



**International Convention on
the Elimination of All Forms
of Racial Discrimination**

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Summary record of the 2182nd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 16 August 2012, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Avtonomov

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention *(continued)*

Eighteenth to twentieth periodic reports of Fiji (continued) (CERD/C/FJI/18-20; CERD/C/CJI/Q/18-20)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Fiji took places at the Committee table.*
2. **The Chairperson** invited the delegation to reply to the questions raised by members of the Committee at the previous meeting.
3. **Mr. Vocea** (Fiji) said that his Government was firmly committed to ensuring that the new Constitution would include non-negotiable provisions such as the prohibition of racial discrimination in accordance with the Constitutional Processes (Constitution Commission) Decree 2012. However, there were currently no specific provisions reflecting article 1 of the Convention.
4. The provisions of the Public Order (Amendment) Decree 2009 broadly reflected article 4 of the Convention. Racial vilification was defined as conduct that offended, insulted, humiliated or intimidated a person or group on the grounds of race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, or conduct constituting incitement to hatred, serious contempt, revulsion or severe ridicule of such persons or groups. Any act that insulted, humiliated or intimidated any person or group on grounds of race was thus criminalized. The definition actually exceeded the scope of article 4 by specifying different acts of violence committed against a person or group. It did not, however, require “superiority of the group of offenders”. The provisions were also applicable to public meetings, processions or assemblies. However, there was no general law that expressly prohibited racial vilification. The Fijian Government intended to incorporate the aforementioned provisions in the Constitution.
5. The Fijian Government maintained ethnic profiles for planning and development purposes. They continued to be a major component of the national census, the household income and expenditure surveys on which poverty reports were based, and employment surveys by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics. Ethnic profiles were also maintained by Government agencies such as the Ministries of Education and Health and the Department of Social Welfare for the allocation of social welfare resources. However, racial profiling was removed from areas in which it served no useful purpose, for example from immigration forms for Fiji residents returning to the country and from all court documents.
6. All citizens of Fiji, including iTaukei, Fijians of Indian descent and Fijians belonging to other ethnic minorities, were now referred to as Fijians.
7. The Government had made two major adjustments to its decision-making machinery in 2009 in order to enhance the coordination of structural reform and development efforts, especially the implementation of the People’s Charter for Change, Peace and Progress (the People’s Charter). The first consisted in the development of an Integrated Rural Development Framework, which established divisional and provincial development boards composed of representatives of local communities and relevant Government agencies, which were responsible for integrating all rural development initiatives into the Government’s planning and decision-making framework. Development assistance to iTaukei and Fijians belonging to other ethnic groups was no longer provided through separate administrative structures. Moreover, bodies comprising members of local communities had been established to advise the Government on development assistance for rural areas.

8. The second adjustment consisted in the establishment of the National People's Charter Advisory Council, which was composed of members of civil-society and private-sector organizations who received periodic reports from Government agencies on the implementation of the People's Charter and produced annual reports containing recommendations to the Prime Minister on measures required to improve implementation. The Council also provided the formal framework for Government consultations with the private sector and civil society on the implementation of its national development and reform agenda.

9. Interpreters were required for any individual appearing in court whose first language was not English. Interpreters were made available to Fijians who spoke only iTaukei, Hindi, Chinese or other Pacific languages. The process of recruiting interpreters from abroad for foreign nationals was very costly, but every effort was made by the courts to ensure due process.

10. The Fiji Human Rights Commission had been established to investigate human rights violations and was independent of the Government. However, the Government provided the Commission with funds (730,000 Fiji dollars) and services. Section 36 of Human Rights Commission Decree No. 11 of 2009 empowered the staff of the Commission to continue providing necessary services, including the investigation of human rights complaints. The complaints had been compiled into a report and forwarded to the Government, which had acted on the recommendations. The structure of the Commission would remain unchanged until the new Constitution was adopted, and the Government was committed to ensuring that it continued to operate under the Constitution. The Commission would also be required to assist in interpreting the Constitution and in taking action against any breaches.

11. While the Government acknowledged the importance of statistical data on legal proceedings and judicial decisions pertaining to racial discrimination, it had been unable to obtain adequate statistics because most complaints and convictions concerned economic or physical offences for which adequate remedies and compensation for damage were available under the criminal and civil justice systems.

12. The judiciary had issued a number of decisions pertaining to human rights in general, including decisions on the right to employment based on age, the right to freedom of movement within and outside Fiji, and the right of women to protection against violence. The Domestic Violence Decree 2012 and the Family Law Act empowered women to file claims for property and maintenance in respect of marital and de facto relationships. Where injuries or losses were sustained, the judiciary awarded compensation to victims or, in the case of deceased victims, to their relatives. He undertook to provide the Committee with the relevant statistics in due course.

