



STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE

Consolidated Review Report of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji 2019-2020 and 2020-2022 Annual Reports



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
Parliamentary Paper No. 24 of 2025

March 2025

Published and Printed by the Department of Legislature, Parliament House, SUVA

Table of Contents

Acronyms	3
Chairperson’s Foreword	4
1.0 Committee Remit and Composition	6
1.1 Committee Secretariat Team	7
2.0 Background and Terms of Reference	7
2.1 Procedure and Program	7
3.0 Committee Deliberation and Analysis	8
3.1 Introduction	8
3.2 Summary of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji 2019-2020 and 2020-2022 Annual Reports	8
3.3 Committee Findings	14
4.0 Sustainable Development Goals	17
4.1 Gender Equality in Parliamentary Scrutiny	17
5.0 Conclusion	18
6.0 Committee Members’ Signatures	19
7.0 Annexure	20

Acronyms

Acronyms

CPA	-	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
ITC	-	Information Technology and Computing Services
KMI	-	Knowledge Management Initiative
SCFAD	-	Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
MP	-	Members of Parliament
FPSP	-	Fiji Parliament Support Project
MLTC	-	Multi-language Translations and Captioning

Chairperson's Foreword

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (Committee) hereby presents to Parliament the Consolidated Review Report of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji's 2019-2020 and 2020-2022 Annual Reports.

The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji (Parliament) is the country's legislative body, operating under the principles of the Westminster Parliamentary System and guided by the 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji. Parliament is a unicameral legislature, consisting of 51 members following the 2018 general election and 55 members after the 2022 general election. According to Section 46(1) of the Constitution, Parliament holds the authority and power to make laws for the State, which is exercised through the passage of Bills and their assent by the President.

Parliament serves as the voice of the Fijian people, responsible for passing laws to ensure public safety, promote economic opportunity, guarantee equality under the law, provide essential administrative services, and ensure the education, health, and welfare of all citizens. It also oversees the operations of the Government and holds it accountable.

The Committee was referred the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji 2020-2022 Annual Report on 6 December 2024 and the 2019-2020 Annual Report on 29 January 2025. This referral was made in accordance with SO 38 (2), whereby the Committee was tasked with investigating the contents of the reports and presenting a report to Parliament at a future Sitting. While this report falls outside the usual scope of the Committee's mandate, the referral was made to assist with managing the workload of other Standing Committees.

The Committee hosted a face-to-face public submission (talanoa session) from the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji on 14 January 2025. The session was broadcast live on the Walesi Parliament Television Channel and streamed on the Parliament Facebook page.

This report includes six (6) recommendations for consideration by the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General of Parliament and the staff for their unwavering support during this review. I also thank the members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence for their efforts in compiling this bipartisan report, as well as the Secretariat for their invaluable support.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I hereby submit this report to Parliament.



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson

Recommendations

- 1.0 The Committee is of the view that Parliament needs to review its Civic Education Strategy to utilize the Parliament TV Channel and social media platforms to educate the general public. Parliament to consider having short videos, snippets, and children’s educational programs on the works of Parliament. The Committee suggests that Parliament should also undertake a survey on the effectiveness of these programmes (*refer to paragraph 3.3.1*).
- 2.0 The Committee recommends that there needs to be adequate public engagement via notification to the general public and key stakeholders on the schedule of public submissions/consultations to be undertaken by Committees. This would allow more active users and interactions on these platforms (*refer to paragraph 3.3.2*).
- 3.0 The Committee is concerned that the majority of the Parliamentary Tours to Parliament involve village communities. It was noted that for these groups, understanding English can be challenging, as it may be spoken at a level they may not often use. The concern highlights the importance of ensuring that communication is accessible to all visitors, especially those for whom English is not the primary language (*refer to paragraph 3.3.3*).
- 4.0 The Committee recommends that due consideration be given to the establishment of a Parliamentary Legal Counsel (*refer to paragraph 3.3.4*).
- 5.0 The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Finance be advised to consider other options such as auctioning the old furniture or donating it to schools or charitable organizations. This would help maintain a clean and safe environment in Parliament while ensuring that the items are put to good use elsewhere (*refer to paragraph 3.3.6*).
- 6.0 The Committee noted that in terms of performance management system, the Parliament had highlighted that they continue to use MyAPA mechanism to assess and evaluate the performance of staff. However, the Committee is concerned that Parliament has chosen not to align or benchmark its assessment process with the Ministry of Civil Service. The Committee recommends that in order to address staff retention, that proper mechanisms be in place to assess and reward (bonuses/increments) staff accordingly based on their performance (*refer to paragraph 3.3.9*).

