represents. As a result, the presentation of credentials by an Ambassador is the same as the formation, maintenance, and fortification of a diplomatic alliance between two nations. The protocol surrounding the ceremony has great symbolic and practical significance.

8.5 Human Resources Division

8.5.1 Executive Summary

HR planning, recruitment and selection, contract management, reward and recognition, occupational health and safety, corporate social responsibility, training and development, and performance management are the key deliverables for the Human Resource Management team. The Division is an internal support service managing resources for the achievement of the Ministry's strategies and ensuring compliance with governance obligations and improving corporate policies, procedures and outcomes.

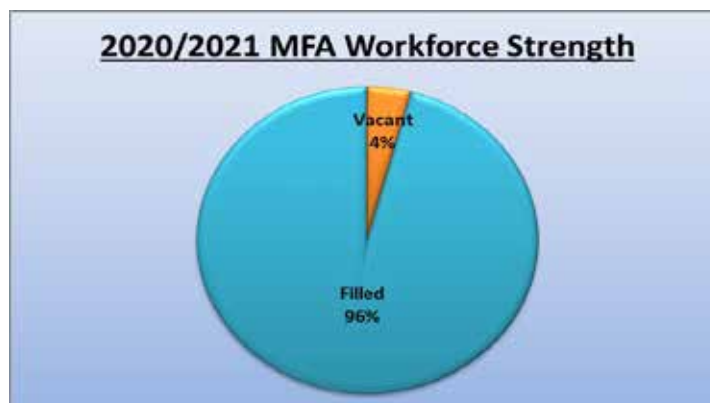
Given the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus during this period, HR played a crucial role in managing the response at organizational level where flexible working hours, e-mails and different virtual platforms became the new norm.

Key activities for the 2020/2021 fiscal year included; transitional arrangements to the Performance Management Framework for on-going performance requirements for contract renewals and performance appraisal and ensuring regulatory compliance with the Health and Safety at Work (General Workplace Conditions) (Amendment) Regulations 2021, which now states that it is mandatory for all civil servants to be vaccinated as a condition of employment to protect employers, employees, customers and the general public at workplaces from COVID-19.

8.5.2 Staff Establishment

Workforce Strength

The Ministry has an approved establishment of 121 with 116 positions substantively filled and 5 positions (Missions and HQ) vacant. The graph below illustrates the workforce strength for the Ministry for the year.



Out of the total establishment, 4% of the positions continued to be vacant in the 2020/2021 financial year.

The Ministry developed strategies to ensure that the service delivery to diverse customers were not disrupted or compromised due to the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. This brought about the introduction of flexible working arrangements such as Work from Home and rotating staff in and out of the office with the provision of transportation to maintain social distancing protocols. These protocols were also applied to officers working in the Fiji Missions abroad.

The table below illustrates the total number of staff employed by the Ministry at the end of the 2020/2021 Financial Year:

Division/ Mission	Gender		Vacant	Grand Total
	Female	Male		
Headquarters				
Executive Support Unit	4	2	0	6
Media & Communication Unit	1	3	0	4
Policy Research & Development Division	2	1	0	3
Protocol Division	5	5	1	11
Human Resources Division	8	4	0	12
Finance Division	8	5	0	13
Multilateral Division	8	3	0	11
Asia Division	3	4	2	9
Oceania Division	3	1	0	4
Missions				
Abu Dhabi Mission	0	3	0	3
Beijing Mission	1	2	0	3
Canberra	2	1	0	3
Geneva	2	3	0	5
Jakarta	0	3	0	3
London	2	1	0	3
New Delhi	0	3	0	3
New York	2	1	0	3
Roving Ambassador	2	1	1	4
Tokyo	1	2	0	3
Washington	0	1	0	1
Wellington	1	2	0	3
Government Wage Earners	1	9	1	11
Grand Total	56	60	5	121

Of the 116 filled positions, the Ministry had a workforce with 52% Males to 48% Females. The Ministry is an equal opportunity employer and committed to ensuring that initiatives and activities implemented have a good representation of both genders in the processing of vacant positions in future.

