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## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

### **Review Report on the 2023 iTaukei Land Trust Board Annual Report**



**PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**  
**Parliamentary Paper No. 19 of 2026**

*March 2026*

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## **Chairperson’s Foreword**

I am pleased to present the Standing Committee on Social Affairs *Review Report on the 2023 iTaukei Land Trust Board Annual Report*.

The Committee proudly acknowledges and appreciates that this is the first ever TLTB Annual Report independently tabled in Parliament, presented on 14 March 2025, an important milestone for transparency, accountability, and strengthened parliamentary oversight of iTaukei land management.

Throughout our review, the Committee noted several critical areas that warrant national attention. Rent arrears continue to be a significant challenge, with a starting arrears balance of \$27.75 million for the 2023–2024 period, particularly concentrated in residential and agricultural leases. This undermines the financial returns to landowners and places pressure on TLTB’s operational capacity. The Committee encourages the Board to strengthen its arrears recovery mechanisms through structured repayment options, digital reminders and incentive schemes for early settlement.

The Committee also examined the status of over 40 development leases under the Ministry of Housing, where prolonged delays have resulted in landowner dissatisfaction and a growing reluctance to renew development leases. Only two projects at Ledrusasa and Waidamudamu have reached completion. Effective land development is essential for iTaukei socio-economic progress, and we therefore recommend the establishment of a joint TLTB Housing monitoring mechanism to improve delivery and ensure accountability.

A further concern relates to the misalignment between the iTaukei Land Trust Act and the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act (ALTA). ALTA’s regulated rent system differs fundamentally from TLTB’s open-market rental framework, resulting in policy fragmentation and operational challenges. The Committee supports a holistic legislative review and the formation of an Inter-Ministerial Land Policy Alignment Taskforce to ensure long-term policy coherence.

The Committee acknowledges TLTB’s proactive engagement regarding the more than 1,000 sugarcane leases set to expire by 2030. Early consultations with tenants and landowners are commendable, as they enable informed decision-making, whether for renewal, partial renewal, or conversion to higher-value uses. Such forward planning is essential to sustaining both the agricultural sector and landowner interests.

We commend TLTB for its ongoing digital transformation, including online systems for lease processing, rent reassessments and conveyancing. These advancements, supported by national

recognition such as the President’s Award, significantly improve accessibility and service delivery, particularly for rural landowners who may benefit from expanded mobile friendly platforms.

On behalf of the Committee, I extend our sincere appreciation to TLTB, government ministries, landowners, and stakeholders for their cooperation throughout this review process. As the first independently prepared TLTB Annual Report submitted to Parliament, this moment represents a significant step toward greater transparency, accountability and collaborative progress.

Finally, I thank the Hon. Members of the Committee, Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure, Hon. Alikia Bia, Hon. Alipate Tuicolo, Hon. Viam Pillay, Hon. Parveen Bala and Hon. Ketan Lal for their invaluable input and support.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this report to Parliament.



.....  
**Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu**  
**Chairperson**

## Acronym

ALTA	Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act
LOU	Land Owning Units
MP	Member of Parliament
TLTB	iTaukei Land Trust Board
SO	Standing Order

## Committee Members

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs (**‘Committee’**) is established under Section 70 of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji and Standing Order 109. The Committee’s mandate and functions are provided under SO 109 (2) and 110 (1) (a)-(d) & (f). Members of the Committee are:



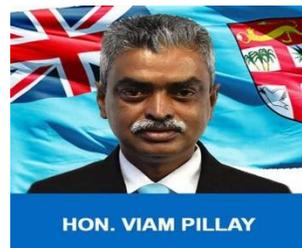
HON. ILIESA SOVUI  
VANAWALU

**Chairperson**



HON. RATU RAKUITA  
S. VAKALALABURE

**Deputy Chairperson**



HON. VIAM PILLAY

**Member**



HON. ALIPATE TUICOALO

**Member**



HON. PARVEEN KUMAR

**Member**



HON. ALIKI BUA

**Member**

## **1.0 Introduction**

The Itaukei Land Trust Board 2023 Annual Report was tabled in Parliament on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025, and referred to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

Standing Orders 109 (2)(b) allows the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to examine matters related to health, education, social services, labour, aviation, culture and media.