1.0 Committee Remit and Composition

Under Standing Order 109(2)(e) the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence is mandated to look into matters related to Fiji's relations with other countries, development aid, foreign direct investment, oversight of the military, and relations with multi-lateral organizations. The members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence are as follows:



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson

Deputy Speaker of Parliament
Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs



Hon. Rinesh Sharma
Deputy Chairperson



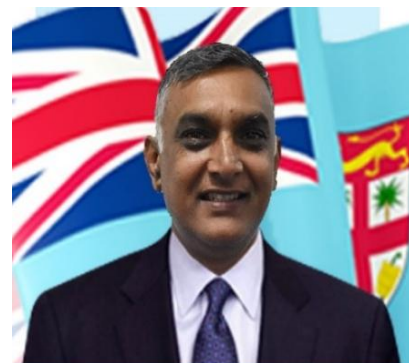
Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Member

Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Heritage and Arts



Hon. Penioni Ravunawa
Member

Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services



Hon. Virendra Lal
Member

1.1 Committee Secretariat Team

Supporting the Committee in its work is a group of dedicated Parliament Officers serving as the Committee Secretariat. These officers are appointed and delegated by the Secretary-General to Parliament by Standing Order 15(3)(i). The Secretariat officers are as follows:

- Mrs. Susana Korovou – Senior Committee Clerk
- Mrs. Elesi Tabuyaqona – Deputy Committee Clerk

2.0 Background and Terms of Reference

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (the Committee), was referred to the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji 2020-2022 Annual Report on 06 December 2024 and the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji 2019 – 2020 Annual Report on 29 January 2025. The referral of the Annual Reports was done in accordance with SO 38 (2), whereby the Committee was assigned to investigate the contents of the report and provide a report to Parliament at a future Sitting. This report is outside the usual mandate of the Committee, but the referral was made to help ease the workload of the other Standing Committees.

2.1 Procedure and Program

Public Submission (written submission and oral submission)

In relation to Standing Order 111 (1), the Committee is committed to upholding public trust in Parliament, by ensuring that there is public participation and that all such participation is given due consideration. The Committee hosted a face-to-face public submission (talanoa session) from the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji on 14 January 2025. This session was aired live on the Walesi Parliament Television Channel and on the Parliament Facebook page.

A summary of the submission is provided in a later part of this report, under the heading ‘Committee’s Deliberation and Analysis’. Copies of the written submission and the verbatim from the meeting can be obtained from the online Appendices of this report, which can be accessed from the Parliament website: www.parliament.gov.fj.

3.0 Committee Deliberation and Analysis

3.1 Introduction

The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji (Parliament) is the legislative body of the country. It is based on the principles of the Westminster Parliamentary System and guided by the 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji. The Parliament is a unicameral legislature comprising 51 members (after the 2018 general election and 55 members after the 2022 general election). Section 46 (1) of the Constitution provides that the authority and power to make laws for the State is vested in Parliament and is exercised through the enactment of Bills and assented to by the President.

Parliament is the voice of the Fijian people, charged with passing laws to ensure public safety, promote economic opportunity, guarantee equality under the law, provide needed administrative services and functions, and ensure the education, health, and welfare of all Fijian people. It is also responsible for overseeing the operations of the Government and holding them accountable.