Recruitment & Selection

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs uses a fair and effective recruitment process governed by the principles set out in the Open Merit Recruitment and Selection (OMRS) Guideline to employ the right people with the required skillset for each of its job vacancies. The table below illustrates the different recruitment and selection activities undertaken throughout the financial year:

No	Type of Appointment	Total
1	Acting Appointment	11
2	Extension of Acting Appointment	5

No	Type of Appointment	Total
3	New Appointment	1
4	Renewal of Contracts	53
5	Extension of Contract	8
6	End of Contract	4
7	Deemed Resignation	2
8	Resignation	3
9	End of Diplomatic Posting	12
10	Leave without pay	1
11	Retirement	2
12	Termination	8
13	Sideways Transfer	13
14	Secondment on Leave Without Pay	1
15	Rescindment of Posting	1
16	Extension of Secondment	1
Total		126

In this financial year, the Ministry renewed a large number of contract appointments. This is in line with the Performance Management Framework for on-going performance requirements for contract renewals and performance appraisal according to operational plan outcomes.

Training & Development

With the lockdown and establishment of containment areas during the COVID-19 pandemic in Fiji, there had been 14 learning and development opportunities available to staff including both local and overseas training. There was a high growth and adoption of virtual online learning which has given a rise to future training opportunities for staff.

The Ministry is committed towards providing a range of short-term learning and development opportunities which is focused on specific capability development needs. The table below shows the types of training against the number of staff attending.

No	Type of Training	Total
1	Overseas	2
2	Reform	1
3	In-house	1
4	Local	10
Total		14

Fiji National University (NTPC) Levy and Grants Compliance

In compliance with the FNU Amendment Act 2010 and FNU Levy Order, all employers in Fiji are required to register with Fiji National University Levy Department and facilitate the payment of the bi-annual levy.

The 1 % Levy imposed on Gross Emoluments for all staff was paid bi-annually to Fiji National University Levy and Grants Department. The assessments are done annually to determine the points and refunds if the Ministry is fully compliant with the training assessment criteria. Summarized below is the assessment point of the Ministry for the year 2020.

Year	Points
2020	60.5

The Ministry encourages staff to attend training programs that addresses competency gaps to ensure that they perform to the optimum. The workforce learning and growth shows the commitment of the Ministry towards its workforce investment through human resource development and capacity building which leads to high performance rates.

8.5.3 Obituary

Farewell for the Late Ms. Naitoko Baleisuva Tuiloma

A Fijian Government delegation presented the Ministry's i-reguregu for one of the longest-serving staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the late Naitoko Tokatokarua Baleisuva, who had a distinguished career of more than 30 years in the civil service.

The funeral service was held at the Centenary Methodist Church in Suva and while delivering the eulogy on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Amena Yauvoli stated that the late Ms. Naitoko had demonstrated great professionalism and dedication as a civil servant and diplomat. Ambassador Yauvoli further added that the late Ms. Baleisuva served her country well and has left a proud legacy. He also added that Baleisuva was a jovial and loving person and touched many hearts. The Ambassador further thanked the family of Ms. Naitoko for raising and grooming such a beautiful and great person.

Late Ms. Baleisuva began her career in the civil service in the 1990s and worked at several Ministries including the Public Service Commission and the Judicial Department and finally the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2008, late Ms. Naitoko joined MFA when she was appointed as Private Secretary to the then Ambassador at Large and later she was posted as Private Secretary to the Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Republic of Fiji in Belgium. In that capacity she served three Head of Missions, (Ambassador Ratu Seremaia Tui Cavuilati, the late Ambassador Peceli Vocea and Ambassador Deo Sharan).