### **1.1. Committee Procedures**

Deliberations on of Itaukei Affairs Lands Trust Board 2023 Annual Report commenced in January 2026. The Committee read through the reports, prepared questions and sought clarifications on key issues of interest from the TLTB.

The Committee held Public Submission with the Executives of the Itaukei Land Trust Board on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

Furthermore, the committee conducted a site visit on the TLTB Land Projects from 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

- a) Sigatoka Town – Mataqali Etuba
- b) Nadala Village – Nadi
- c) Varavu Ba Lot Development

Upon receipt of all pertinent information pertaining to the Committee’s queries, which was subsequently endorsed on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

The responses from the Itaukei Land Trust Board can be viewed at the following link <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>

## 2.0 Background

The iTaukei Land Trust Board (TLTB) is the statutory body established under the *iTaukei Land Trust Act of 1940* to administer and manage 91% of Fiji's land, which is owned communally by the iTaukei people. The Board acts as a trustee on behalf of landowners issuing leases, collecting and distributing lease monies, protecting landowner interests and facilitating land development.

The 2023 Annual Report provides a detailed account of TLTB's operations, governance, financial performance and strategic direction for the year. It highlights major reforms, achievements and challenges as the Board works toward its vision "*To Excel in Land Services and the Economic Empowerment of our Landowners.*"

A major shift occurred in the Board's structural composition with the full establishment of three core divisions Estate Services, Landowners Affairs and Corporate Services each led by a General Manager appointed in November 2023. This restructuring is intended to enhance operational cohesion, improve service delivery and place landowners at the centre of decision-making.

### **3.0 Key Findings**

The key findings of the Committee were:

- 3.1 TLTB reported that rent arrears remain significantly high, with a starting arrears balance of \$27.75 million in 2023–2024, particularly concentrated in residential and agricultural leases.
- 3.2 Over 40 development leases under the Ministry of Housing have faced prolonged delays, with only two (Ledrusasa and Waidamudamu) successfully completed. This has resulted in landowner dissatisfaction and reluctance to renew development leases.
- 3.3 Significant misalignment exists between the iTaukei Land Trust Act and ALTA, with ALTA imposing a regulated rent at 6% of Unimproved Capital Value while TLTB operates under an open-market model.
- 3.4 More than 1,000 sugarcane leases will expire by 2030. TLTB has begun tenant engagement 10 years ahead of expiry to determine suitability for renewal, partial renewal, or conversion to higher-value land uses.
- 3.5 TLTB has introduced online systems for lease processing, rent reassessments, conveyancing and has twice achieved the President’s Award.
- 3.6 The Wealth Fund, supported by 10% of poundage deductions, has grown to \$26.1 million. TLTB has already disbursed \$5 million to landowners for business and agricultural support, with \$1 million repaid.
- 3.7 TLTB manages 55,224 leases across agriculture, tourism, industrial, commercial and residential sectors contributing substantially to national development.

## 4.0 Recommendations

The recommendations of the committee were:

- 4.1 TLTB should implement enhanced arrears recovery strategies, including structured repayment plans, automated digital reminders and incentive schemes for early settlement.
- 4.2 Establish a joint TLTB Housing monitoring committee to enforce efficient delivery of development timelines and ensure accountability.
- 4.3 Initiate a holistic legislative review, covering ALTA, the iTaukei Land Trust Act and other related laws to establish an Inter-Ministerial Land Policy Alignment Taskforce to coordinate future amendments and prevent cross-legislative conflicts.
- 4.4 TLTB must work with landowners to renew all sugarcane leases that will expire by 2030.
- 4.5 Expand digital services through mobile-friendly platforms to serve rural landowners more effectively.
- 4.6 Expand supported financing options to include value-chain and empower iTaukei landowners.
- 4.7 Enhance whole of government coordination to maximise TLTB's contributions to Fiji's long term growth and position TLTB as a regional leader in customary land administration through structured training and advisory support to benefit landowners.