Section 79 of the Constitution establishes the office of the Secretary-General to Parliament (Secretary-General) who shall be responsible to the Speaker for the efficient, effective and economical management of Parliament. Additionally, the Secretary-General shall have the authority to appoint, remove and discipline all staff in Parliament. Parliament is supported by staff who provide procedural support and advice to Members along with a wide range of essential services that facilitate the work of the Parliament.

3.2 Summary of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji 2019-2020 and 2020-2022 Annual Reports

3.2.1 Strategic Priority 1: Respect for the relevance and independence of Parliament

3.2.1.1 Ensuring the smooth running of the plenary

The Tables and Journals Unit is responsible for the effective functioning of Parliament, in particular the facilitation of the Select Committee, and Standing Committee meetings. During the years under review, Fiji was fronted with the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in disruptions to Parliament Sittings.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fijian Parliament utilized digital tools to ensure the continuation of Parliamentary sittings. Through a hybrid solution, some Members of Parliament met virtually whilst others attended in person to discuss the nation's affairs. The Standing Committees of Parliament remained accessible to Fijians, allowing citizens to present submissions through live online hearings, which were televised on the Walesi Parliament TV channel. This enhanced public access to Parliamentary affairs and these virtual hearings continue to this day. The table below shows the number of meetings facilitated during 2019-2020 and 2020-2022.

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021- 2022
No. of Parliamentary Sittings	34 Sitting Days	35 Sitting Days	40 Sitting Days
No. of Oral and Written Questions	152 Parliamentary Questions	115 Oral Questions 15 Written Questions	195 Oral Questions 28 Written Questions
Number of Acts Passed	36 Acts	49 Acts	59 Acts
Percentage of Hansard Reports	100% Delivery of Hansard Reports for all sitting days	100% Delivery of Hansard Reports for all sitting days	100% Delivery of Hansard Reports for all sitting days
Number of Select Committee Meetings facilitated	11 Select Committee Meetings **4 Privileges Meetings, 7 Business Committee Meetings	Unreported	Unreported

Table 1: Total Number of Plenary Meetings, oral and written questions and Acts Passed from 2019 to 2022

3.2.1.2 Challenging and improving Government policy through Committee scrutiny

During the reporting periods, the six standing committees made significant strides in challenging and improving government policies through rigorous committee scrutiny. The -committees facilitated a total of 570 meetings, which included 400 virtual sessions, demonstrating their commitment to transparency and accountability even amidst the pandemic. The outcome of these meetings resulted in the tabling of 59 reports. Table 2 shows the total number of committee meetings held from 2020-2022.

Particulars	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Number of Committee Meetings	500 **inclusive of 64 public consultations and 19 site visits	307	546
Type of Meetings	Unreported	216 Virtual Meetings 91 Face to Face Meetings	326 Virtual Meetings 213 Face to Face Meetings 7 Hybrid Meetings
Tabling of Committee Reports	47 Reports	47 Reports	45 Reports

Table 2: Summary of Committee Meetings and Committee Reports tabled in 2019 to 2022

3.2.1.3 Active participation in inter-parliamentary networks

The Inter-Parliamentary Relations and Protocol Unit is tasked with managing inter-parliamentary relations and coordinating the international interests and travel of the Speaker and Members of Parliament. For the year 2019-2020, the Unit facilitated 21 bilateral meetings. A key highlight for the year 2019-2020 was the successful hosting of the Fifth Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentarian Forum on Global Health at the Pullman Resort in Nadi, Fiji. During the same year, the Fijian Parliament hosted the CPA Public Accounts Committee Workshop in February 2019 and the 1st Pacific Women in Power Forum.

The Unit facilitated the participation of the Fijian Parliament in various inter-parliamentary meetings and conferences including the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Asia-Pacific Parliamentarian Forum, Asia-Pacific Parliamentarian Forum on Global Health, and so forth.