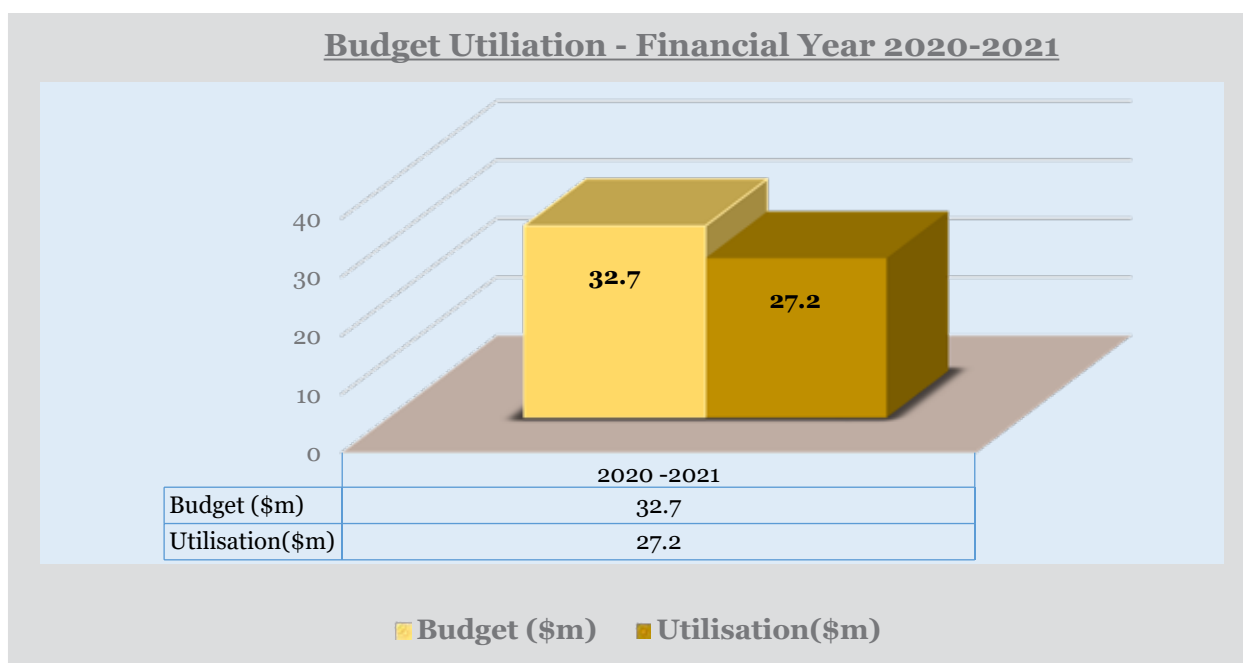
8.6 Finance Division

Executive Summary

The Division provides prudent management of financial resources and guarantees that all expenditures and revenue collections are in compliance with the relevant provisions outlined under the Finance Instructions, Finance Manual (2019), and the Fiji Overseas Service Regulations (FOSR). The Division also ensures the efficient and effective updating of all transactions into the Financial Management Information System (FMIS) for Government.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Budget Overview for Financial Year 2020-2021

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had received a total budget of \$32.7 million for the 2020-2021 financial year compared to \$36.9 million for 2019-2020 financial year. The total budget utilization for the year ended 31st July 2021 was at 83%. The Column Chart below illustrates the financial expenditure summary for 2020/2021 fiscal year:



Approximately 72 per cent of the Ministry's budget is allocated towards its 'off-shore' operations through the Overseas Missions and the remaining 28 per cent is for its on-shore operation or Headquarters.

Asset Management

Annual Board of Survey (BOS)

The BOS for the financial year 2020-2021 was conducted at Headquarters and in the Fiji Missions abroad.

The following locations were surveyed:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1. Abu Dhabi | |
| 2. Beijing | 7. New Delhi |
| 3. Canberra | 8. New York |
| 4. Geneva | 9. Tokyo |
| 5. Jakarta | 10. Wellington |
| 6. London | 11. Headquarters-Suva and Nadi office. |

The 2020-2021 BOS report was approved and received from the Ministry of Finance within its financial year. The items written off had a total value of \$1,552,794.

Vehicle and Transport

A total of 11 vehicles were engaged to facilitate the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the 2020-2021 financial year.

One was designated for the Deputy Secretary and the remaining ten (10) were used for Ministry staff and VIP operation(s).