## **5.0 Sustainable Development Goals and Gender Analysis.**

The information below is provided by TLTB.

TLTB recognizes the SDGs as a global framework that complements our mandate to manage iTaukei land for the benefit of its owners while promoting sustainable development. Our strategic plan integrates key SDGs to ensure that our operations contribute to social, economic, and environmental resilience.

Relevant SDGs and Their Impact on TLTB's Goals includes the following:

### **SDG 1 – No Poverty**

Through equitable lease distribution and revenue management, TLTB supports income generation for iTaukei landowners, reducing poverty and improving livelihoods in rural communities.

### **SDG 2 – Zero Hunger**

Through the issuance of agricultural leases, TLTB promotes national food security and contributes to the goal of eliminating hunger.

### **SDG 5 – Gender Equality**

TLTB has implemented policies that encourage women's participation in land governance and decision-making processes, fostering inclusivity and empowerment.

### **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth**

By facilitating commercial leases and infrastructure development, TLTB creates employment opportunities and stimulates economic growth for landowners and the wider economy.

### **SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure**

Investments in infrastructure projects and digitalization of land records have enhanced operational efficiency and improved service delivery to stakeholders.

### **SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities**

Strategic land planning and reservation for future development ensure sustainable urban and rural communities, aligning with national development priorities.

### **SDG 13 – Climate Action**

Environmental safeguards are integrated into land development projects to promote climate resilience and sustainable land use practices.

### **SDG 15 – Life on Land**

As the administrator of 91% of Fiji's land mass, TLTB holds a critical fiduciary responsibility to ensure sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

**Gender Analysis:**

**Below is the gender analysis provided by TLTB.**

- a) Recruitment and Selection Policy the Board recruits’ officers of the Board through an open merit and prohibits discrimination whether direct or indirect, actual or supposed, personal characteristics or circumstances, including ethnic origin, place of origin, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, disability and HIV/AIDS status.
  
- b) Estate Operation Manual Leases are issued to applicants who have met the requirements and fully settled offer and accepting all conditions of the leases. Tenants who are a member of the Landowning Unit have their premium waived to encourage them to lease their own land and this incentive applies to all genders. In year 2024, TLTB have included targets encouraging women participation in leases; women leases and LOU Women Leases

Table below shows the staff composition by gender

<b>Year</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
2022	158	90
2023	160	85
2024	154	89

## **6.0 Conclusion**

The review report highlights significant challenges including high rent arrears, delays in development leases, and legislative misalignments that require urgent and coordinated action. At the same time, the Committee recognises TLTB's progress in digital transformation, proactive engagement on expiring sugarcane leases and the growth of the Wealth Fund.

With continued collaboration among TLTB, government agencies, landowners and tenants, these efforts will support more effective land administration and contribute to the long-term social and economic wellbeing of iTaukei communities.

## Committee Members Signatures

We, the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, hereby agree with the contents of this report:

Committee Member	E-Signature
Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu Chairperson	
Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure Deputy Chairperson	
Hon. Alipate Tuicolo Member	
Hon. Viam Pillay Member	
Hon. Parveen Bala Member	
Hon. Alikia Bia Member	
<b>Date: 6 March, 2026</b>	

## **Annexure**

### **Published evidence**

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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-social-affairs/>

# **[ VERBATIM REPORT ]**

## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

### **iTAUKEI LAND TRUST BOARD 2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

**SUBMITTEE:** iTaukei Land Trust Board

**VENUE:** Big Committee Room, Parliament

**DATE:** Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2026

**VERBATIM NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST/WEST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS ON THURSDAY, 29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2026 AT 11.11 A.M.**

Present

Hon. I.S. Vanawalu	Chairperson
Hon. A. Bia	Member
Hon. V. Pillay	Member
Hon. A.N. Tuicolo (virtual)	Member
Hon. P.K. Bala	Member