3.2.2 Strategic Priority 2: An effective Parliament with exceptionally capable people

3.2.2.1 An effective and diverse workforce

The Parliament in 2019-2020 reported having 86 staff, 74 of whom were established staff and the remaining 12 were Government Wage Earners. In the 2020-2021 financial year, the Parliament reported on renewing 12 staff contracts for a term of three years. These were for two new appointments, three retirements, one resignation, and one death with one staff on Military Leave to serve on an overseas mission whilst three staff were on secondment to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for a short-term basis to assist the Nauru Parliament.

During the 2021-2022 financial year, the Parliament successfully filled 12 vacant positions with an additional 11 internship recruitment under the Parliament's Support Programme. The Parliament reported that one of the major challenges faced during such times was performance management. It was difficult to measure employees' performances while working from home. However, this was addressed through the implementation of a new performance framework through coaching and providing relevant training for employees.

Additionally, the whole-of-government ITC server crash in April 2021 posed a major challenge to the institution.

3.2.2.2 Professional development of MPs

The Unit is also responsible for the professional development of MPs with the support of the UNDP Fiji Parliament Support Project. In 2019, professional development training was undertaken by the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, the Hon. Veena Bhatnagar. Also in the same year, the Fijian Parliament, in support of its women Members and its achievement towards SDGs 5 and 16, coordinated 3 overseas trainings and study visits to strengthen women's role and their representation in the political arena.

3.2.3 Strategic Priority 3: Sustainable service delivery through operational excellence

3.2.3.1 Strengthening governance and accountability at all levels

The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Compliance Unit (Unit) achieved its targets through the facilitation of the Knowledge Management Initiative (KMI) and Staff Forum sessions. The Unit organized 19 Staff Forums and 58 KMI sessions in 2020-2022. The KMI sessions allowed an opportunity to share learnings and experiences from local and overseas training.

3.2.3.2 Financial prudence and compliance

The Parliament reported on the following budgetary allocations and utilisation rates for the years under review. The Committee commends the institution for fully utilizing its budgetary allocation, which is a key indicator that programs and activities have been undertaken with due diligence.

	2019-2020 Status	2020-2021 Status	2021-2022 Status
Budget Allocation	\$8.8 million	\$8.6 million	\$7.1 million
Utilisation Rate	100%	90.10%	98.0%

Table 3: Budgetary allocations and utilisation rates for 2019 to 2022

A major challenge encountered during the 2021-2022 financial period was the changes made by the then Ministry of Economy regarding online submission and making it mandatory to provide necessary documents for the release of donor fundings.

3.2.3.3 Provision of timely research and information to Members

The Research and Library Services Unit is responsible for the provision of research and library services to Members of Parliament, the Executive Management, and the Parliament Secretariat. Services include the provision of timely and accurate information briefs, budget briefs, annual report summaries, inter-parliamentary surveys, speaking notes, and committee support. The library houses parliamentary papers, current legislation (law books), reports, Hansard, journals, periodicals, and other resources for the use of Members. The library can also assist MPs to access information from other libraries both locally and overseas. Increasingly, the library has moved away from the provision of hard copies (photocopies) of materials, towards digital or e-copies of documents that MP's request. The library also provides a quiet space for MPs to do reading, research, or meet with parliamentary colleagues for their parliamentary work.

The Fijian Parliament Library has played a crucial role in supporting MPs and Standing Committees by providing essential research materials, legislative updates, and guidance on accessing parliamentary resources. The library is being utilised by most MPs mainly for archival research, legislative updates, previous Parliaments' Hansards, past parliamentary reports, journals, and related information. Most of the library services are provided via email

communication between the librarians and MPs. Some Members regularly visit the library to do research or have a quiet space to prepare their speeches, statements, and so forth.

During these reporting periods, sixteen (16) sets of Laws of Fiji were updated. The library has a current subscription to LexisNexis for the updating of the Laws of Fiji texts; these are undertaken when laws are amended, or new laws are enacted. The updating of the law books is a tedious undertaking that often requires the assistance of other staff, especially from Committees.