The total fuel consumption for 2020-2021 financial year was \$74,170 and repair and maintenance cost was \$54,695 which totals \$170,390.

Challenges

A major challenge for the Ministry is the management of its off-shore (Overseas Missions) component of the budget, which accounts for over 74% of the Ministry's budget. Ensuring better and efficient financial practices and overall compliance remains a challenge in our effort to achieve prudent management of all financial resources allocated to the Ministry.

Way Forward

Better coordination between Headquarters and each of our diplomatic Missions abroad is critical for the effective management of the Ministry's financial resources. The Ministry, through its Finance team, is exploring options that will facilitate the adoption of electronic platforms as a practical means of doing business. Apart from encouraging the use of electronic platforms, strengthening of the Ministry's internal audit mechanism is critical in supporting the Ministry's effort of an improved compliance and adherence to financial policies and regulations.

9.0 Financial Statement for the Year Ended 31 July 2021



File: 347

31 October 2022

Yogesh Karan
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
iTaukei Trust Fund Complex
NASESE

Dear Mr Karan

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AGENCY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - 31 JULY 2021

The financial statements audit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the year ended 31 July 2021 has been completed.

The audited financial statements together with the final management letter and management representation letter are forwarded for signing. Please return the signed accounts and the management representation letter at your earliest to facilitate the issue of the independent audit report on them.

Should you require any clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Asele Saunivalu
for **ACTING AUDITOR-GENERAL**

Encl.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2021

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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Date: 08 November 2022

File No: 347

The Auditor General
Office of the Auditor General
P. O. Box 2214
Government Buildings
SUVA

Dear Sir,

This management representation letter is provided in connection with the audit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Financial Statements and Appropriation Statement for the year ended 31 July 2021 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of (or 'present fairly', in all material aspects) the financial position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as of 31 July 2021 and of the results of its operations for the year ended in accordance with, Financial Management Act 2004 and Finance Instructions 2010.

We confirm to the best of our knowledge and belief, the following representations:

General

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Financial Management Act and Finance Instructions 2010.
2. We acknowledge our responsibility for keeping proper accounts and records, and preparation of reconciliation and returns.
3. There have been no irregularities involving management or employees who have a significant role in the accounting and internal control systems or that could have a material effect on the financial statements except for those matters raised in the management letter.
4. We have made available to you all books of account and supporting documentation and minutes of all meetings held in 2021.
5. The Ministry has complied with all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance. There has been no non-compliance with requirements of regulatory provisions that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance.
6. We acknowledge our responsibility to ensure that the financial statements are free of material misstatements, including omissions.
7. We have taken note of the following "Other Matter" raised in the Auditors Report:
An unreconciled variance of \$3,990,195 exists between the FMIS general ledger balance of \$7,760,986 and the accumulated Overseas Mission's bank reconciliation balance of \$3,770,791. The Ministry is working with the Ministry of Economy to rectify and appropriately the unreconciled variances.

Internal Controls

8. Adequate systems of internal controls exist to ensure that:

- (a) All material transactions are recorded in the accounting records and these have been reflected in the reconciliation and returns prepared by the Ministry.
- (b) No material irregularities (fraud or misappropriation) have occurred involving management, employee or external parties.

We also acknowledge that we are responsible for the design and implementation of internal control to prevent and detect fraud and error. We have established and maintained an adequate internal control structure to facilitate the preparation of reliable financial statements, and adequate financial records have been maintained. There are no material transactions that have not been properly recorded in the accounting records underlying the financial statements.

Internal Audit

- 9. The Ministry does not have an internal audit function however management will be addressing any shortcomings reported by the Internal Audit and Good Governance Division of Ministry of Economy.

Fixed Assets and Commitments

- 10. All fixed assets have been properly recorded and accounted for and due care has been taken on its use. Other properties of the Ministry have been safeguarded against loss or damage. All commitments and liabilities have been properly accounted for in the accounting records.