**Interviewee/Submittee: iTaukei Land Trust Board**

In Attendance:

1) Mr. Solomone Nata	Chief Executive Officer
2) Mr. Semisi Tuisabeto	Manager, Finance
3) Mr. Mosese Ratubalavu	Reserves Commissioner
4) Ms. Sereana Tuisabeto	Manager, Research & Policy
5) Mr. Epeli Ravula	Acting General Manager, Corporate Services
6) Mr. Cama Raimuria	Acting Chief Financial Officer
7) Mr. Isoa Tuwai	General Manager, Estate Services
8) Mr. Peni Qalo	General Manager, Landowners Empowerment
9) Mr. Salimoni Karusi	Board Secretary

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MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, members of the public, secretariat, dear viewers tuning in this morning, ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to you all. It is a pleasure to welcome everyone here this morning, especially the viewers who are watching this public hearing session. At the outset, for information purposes pursuant to Standing Order 111 of the Standing Orders of Parliament, all Committee meetings are to be open to the public. Therefore, please note that this submission is open to the public and the media and is also being aired live via the wireless platform and streamlined live on the Parliament website and social media platform.

For any sensitive information concerning the matter before us this morning that cannot be disclosed in public, this can be provided to the Committee, either private or in writing. However, please be advised that Standing Order 111 in the following circumstances permit for non-disclosure of information and these are;

- 1) The national security matters;
- 2) Third party confidential information;
- 3) Personnel or human resources matters; and
- 4) Committee deliberation and development of committee's recommendation within the report.

This is a Parliamentary meeting and all information gathered is covered under the Parliamentary Powers and Privilege Act 1965.

Moving forward, please bear in mind that we do not condone slander or libel of any sort, and any information brought before this Committee should be based on facts.

In terms of protocol of this Committee meeting, please minimise the usage of mobile phone and all mobile phones to be on silent mode while the meeting is in progress. I wish to also remind honourable Members and our guests that all questions to be asked are to be addressed through the Chairperson.

*(Introduction of Committee Members)*

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Today the Committee will be hearing a submission from the iTaukei Land Trust Board and this is in relation to the iTaukei Land Trust Board 2023 Annual Report. And before us, we have representatives from the board, and I would like to thank them for availing themselves to appear to this hearing.

Due to the essence of time, you may give a brief response. The Members will intervene with their supplementary questions during your presentation.

MR. S. NATA.- *Bula vinaka*, Mr. Chairman and honourable Members of the Committee.

On behalf of the management, we just want to make a very brief presentation that will very briefly indicate our performance for 2023. The 2023 Annual Report has been audited way back in early 2024.

So very briefly, iTLTB has been in existence for 85 years until now from 1940, that was set up by the Great Council of Chiefs in 1936, then in 1940 it was enacted as an institution under the Native Land Trust Ordinance. In 1970, all the ordinances were transformed into the Act of Parliament.

Very briefly, Mr. Chairman, the “*iTaukei*” land definition is all vacant land including such land declared under section 19, all land set aside by proclamation under section 18 of the Native Land Trust Act 1940 and all extinct *mataqali* land vested in the Board under section 19 of the iTaukei Land Trust Act 1940.

Mr. Chairman, the legal mandate that we have under the *iTaukei* Land Trust Act, section 4 states that the control of the *iTaukei* land vested in the Board. The control of *iTaukei* land shall be vested in the Board and all such land shall be administered by the Board for the benefit of the *iTaukei* owners or for the benefit of the *iTaukei*.

Section 14 empowers to distribute lease money or trust money. Subject to the other provision of this section, rents and premium received in respect of leases and license in respect of the *iTaukei* land shall be subject to deduction of such amount as the Board may from time to time determine not exceeding 25 percent. So, the maximum rate that we can levy is 25 percent, basically we are charging 18 percent at the moment.

Section 3(6) empowers the Board to set up a corporate company, in case it needed to manage some of its operations, and the power to invest trust monies is also enacted under the amendment of the iTaukei Land Trust Act 2004.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, you mentioned that you can form companies so at the moment how many companies are in place?