The library also continues to sort historical documents from the old Parliament. It is important to note that the Parliamentary library is not an archival library as this is undertaken by the National Archives; however, it maintains copies of historical documents for the convenience of MPs and other users for the years under review, the Unit reported the following:

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Annual report summaries	79	49	59
Speaking Notes	8	2	1
Information Briefs	Unreported	0	7
Bill summaries	5	8	Not undertaken

Table 4: Total Number of Annual reports summarised, Speaking Notes, Information Briefs, and Bill summaries from 2019 to 2022

3.2.3.4 Innovative budget analysis

The provision of annual budget briefings for Members of Parliament is also the responsibility of the Research and Library Services Unit. This service is provided with the assistance of researchers from the Australian Federal Parliament, the Legislative Assembly of Tonga, and other Fijian Parliament staff. The Unit prepared briefings on several cross-cutting issues: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); climate change, gender equality, and COVID-19. During the reporting periods, the Unit produced the following:

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Budget Briefs	40	54	53
Civil Society Workshop on the Budget	1	1	1

Table 5: Total Number of Budget Briefs and Civil Society Workshop on the Budget from 2019 to 2022

3.2.4 Strategic Priority 4: ICT to facilitate the services of Parliament

3.2.4.1 Enhancing digital access to Parliamentary information and records

The Fijian Parliament's ability to continue Parliamentary business amidst the pandemic is attributed to the timely investments in its e-Parliament initiative which began in 2020 and included the development and strengthening of the I.T facilities to ensure effective online or

virtual communications. The Hybrid Parliament project was funded by the UNDP, with the integration of the Parliament’s Television broadcasting and video conferencing.

3.2.5 Strategic 5: Extensive engagement and effective communication

3.2.5.1 Communication and Public Engagement

The Civic Education and Media Unit helps raise awareness on the work, processes, and relevance of the institution of Parliament, to increase levels of engagement between the public and the Parliament. Despite the COVID-19 restrictions in place, the Unit utilized mainstream media and social media platforms to engage with the public and proficiently communicate about Parliament. In 2021, broadcasting of the Standing Committee public consultations in the Western and Northern Divisions commenced. Parliament events and activities were regularly reported through mainstream media and social media platforms. The Parliament website was frequently updated with educational information, and social media posts were increased. For the years under review, the Unit reported on the following:

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Active Users on the Parliament Website	More than 85,000 users	More than 20,000 users	More than 35,000 users
No. of Engagements on the Parliament's social media platforms	34,000	145,000	Over 300,000
Press release and media alerts	18 Press Releases 81 Media Alerts	37 Press Releases 2 Newsletters	22 Press Releases 4 Newsletters

Table 6: Total Number of Active Users on the Parliament Website, Number of Engagements on the Parliament’s social media platforms and Press release and media alerts from 2019 to 2022

Youth Engagement

3.2.5.2 For the 2019-2020 reporting period, the Unit works to inform and educate the Fijian public. One of the Unit’s key ambitions in 2019–2020 was to increase wider youth engagement with Parliament. The Unit conducted many community outreach initiatives to engage with the public under its Engagement Strategy and make them aware of the roles and functions of Parliament. Continuing the initiatives, the Fijian Parliament, supported by the UNDP FPSP, organised workshops targeting school teachers in Labasa and Lautoka. A total of 29 (12 males and 17 females) participated in Labasa whereas 22 (9 males and 13 females) attended the Lautoka workshop. The Unit also encourages Parliament tours by schools, groups, and individuals. During this period, the Unit recorded a total of 110 tours and 3,898 visitors. The Unit promotes greater awareness of parliamentary procedures and the legislative, representative, and oversight functions of the Members of Parliament.

3.3 Committee Findings

3.3.1 Revamping the Parliamentary Education Programme

The Committee was informed that the Parliament Outreach Programs focused on primary and secondary schools with Parliament extending its efforts into village settings to raise awareness about its role. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all these initiatives were put on hold.

