

Statement by H.E. Mr. Isikia Savua
Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations during the High Level
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Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for organizing CSD12 in a way that allows the thematic issues of water, sanitation and human settlement to be thoroughly addressed. We support the holistic approach to the issues to strengthen the focus of inter-dependability among them. However, the three are integral components of daily activities happening together as a single process. It is therefore important that a balance be found when addressing the three areas.

In Fiji, increasing pressure is being placed on water supply to satisfy its 800,000 population. This is exacerbated by urbanization and the mushrooming squatter settlements. Recent statistics show that about 82,000 people live in 182 squatter settlements with an average size of six per family.

Past water development projects have concentrated on the upgrading or extension of existing water supply infrastructure. This supply driven approach is very costly for both the donor and the recipient country and has not resulted in safe water supply for the bigger urban centers in most of the Pacific Islands.

Most water supply systems operate at the end of collapse and, contrary to common knowledge, the reason is usually not the insufficiency of water but as a consequence of the water supply delivery systems in the region losing more water through leakage and wastage than what they actually deliver to customers. We are working through our regional organizations towards strengthening our integrated water resources strategies and plans.

CSD12's focus on partnership between developed and developing countries hopefully carries with it the promise of realizing the goals of Agenda 21, MDG, JPOI, the Monterrey Consensus and of importance to SIDS to monitor the sustainable development of BPOA+10.

Fiji has always advocated trade as the engine of sustained growth and recognizes water security as absolutely vital to underpin our national opportunities to enter into a successful trading regime. Deepening of market access for higher volume of export is an essential priority to fulfill the pillars of sustainable development. In this regard, while aid provides a leg up, continued reliance on aid can result in a handout mentality and development paralysis. In terms of monitoring performance, we look forward to using the new Environmental Vulnerability Index developed for global application to monitor our growth.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.