MR. S. NATA.- It is part of the presentation. We will come to it at the end of the presentation.

Basically the alignment is from the SDGs and also the National Development Plan, especially for land provisions to support the economy in all sectors - commercial, residential, tourism, industrial, farming, et cetera.

Our vision has sort of remained the same for quite some time - to excel in land services and economic empowerment of our landowners.

Our core business is sustainable land development to enrich the lives and livelihoods of our landowners.

Our core roles, currently we have four. We had three since 2024.

In 2023, we added another core role. Core roles are:

- (1) control and manage *iTaukei* land by way of leases and licence;
- (2) collect and distribute;
- (3) ensure that we have sufficient land for the *iTaukei* landowners; and
- (4) empower landowners in terms of commercial enterprise, et cetera.

Mr. Chairman and honourable Members, iTLTB does not operate alone. It operates in synergy with other legislations of Fiji, especially Agricultural Landlord Tenant Act (ALTA), iTaukei Lands Act that set up the iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission, Town Planning, State Land Act, Environment and others.

Currently, we have around 55,224 leases generating and distributing around \$120 million, and we have an annual rent portfolio of around \$55 million, with around 7,747 landowning units in Fiji. The breakdown of our lease portfolio, out of that 55,224, the biggest component is on residential leases, around 32,762.

The second largest component is agricultural, 15,750, covering an area of 162,784 hectares of land under agricultural uses. We also have rent arrears; this is one of the major challenges we are facing. For this year, we started off with \$27,751,000. Rent arrears from 2023-2024 have declined over the years in view of some of the strategies and measures that we are undertaking in terms of rent collection.

The Estate Services Division looks after our lease processing, as I have mentioned earlier. They also look after our land development. We have around two subdivisions that we completed last year - Vunitavola and Varavu. These are fully fledged subdivisions - tarsealed, gravel and we connect power and water into those subdivisions. We bear all the costs for the landowners, and these are ready for selling right now. We recover the cost, and the landowners will receive a much better return from the practicing of issuing individual leases for residential purposes in the area.

Moving forward, in terms of unformed access, the Government has provided us around \$1 million to construct the uniform access within agricultural leases. We have around certain subdivisions at Kasavu, Navunibua, Nabulula, Navunisorua, Wailase, and also at Kasavu, Burenitu. The Committee too, we were informed, would like to inspect some of these sites, and we can arrange that in the coming weeks.

Currently, Mr. Chairman, we are deducting around 18 percent as poundage. The maximum is 25 percent, as mentioned earlier. Out of that 18 percent, 8 percent is for our operation (administration of iTLTB business), and 10 percent we have diverted to create a wealth fund. For Crown Grants and Native Grants, we have submitted around 17 cases to the Government to look at reverting some of those Crown Grants and Native Grants back to the landowners, and I believe that submission has been directed to a Cabinet Standing Committee on Native Grants and Crown Grants.

Trust fund – from 2010 to 2024, we distributed around \$1.1 million, and our Wealth Fund, out of that 10 percent right now, we started diverting 10 percent on 1st, January 2024. So in 2024, we collected around \$12.1 million and right now the total Wealth Fund is around \$26.1 million.

Mr. Chairman, moving on to our Corporate Services Division, we have around 273 staff – 173 males and 100 females. A lot of legislative reviews were undertaken by iTLTB. The first one was the Mahogany Industry Development Act 2010, and I believe there is a Bill to further amend the Mahogany Industry Development Act 2010. We have the Surfing Areas Act 2010. We also made a submission. Also on the Forestry Act 2025 and other legislations amended by the Government - Employment Relations Bill, 2025 and Sugar Industry Act. Right now our very own Act (iTaukei Land Trust Act) is under review. I believe that will summarise some of the key areas I wish to present just to introduce our presentation and we are ready to answer questions as the Committee would like this morning.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much, CEO and your team. We can always go back to their PowerPoint presentation if there is any particular area which we need to ask questions based on the Report that is before us.