13. With the inclusion of the prohibition of racial discrimination through hate speech and hate crimes in the recently enacted legislative framework, the State party was confident that complaints of racial discrimination would be adequately addressed by the judicial system. Provision had been made for criminal penalties and civil damages in the event of abuse of authority. The Government was confident that relevant statistics would be available in the future.

14. The Government was aware that merit-based equality of opportunity could in some instances exclude certain vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities and women, from full participation in society. Entrenched systems and policies had, in the past, favoured particular ethnic communities in the electoral system and in income-generating development assistance programmes. It was only when the current Government had come to power in 2006 that Fiji had begun to practise merit-based equality of opportunity regardless of race. The Government had adopted a needs-based approach to socioeconomic

development assistance with a view to ensuring that vulnerable groups were catered for. An affirmative action programme for vulnerable groups might be adopted in the future to correct any imbalances created by merit-based equality of opportunity policies. Social justice was one of the non-negotiable principles to be provided for under the new Constitution.

15. The police force currently had no statistics concerning offences involving racial discrimination or human rights violations. Between 17,000 and 18,000 crimes had been committed in Fiji each year since 2006 and the police detection rate was between 40 and 50 per cent. The current position was that a crime was a crime regardless of the motives involved. The Government would give due consideration, bearing in mind existing capacity constraints, to the Committee's recommendation that violent acts against individuals because of their ethnicity should be recorded.

16. There were two main poverty reports on Fiji, the Preliminary Report on Poverty and Household Incomes published by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics in September 2010 and a World Bank report entitled Poverty Trends, Profiles and Small Area Estimation published in September 2011 and covering the period 2003–2009. Poverty statistics were based on a 2008–2009 Household Incomes and Expenditure Survey. The basic needs poverty line was estimated at about 175 Fiji dollars per week for a household of four adults, which was the average family size. The poverty rate for ethnic groups was 31 per cent for iTaukei, 32 per cent for Fijians of Indian descent, and 25 per cent for Fijians belonging to other ethnic groups. The incidence of poverty in rural areas was 42 per cent for iTaukei and 45 per cent for Fijians of Indian descent. Ethnic minority communities recorded the highest incidence of poverty in rural areas, namely about 50 per cent. In urban areas, Fijians of Indian origin recorded the highest incidence of poverty at 21 per cent, compared to 17 per cent for iTaukei and 16 per cent for other ethnic groups.

17. Priority in the allocation of resources under the Government's two main social welfare programmes, the family assistance scheme and the food voucher programme, was given to older persons, persons with disabilities and pregnant women. Of the roughly 22,800 households receiving a family assistance allowance, 58 per cent were iTaukei, 39 per cent Fijians of Indian descent and 3 per cent Fijians belonging to other ethnic groups. About 54 per cent of the food voucher programme beneficiaries were Fijians of Indian origin, 44 per cent were iTaukei and the remaining 2 per cent were Fijians belonging to other ethnic groups.

18. According to figures for 2002–2003, Fijians of Indian descent fared badly in terms of income distribution, with a Gini coefficient of 0.427, compared to 0.394 for iTaukei. The ethnic inequality gap had declined from 9 to 7 per cent between 2003 and 2009. The World Bank had assessed the overall poverty rate in Fiji at 35.2 per cent. The average rate of poverty reduction for iTaukei and Fijians of Indian descent over the period from 2003 to 2009 was between 4 and 5 percentage points. The corresponding figure for other ethnic groups was as high as 7 percentage points, although they accounted for only 5 to 6 per cent of the total population.

19. Fiji had adopted standards to limit foreign ownership of its media organizations under the Media Industry Development Decree. While the media were free to report and comment on all matters of public interest, they were prohibited from publishing or broadcasting material that was likely to promote or encourage communal hatred or discord. Under the Media Code of Ethics and Practice, they were required to avoid discriminatory or denigrating references to people's gender, ethnicity, colour, religion, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental disability or illness, or age. Complaints could be lodged with the Media Tribunal by any individual who felt that a media organization had breached the Code. Any journalist or media organization found by the Tribunal to be in breach of the

Code could be sentenced to a fine of up to \$1,000 in the case of a journalist and \$100,000 in the case of a media organization.

20. Fijian law regarding statelessness was consistent with international human rights principles. According to the Citizenship Decree 2009, all persons born in Fiji were Fijians, including those with paternity links. The provision was applicable to members of all races and to minors born in Fiji.

