

Master .

Fiji (4)

Mr Chairman

Since this is the first time I am taking the floor, please allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chair. My delegation is confident that with your leadership and guidance, we should be able to successfully complete this meeting.

Mr. Chairman, the Fijian Government has placed some emphasis on CRVS. This is driven by its general intent at a universal level – that everyone should be counted. In this regard, our Government has been a part of the Regional Steering Group here with ESCAP and Pacific sub-regional initiative through the Brisbane Accord Group, which oversees the implementation of the Pacific CRVS Action Plan. On the national level, the Fijian Government has a CRVS Steering Group led by our Ministry of Health and includes the key relevant agencies such as the Ministry of Justice and the Bureau of Statistics Office. So we have been fortunate that our work is supported by a political commitment. We are encouraging our Government to underscore this commitment by allocating the resources needed to effectively carry out our work.

Since the inception of our Steering Group in 2012, we have made great strides. Our collaboration has seen the gradual removal of barriers that used to prevent us from accessing and collecting important data. For example, our Ministry of Health now shares its data with key agencies for registration purposes, covering all aspects of it. This year, our Government granted an amnesty period for those who have not registered the birth of their children by waiving the penalty for late registration; this resulted in an increase in registration. We are trying to address how we can capture other vital statistics to enhance our civil registration process. We are also trying to address the influx of foreigners into our country because Fiji has been opening up its borders in the recent past. A major milestone that Fiji has achieved, after two years of being involved in this work, was the publishing of our best practices and experience with the University of Queensland working papers as our contribution to **Strengthening CRVS systems in the Pacific**. Through this,

Fiji has shown that with the appropriate resolve and determined commitment, we can reduce the gaps in CRVS.

Mr. Chairman, Fiji contributed to the formulation of the draft regional action framework on CRVS that will be discussed during this meeting. It is a progressive document which will facilitate a multiple stakeholder approach to enable Governments to achieve the desired shared results. We are, therefore, fully supportive of the Secretariat's work in getting this document endorsed at this meeting, and its passage to the relevant forums deemed necessary.

I thank you.