On the legislative review, CEO and the team, I believe this is a very important area that needs to be addressed while we are trying to align our legislative to the current environment that we are in. There is a lot to be done while looking at the review on your legislative issues. The question I want to ask is, are there any timelines based on those reviews, in terms of legislation, which need to go through Government and go back to the implementation part?

MR. S. NATA.- Mr. Chairman, we have done our part by submitting to the Ministry and the Ministry normally submits to Cabinet and to Parliament, for example, the Mahogany Industry Development Act 2010. We contributed to the amendment of the Surfing Areas Act 2010. I think the Commercial Usage of Marine Areas Bill 2025 is before Parliament. In terms of timeline, I think it is for the Government to provide. We made submissions and the process of going through the Parliament, that is beyond us.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- For the Committee, when we table this back to Parliament, whatever our key findings and recommendations, that will be taken on board by the respective stakeholders who are involved in this. In that sense, we have the authority to make it happen. Based on that, we will try to be very thorough on the issue of getting this done on time. That will be part of our recommendation back to Parliament, whether it is still with Cabinet, et cetera, the Committee is to

ensure that whatever legislative is there as I have said from the beginning, it is very important to get this organised on the ground in terms of relevancy. When we talk about marine, that is very important to us. When you talk about other legislation, we will work out something, have a feedback to Parliament during tabling, before debate begins. Once Parliament approves our recommendations, stakeholders are given 60 days to respond to the reports.

HON. P.K. PALA.- Mr. Chairman, yesterday, we met with the Ministry of Housing. We were told by the Ministry of Housing when the question was raised with them on why these development leases which were obtained were not being renewed. The reason they gave us was landowners do not want to renew. To me it came as a surprise, because initially there were a lot of work done, a lot of meetings were conducted and the landowners knew the benefit of that arrangement between the Government and iTLTB. Could you please advise us, is there any truth in it whether the landowners do not want to renew the development leases?

MR. S. NATA.- Mr. Chairman, we have around 40-plus development leases that were issued to the Ministry of Housing. I think the main issue there, some of those development leases are into the third cycle, renewal of three five years. The landowners have been asking, when will the development take place, et cetera? The main factor there is the delay in developing by the Ministry of Housing.

Right now, there are only two development leases that have been developed - one is Ledrusasa in Nadi and the other one is Waidamudamu that we have reached a stage of issuing registered titles. There were only two started by the previous government and completed by the current one. All other subdivisions are either into earthworks, engineering, et cetera, and they have asked for another five years extension. The renewal and non-renewal is a mutual understanding or discussion – to renew or not to renew. Some of the problems, like I said, the landowners want their land back. For some of those sites are within reserve. So when the five years expires, it went back to reserve status so when we tried to get the renewal for fresh consent, that is where the problem lies.

HON. A. BIA.- Mr. Chairman through you, thank you for the presentation this morning. Back to the legislative review that was alluded to earlier by the honourable Chairman. As time goes by from the colonial days up until now, safeguarding the assets of *iTaukei*, do you think that in terms of legislation, there is a need of new legislation to be introduced? I know that some are in review at the moment on the list that you have, but do you think the dynamics have changed, things becoming new everyday everyday and there is a need of new legislations in order to continue to safeguard *iTaukei* assets?

MR. S. NATA.- Mr. Chairman, to respond to that, we have the *iTaukei* Land Trust Act, that is our principal legislation that we act upon, that set up *iTaukei* Land Trust Board. Like I said before, we work with probably 22 other legislations. Those legislations, all of them need to be perhaps renewed in terms of timeline, we have the Climate Change Act not yet being implemented, but have some conditions. We have the Environment Management Act 2005 and implemented in 2007 where it provided some legislative clauses that require other legislations to be reviewed.

We want the ALTA to be reviewed. ALTA has has a rent regulated method at 6 percent of Unimproved Capital Value while iTLTA is based on open market. So, one is regulated, one is open market but for ALTA, it is a regulated rent return but they can sell in the open market. And most of the land leased by iTLTB are under ALTA. I believe that is also for State land.