Fraud or suspected fraud

- 11. There have been no irregularities involving management or employees who have a significant role in the accounting and internal control systems or others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.
- 12. There have been no allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting materially the Ministry's financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

Compliance with legislation and other requirements

- 13. We are not aware of any breaches or possible breaches of any relevant legislation, contracts or agreements except for those matters raised in the management letter.
- 14. In respect of the operations during the year, Parliament and other Government directives have been complied with.
- 15. There have been no instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations involving management or employees who have a significant role in internal control.
- 16. There have been no communications from regulatory agencies concerning non-compliance with, or deficiencies in, financial reporting practices that could have a material effect on the financial statements.
- 17. There are no violations or possible violations of laws or regulations the effects of which should be considered for disclosure in the financial statements or as basis for recording as an expense.

Financial records, data and information

- 18. We have made available to you:
 - (a) All financial records and related data, other information, explanations and assistance necessary for the conduct of the audit, except for those matters raised in the management letter;
 - (b) Access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;

- (c) Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit;
- (d) Unrestricted access to persons within the Ministry from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence; and
- (e) Minutes of all meetings, where minutes have not been prepared for recent meeting, a summary of decisions taken at those meetings has not been made available to you.

Contractual agreements

19. The Ministry has complied with all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance. There has been no non-compliance with requirements of regulatory authorities that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance.

Receivables and Prepayments

20. The Ministry has satisfactorily recorded all Debtors in a Register within the FMIS or an accounts receivable ledger.
21. The Ministry has promptly followed up on overdue in accordance with the debt recovery procedures in the Finance Manual.
22. The Ministry has satisfactorily submitted a quarterly report on outstanding and overdue debts to the Ministry of Economy.

Board of Survey

23. The Ministry has satisfactorily completed an annual board of survey to verify the existence and condition of assets recorded on the asset register.
24. The Ministry has satisfactorily investigated all assets which are not accounted for in the board of survey and has determined the appropriate recovery or write-off action.

FNPF and Tax Deductions

25. The calculation of the Value Added Tax (VAT) and Income Tax (PAYE) has been in accordance with the VAT Decree and the Income Tax Act, respectively. Deductions as required by the Fiji National Provident Fund Act have been made and paid to the relevant authorities. Unpaid amounts are kept in a Trust Account.

We confirm that the above representations are made on the basis of adequate enquiries of management and staff (and where appropriate, inspection of evidence) sufficient to satisfy ourselves that we can properly make each of the above representations to you.

Yours sincerely,



Yogesh Karan
Permanent Secretary



Josefa Tuima
Director Finance

Date: 10/4/22

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2021**

We certify that these financial statements:

- (a) fairly reflect the financial operations and performance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the year ended 31 July 2021; and
- (b) have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Financial Management Act 2004 and Finance Instructions 2010.



Yogesh Jitendra Karan
Permanent Secretary



Josefa Tuima
Director Finance

Date:

19/11/22

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2021**

	Notes	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
RECEIPTS			
State Revenue			
Operating Revenue		686	4,801
Total State Revenue		<u>686</u>	<u>4,801</u>
Agency Revenue			
Miscellaneous Revenue		619,755	39,445
Revenue Admin Fees		197,502	140,195
Total Agency Revenue		<u>817,257</u>	<u>179,640</u>
TOTAL RECEIPTS	3 (a)	<u>817,943</u>	<u>184,441</u>
EXPENDITURE			
Operating Expenditure			
Established Staff		10,182,980	12,890,975
Government Wage Earners		2,477,708	3,537,754
Travel & Communication		765,347	2,123,333
Maintenance & Operations		7,616,148	10,057,758
Purchase of Goods & Services		856,953	1,259,872
Operating Grants & Transfers		3,733,908	4,626,059
Special Expenditure		2,247,462	703,076
Total Operating Expenditure		<u>27,880,506</u>	<u>35,198,827</u>
Capital Expenditure			
Capital Construction		57,320	-
Total Capital Expenditure		<u>57,320</u>	<u>-</u>
Value Added Tax		116,688	131,212
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	3 (b)	<u>28,054,514</u>	<u>35,330,039</u>