The pertinent issue lies in the fact that those who had previously participated in or been exposed to training by the Parliament team have already left the school system. The team must continue targeting younger students, starting from primary school, with the hope that they will carry this knowledge with them as they move on to secondary education.

The Committee is of the view that Parliament needs to review its Civic Education Strategy to utilize the Parliament TV Channel and social media platforms to educate the general public. Parliament to consider having short videos, snippets, and children's educational programs on the works of Parliament. The Committee suggests that Parliament should also undertake a survey on the effectiveness of these programmes.

3.3.2 Adequate Notification of Parliamentary Business

The Committee noted that there is little or no interaction from the general public when public submissions are aired live on Parliament's Facebook page. The Committee recommends that there needs to be more advertising of upcoming consultations/parliamentary business on the Parliament social media pages which members of committees can then share. This would allow more active users and interactions on these platforms.

3.3.3 Use of Vernacular Language during Parliamentary Tours

The Committee is concerned that the majority of the Parliamentary Tours to Parliament involve communities for whom English is not a first language. It was noted that for these groups, understanding English can be challenging, as it may be spoken at a level they may not often use. The concern highlights the importance of ensuring that communication is accessible to all visitors. Parliament to also consider inviting Members of Parliament to visit the Chamber when tours are in progress.

3.3.4 Introduction of a Parliamentary Legal Counsel

The Committee notes the challenges with receiving delayed legal opinions from the Office of the Solicitor-General. Parliament during its submission highlighted that there have been ongoing discussions on the possibility of having an in-house Parliamentary Legal Counsel. These discussions were already taking place during the tenure of the former Speaker, H.E. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu, with talks between Parliament and the Ministry of Finance to explore how

best to achieve this. The Secretary-General acknowledged that these discussions were more focused on the long term, with the goal of training in-house staff in legal matters to take on this responsibility. However, it was noted that fully realizing and achieving this objective would likely take years. The Committee recommends that due consideration be given to the establishment of a Parliamentary Legal Counsel.

3.3.5 Delay in the production of Verbatim Reports

The Committee was informed of the delay in the production of Verbatim Reports, due to the workload of Hansard Reporters. It is anticipated that the rollout of the Multi-language Translations and Captioning (MLTC) Project will further support the submission of reports. Parliament highlighted that the captioning system is intended to help alleviate this workload by supporting Hansard, and this is an area where Parliament is investing to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the reporting process. Due to the nature of the work, Hansard reporters often work extended hours, from the Parliament sitting week into the Committee sitting week, as well as during public consultations. Regarding the timeline for Committee work, it was noted that hiring more Hansard reporters at this time may not be effective. The focus is on improving the infrastructure, particularly with the captioning system, which is expected to enhance the efficiency of Hansard reporters and enable them to provide more timely reports to the Committees.

3.3.6 Writing-Off Process for Non-Expandable Items

The Committee was concerned with the amount of unused furniture and equipment within the premises. Parliament reiterated that the board of survey is up to date, but before new furniture can be purchased, it needs to be approved through the board and reflected in the survey. Parliament is constrained by storage space, with containers in the old Parliament filling up. The process requires the Ministry of Finance approval to clear out old furniture, and while they understand the need for new items, the Ministry has instructed Parliament to continue using furniture until it can no longer be used, likely as a cost-saving measure. The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Finance be advised to consider other options such as auctioning boarded, but still usable, furniture or donating them to schools or charitable organizations.

3.3.7 Display the History of Parliament

The Committee highlighted that the New Zealand Parliament had an “An Illustrated History” exhibition showcasing the Parliamentary Collection, offering a glimpse into New Zealand’s history through the displayed artifacts, artworks, and historical touchstones. During the public submission, it was discussed that even though Parliament has a small public gallery, it is not enough due to its limited space. The Civic, Education, and Media Unit has been working on expanding the gallery by creating an extension on Level 3. Once sufficient space is available, they plan to develop a more comprehensive gallery that will display historical photos, including

images of previous governments and other important moments in Fiji's history. This is something they hope to organize once space becomes available.