The Forestry Act also is connected to the iTaukei Land Trust Act, Fisheries Act, et cetera. Like I said, we need to have a holistic review of perhaps all the legislations that affect land resources in this country.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman through you, CEO we have been informed in Parliament in regards to the thousand plus leases, sugar cane leases that will be expiring by 2030. Is there any process in place or what sort of work is being done for its renewal?

MR. S. NATA.- For the renewal of agricultural leases, there are probably four factors that need to be considered in renewing the lease. One is rent arrears, if you look at my presentation, you will see the highest is residential, the second is agricultural. The arrears were not used or the land will be subdivided by a higher economic return or the landowners need the land, those are four important factors. So, if the tenant continues to cultivate productively, pay the rent, the chance is very high in terms of renewal.

What we have done, we have visited all expiring leases ten years before expiry. Before it was five years, now ten years, just to tell them whether the lease will be renewed or not, just to prepare themselves. Either it will be renewed in total or renewed in parts, or if the landowners want the land, then we will try to negotiate for them to have some residential sites and other areas to plant, or the land will be totally converted into residential, industrial, commercial subdivision or even tourism. We have that mechanism in place going on.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman through you, as mentioned by CEO on the arrears, at the top is residential and second is agriculture with almost \$9 million. Is there any percentage of this amount that government needs to pay on behalf of farmers? I remember in Parliament, the then Minister of Finance made some noise about assisting the farmers. Is that arrears included in this or the government has paid on behalf of farmers at that time?

MR. S. NATA.- Mr. Chairman, the assistance by government is normally on the renewal of leases, paying of premium. I think that is the assistance provided by government on the renewal of leases. But in terms of arrears to pay rent arrears, we would like government to pay, to clear the rent arrears.

HON. A. BIA.- Mr. Chairman through you, CEO in terms of the challenges presented on the presentation this morning, one notably is vocal *iTaukei* perception on iTLTB's role. Just elaborate more on that.

MR. S. NATA.- What is it?

HON. A. BIA.- Vocal *iTaukei* perception on iTLTB's role. Just elaborate more on that challenge. One of the challenges presented on the presentation.

MR. S. NATA.- Mr. Chairman, we are trustee for customary owners of Fiji even though the *mataqali* is one, there are so many members. There will always be views expressed. It is very difficult to have 100 percent consensus for each *mataqali*; very rare. Now we have the freedom to talk. They can talk, even the *turaga ni mataqali*, the *lewe ni mataqali*. So, that is part and parcel of administering and managing customary land.

We believe iTLTB has a role to play in terms of national building. See that 55,000-plus leases, that is our contribution to the national economy. We are accountable to that in providing

security to support. At the same time, we need to make sure the landowners receive the best return. While leases under iTLTA are under open market, ALTA agriculturally leases are not open market. So, these are some of the issues we need to discuss in totality.

The iTLTB still have an important role to play in coming to a single entity to talk about land rather than going to thousands of people. *iTaukei* is around 600,000 or whatever, rather than going directly like in the Solomons, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, you come to a single entity to talk about land especially customary land.

I believe for the last 85 years, we have been providing the service even though there are some challenges and we believe iTLTB will continue for another 100 years. Mr. Chairman, we receive a lot of interest from PNG, Solomon, Vanuatu. In PNG, the province come to us for guidance on setting up their customary land administration. We provide that kind of assistance.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- CEO, I have a question. First, I would like to declare my interest as I am also a member of the *mataqali*. This is just a general question, most of our native lands are communally owned, belonging to a *mataqali* or clan within the *yavusa*. The members of our *mataqali* would like to venture out to large scale livestock farming and also agriculture. These farmers cannot be assisted by financial institutions as they do not have collateral to secure loans as their lands are not under their individual names. How can the iTaukei Land Trust Board assist with the members of the *mataqali*?