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROPRIATION STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2021

SEG	Item	Budget Estimate (\$)	Appropriation Changes (\$) Note 5	Revised Estimate (\$) a	Actual Expenditure (\$) b	Carry Over (\$)	Lapsed Appropriation (\$) Note 4 (a-b)
	Operating Expenditure						
1	Established Staff	10,944,413	(517,250)	10,427,163	10,182,980	—	244,183
2	Government Wage Earners	2,785,350	(219,345)	2,566,005	2,477,708	—	88,297
3	Travel & Communication	970,000	55,261	1,025,261	765,347	—	259,914
4	Maintenance & Operations	7,830,270	497,043	8,327,313	7,616,148	—	711,165
5	Purchase of Goods & Services	870,683	263,265	1,133,948	856,953	—	276,995
6	Operating Grants & Transfers	5,489,253	—	5,489,253	3,733,908	—	1,755,345
7	Special Expenditure	2,490,000	(78,974)	2,411,026	2,247,462	—	163,564
	Total Operating Expenditure	31,379,969	—	31,379,969	27,880,506	—	3,499,463
	Capital Expenditure						
8	Capital Construction	200,000	—	200,000	57,320	—	142,680
9	Capital Purchase	—	—	—	—	—	—
10	Capital Grants & Transfer	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Total Capital Expenditure	200,000	—	200,000	57,320	—	142,680
13	Value Added Tax	1,112,480	—	1,112,480	116,688	—	995,792
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	32,692,449	—	32,692,449	28,054,514	—	4,637,935

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

STATEMENT OF LOSSES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2021

Loss of Money

There was no loss of money recorded for the year ended 31 July 2021.

Loss of Revenue

There was no loss of revenue recorded for the year ended 31 July 2021

Loss of Fixed Assets

There was no loss of fixed assets recorded for the year ended 31 July 2021. However, the following items worth \$1,552,794 have been written off following the Ministry's Board of Survey for the year ending 31st July 2021.

Fixed Asset Category	Amount (\$)
Motor Vehicles	267,933
Office Equipment	831,526
Furniture & Fittings	453,335
Total	1,552,794

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2021

NOTE 1: REPORTING ENTITY

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs promotes Fijian interests in other nations and on the world stage. This includes a broad range of activities from providing consular services to Fijians living overseas to organising high level visits to Fiji.

The Ministry develops and carries out Fiji's foreign policy and manages Fiji's relationships with other nations and with multi-national and sub-regional organizations like the United Nations and the Melanesian Spearhead Group. The Ministry is focused on securing the maximum benefits for Fiji from these relationships.

NOTE 2: STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

(a) Basis of Accounting / Presentation

In accordance with Government accounting policies, the financial statements of the Ministry is prepared under the cash basis of accounting. All payments related to purchases of fixed assets have been expensed.

The financial statements are presented in accordance with the Financial Management Act 2004 and the requirements of Section 71(1) of the Finance Instructions 2010. The preparation and presentation of a Statement of Assets and Liabilities is not required under the current Government policies.

(b) Accounting for Value Added Tax (VAT)

All expenses and revenue are VAT exclusive. The Ministry on a monthly basis takes out VAT output on total money received for expenditure from Ministry of Economy. VAT input on the other hand is claimed on payments made to the suppliers and sub-contractors for expenses incurred.

The VAT payment as per the Statement of Receipts and Expenditures relates to VAT input claimed on payments made to the suppliers and sub-contractors for expenses incurred and VAT payments to FRCS. Actual amount paid to FRCS during the year represent the difference between VAT Output and VAT Input.

(c) Comparative Figures

Where necessary, amounts relating to prior years have been reclassified to facilitate comparison and achieve consistency in disclosure with current year amounts.

(d) Revenue Recognition

Revenue is recognised when cash is actually received by the Ministry.