3.3.8 Approach towards Unforeseen Circumstances

The Committee was informed that Parliament has learned from its experiences and identified the gaps encountered during the COVID-19 period, particularly during this reporting period. It has acknowledged that, unfortunately, they were unable to provide all staff with necessary tools, including laptops and, in some cases, data. However, efforts were made to provide essential resources to certain staff members who were crucial in ensuring that work continued while everyone was working remotely from home. The Parliament confirmed that in the event of another unforeseen circumstance, Parliament would be in a better position to provide staff with the necessary tools, including laptops and data. This period has highlighted the effectiveness of the Office 365 platform, which continues to facilitate communication and document management, particularly the SharePoint application within Office 365, which has proven to be highly effective. Parliament is encouraging staff to use the platform, and all necessary staff would be ready, if a COVID-like situation were to arise again.

3.3.9 Review Performance-Based Reward System

The Committee noted that in terms of performance management system, the Parliament had highlighted that they continue to use MyAPA mechanism to assess and evaluate the performance of staff. However, the Committee is concerned that Parliament has chosen not to align or benchmark its assessment process with the Ministry of Civil Service. The Committee recommends that in order to address staff retention, that proper mechanisms be in place to assess and reward (bonuses/increments) staff accordingly based on their performance.

4.0 Sustainable Development Goals

The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji demonstrated its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through its activities and priorities during the periods 2019-2020 and 2020-2022. Key areas of relevance include:

- **Legislative Oversight:** Enacting and reviewing laws aligned with SDG priorities, such as climate action (SDG 13), gender equality (SDG 5), and good governance (SDG 16).
- **Budget Allocation:** Supporting funding for SDG-related sectors like health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), and infrastructure (SDG 9).
- **Committee Work:** Addressing SDG-specific issues, including poverty reduction (SDG 1), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), and sustainable economic growth (SDG 8).
- **Public Awareness and Accountability:** Promoting SDG awareness through parliamentary debates, outreach programs, and reports that monitor Fiji's progress on SDG targets.
- **Adaptation and Resilience:** Highlighting climate resilience and environmental sustainability, reflecting Fiji's vulnerability to climate change.

4.1 Gender Equality in Parliamentary Scrutiny

The Parliament of Fiji Standing Orders 110 (2) requires the Committee to give full consideration to the principle of gender equality to ensure all matters are considered about the impact and benefit on both men and women. The Committee noted that Parliament of the Republic of Fiji during this reporting period did not provide any information on gender equality. The Committee suggests that in future reports, an indication of gender information be provided.

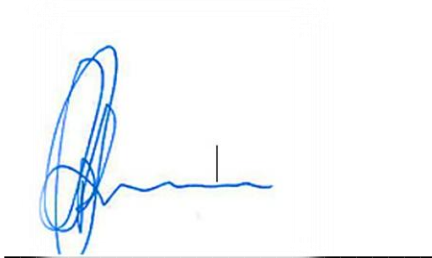
5.0 Conclusion

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence has conducted a thorough review of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji 2019 – 2020 and 2020 – 2022 Annual Reports. The Committee report is bi-partisan and has six (6) recommendations for consideration. The Committee is grateful and commends Parliament of the Republic of Fiji for the forthright discussions held with the Committee during their public submissions.

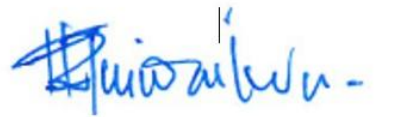
6.0 Committee Members' Signatures



Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua
Chairperson



Hon. Rinesh Sharma
Deputy Chairperson



Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
Member



Hon. Penioni Ravunawa
Member



Hon. Virendra Lal
Member

7.0 Annexure

Published evidence

Written evidence, transcripts, and supporting documents can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link:

<https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-foreign-affairs-and-defence/>