MR. S. NATA.- Mr. Chairman, we have set up a financial facility for the *iTaukei*, like I said, it started at the end of 2023. By 1st January, 2024, we have set aside 10 percent of all the lease money coming to iTLTB for these kinds of purposes. So, far we have distributed around close to \$5 million in terms of the assistance we are providing to the landowners especially those who cannot have access to our commercial banks. It is very difficult for our landowners to access commercial banks in terms of the requirements. For us, the assistance we provide are no deposit, 2.5 percent interest and we need some sort of security because the law says we need to get a security. So the security can be lease money, direct deduction from their lease money or title, but we need to have security.

The categories of those we are assisting are individual *iTaukei* can apply for this facility. The *mataqali*, *tokatoka* or the *yavusa* that owns the land, the trustee or the business arm can apply and also a co-operative for a group of landowners. Those are the three categories that can apply for assistance. For example, we have some dairy farmers in Tailevu and Naitasiri that we have assisted in terms of buying cows, fencing, and even the electrical milker. Those are some of the assistance that we are providing for landowners. We have assisted around 120 landowners with an amount of \$5 million. We have recovered \$1million out of that \$5 million in terms of repayment. It is going good for the time being.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- CEO and your team, just look at how you tabulated your staff. When you look at the requirements from the SDG, they are always there to embark and ensure that the balance of the workers is maintained. You have a very good number, 173 males and 100 females. Are there any ways to improve that? Looking at staffing, the balancing of 60/40 or 50/50 or 70/30 is quite hard. But those are the SDG requirements when moving forward.

MR. S. NATA.- Mr. Chairman, I think it depends on the competencies and the fit for the job. We are land administrators. We are expected to go to the field, long hours, mountains, et cetera. You will stay there, probably late into the night, consultation, drink grog, et cetera.

We must have a mix. We have our estate officer who is a male, maybe an assistant a female, in terms of having the balance. It depends on the job and the competencies required.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I have seen from the presentation that you are the recipient of the President's Award. That is a big achievement so far when you talk about improvement in processes. GM is looking at me, understand this, because I used to be a senior evaluator before. What are the impacts when you look at the organisation of the institution when you apply these seven pillars of the Fiji Business Excellence Award. Before we used to have the Service Excellence Award (SEA) run by the Government, but now it is totally run by the Fiji National University. How do you look at improvement from where you were and the current situation when you have the President's Award, in terms of improving your processes, likewise, you have a benchmark there of standardisation of processes, and the ISO.

I believe there is a lot of improvement in the process, and the continuity part of it; benchmark on best practices is a must. How do you look at it in terms of how the institution was before and now that you have attained the President's Award?

MR. S. NATA.- Mr. Chairman, this is the second time that we have been awarded that recognition, the highest in the country. In terms of leadership, management, compliance, standard, accessibility, customer satisfaction, services, and efficiency, we try to improve in all those areas. iTLTB has a good system and mostly are digital systems. We process the lease now online, rent re-assessments online, even conveyancing in terms of documentations are online. That has been achieved, but it is a process of continuous improvement all the time, focussing on attitude of staff mindset to complement what we have done and reached so far.

In terms of ISO, that is the next level. The Business Excellence is normally a national competition. The ISO is a regional and global in terms of benchmarking. We have completed 10 stages in the first phase last year and we are moving into the second phase this year.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- CEO and the team, last one from this side. While looking at the 2023 Annual Report, when we sum it up, we always look at how best the challenges you face. Maybe not now, if you can provide us, what are the five highest challenges during the report in time to help us in our key findings and recommendations to Parliament? If you can provide this for us through our secretariat, that will help us out in formulating our final submission before we table this Report to Parliament.

At this juncture, I wish to sincerely thank you all for availing yourselves for this public hearing session. We thank you for your time and hope that you will avail yourself for any further queries that the Committee may have on today's submission. On that note, CEO and the team, we are having our site visit exercise that will be rolled out next month, hopefully on 17<sup>th</sup> February, it will be a two-week exercise. The request from the team is if you can provide us some sites relevant to the Report for us to physically check, see what is happening on the ground, in comparison to the Report that is before us.

Our public submission this morning is closed.

The Committee adjourned at 11.52 a.m.