Administration Fees is charged by the Overseas Missions for providing services such as processing of passports and visas, birth certificates and police clearance. All fees are retained by the Ministry; however the normal fees and charges for the above services are posted to the respective agencies FMIS general ledger.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (continued...) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2021

NOTE 3: SIGNIFICANT VARIATIONS

- (a) The Total Revenue collected increased by \$633,502 or 343% in year 2021 when compared to 2020. The increase was mainly attributed to the number of sale of assets from the closure of five (5) Missions. The five (5) closed Missions are Fiji Embassy Brussels, Fiji High Commission Papua New Guinea, Fiji High Commission Kuala Lumpur, Fiji Embassy Washington and Fiji Embassy Seoul.
- (b) The Total Expenditure decreased by \$7,275,525 or 21% in year 2021 as compared to 2020. The decrease was caused by the effects of COVID-19 which further contributed to low economic activities throughout the globe and the reduction of Ministry's Annual Budget from \$36,918,100 in financial year 2019-2020 to \$32,692,449 for financial year 2020-2021.

NOTE 4: UNUTILISED BUDGET

Significant unutilised budget for the financial year ended 31 July 2021 are as follows:

Expenditure	Revised Budget (\$)	Actual Expenditure (\$)	Savings (\$)	Percentage Savings (%)
Maintenance & Operations	8,327,313	7,616,148	711,165	9%
Operating Grants & Transfers	5,489,253	3,733,908	1,755,345	32%
Capital Construction	200,000	57,320	142,680	71%
Value Added Tax	1,112,480	116,688	995,792	90%

SEG 4

From the overall Ministry's SEG 4 allocations, majority of the savings were from running expenses and office and building rental of various missions. These savings have occurred due to the reduced activities during the period of Covid 19 pandemic. Also for Rental savings, Fiji Embassy Indonesia's was reduced due to resignation of First Secretary. In other Missions, Budget loading was not accurately distributed upon commencement of financial year 2021.

SEG 6

Due to the lack of economic activities around the globe caused by the recent Covid 19 pandemic, the process of payment of all Government contributions under SEG 6 was not fully accommodated. This contributed to savings of \$1,755,345 in overall SEG 6 allocations.

SEG 8

The lack of movement and economic activities around the globe due to recent Covid 19 pandemic has caused the stall of refurbishment in most of our Fiji Missions abroad. This is contributed to savings of around \$142,680 in SEG 8 allocation.

SEG 13

The Ministry saved a total sum of \$995,792 from the Value Added Tax (VAT) allocation. This savings were attributed to the lack of economic activities around the globe which are anticipated to be caused by the effects of Covid-19 pandemic.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (continued...) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2021

NOTE 5: APPROPRIATION CHANGES

There were no redeployments of the Ministry's funds during the year. In 2020/2021, the following virements were processed as follows:

Virement Number	From	Amount (\$)	To	Amount (\$)	Approved by
DV0801	SEG 1	665,200	SEG 1	648,200	Permanent Secretary for Economy
	SEG 2	15,000	SEG 2	32,000	
V08001	SEG 1	536,350	SEG 3	174,261	Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs
	SEG 2	200,245	SEG 4	1,133,687	
	SEG 3	119,000	SEG 5	323,265	
	SEG 4	636,644			
	SEG 5	60,000			
	SEG 7	78,974			
V08002	SEG 1	63,550	SEG 1	99,650	Permanent Secretary for Economy
	SEG 2	45,000	SEG 2	8,900	

NOTE 6: BANK ACCOUNTS MAINTAINED BY MISSIONS

For the year ending 31 July 2021, the Ministry maintained a total of ten (10) Fiji Missions with thirteen (13) overseas bank accounts. Three (3) Missions have two (2) bank accounts each namely Fiji Embassy Beijing, Fiji Embassy Jakarta and Fiji High Commission in New Delhi. The remaining seven (7) Missions :- Fiji Embassy Abu Dhabi, Fiji High Commission Canberra, Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations and Other International Organization (PRUNOG) Geneva, Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations- New York, Fiji Embassy Tokyo, Fiji High Commission London, Fiji High Commission Wellington have one(1) bank account each.

As at 31 July 2021, there was a balance of \$7,760,986 recorded in the FMIS general ledger SAG 51.