21. Fijian land tenure was divided into freehold tenure, leased land and iTaukei land. The State could either buy land or acquire it compulsorily through the powers conferred on it by the Crown Acquisition Act. Where public utilities required land, the relevant legislation permitted them to request the State to impose compulsory acquisition. However, the State must first consult the landowners and compensate them for any losses sustained. Under the Land Use Decree, the formal consent of all iTaukei landowning units was required for any deposit of such land with the Land Use Unit (the landbank). The Government had never forced any native landowners to deposit their land with the landbank. However, the iTaukei landowning units might also wish to lease their lands through the iTaukei Lands Trust Board. Where native lands that could be leased were left idle, the Government took steps to promote their proper use, offering premium returns to the landowners. Lessees of native lands were required to provide at least 12 months' written notice through the Native Land Trust Board of their intention to either vacate or seek renewal of their leases. They were then entitled to stay until the date of expiry of their notice. However, adjudicating bodies were convened to settle any disputes.

22. Seventeen civil-society organizations had been involved in the drafting of the periodic report. They included non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the areas of women's rights, children's rights, the rights of indigenous peoples, the rights of persons with disabilities, and the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. The Fiji-based Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) had coordinated the consultation between civil society and the Fijian Government, which had been represented by members of the Inter-Agency Committee.

23. The institutional structures that had engaged in racial discrimination by offering special protection to one race had been dismantled. However, a number of policies supported the vulnerable iTaukei group, for instance through scholarships for further education and the provision of assistance to villages.

24. The current consultations concerned the new Constitution and not the People's Charter. The Constitution was to be discussed by the National Constituent Assembly, which had been established pursuant to the National Constitution Processes Decree. The members of the Constituent Assembly included representatives of the Government, registered political parties, faith-based organizations, young people, women, employers, trade unions, farmers, business owners, national organizations, people with disabilities and civil-society organizations.

25. The iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission, which had been established in 1880 to register ownership of iTaukei land, remained in place. The Commission was the custodian of various registers that complied with regulations laid down in the iTaukei Lands Act and the Fisheries Act. It registered ownership of and adjudicated disputes concerning iTaukei land and customary fishing rights.

26. Fiji was a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), which had a development partnership with the European Union under the Cotonou Agreement. The Agreement, which had been signed in 2000 and would expire in 2020, facilitated coordinated European Union action in ACP countries on issues such as human rights, good governance, the rule of law and migration. The European Development Fund

also provided significant development assistance to ACP States. Fiji had benefited considerably from the Cotonou Agreement.

27. Fiji's relationship with Australia and New Zealand had improved greatly since 2006. Members of the Pacific Islands Forum Ministerial Contact Group had recently visited Fiji to assess progress towards preparing the 2014 parliamentary elections. The feedback from the visit had been very positive. The Fijian Minister for Foreign Affairs had also held several meetings with his Australian and New Zealand counterparts. Full diplomatic relations would shortly be restored. He hoped that other States would also be encouraged to re-engage with his country.

28. **Mr. Saidou** (Country Rapporteur) asked whether, in the ongoing process of democratic reform, an electoral code had been adopted and what the eligibility criteria were for voters and candidates. He also asked whether any measures were taken to combat racial discrimination in rugby. He requested information about evictions in the public interest, particularly in relation to communal indigenous land. He enquired about indigenous ownership of the continental shelf.

29. **Mr. Vocea** (Fiji) said that the Constitution Commission had been conducting broad public consultations on issues, including electoral practice, and that a new electoral code would set out the criteria for candidacy to elections, lower the legal voting age from 21 to 18 and provide for the delineation of voting districts. The commission's proposals would be put to the parliament in early 2013. The only considerations in rugby and other sports were fitness and skill. Referring to an incident in the northern part of the country where the Fiji Human Rights Commission had intervened to block the eviction of some 52 Fijian families of Indian decent, he said that the Government would have to obtain the approval of two thirds of the holders of a given piece of communal land in order to use it for development purposes and would give compensation for the loss.

30. **Mr. Vázquez** asked whether the legal provisions on racial vilification only covered certain offences and insults when accompanied by acts of violence. He expressed the concern that the ban on material that promoted community discord, as defined in the Media Industry Development Decree, was too broad and could be used against minorities trying to assert their rights. He also asked whether there was a specific law to address the problem of racist organizations or whether they came under the decree that gave the executive branch sweeping powers in matters of public security.

31. **Ms. Waqainabete** (Fiji) said that the offence of racial vilification did not have to involve violence and that the Public Order (Amendment) Decree prohibited public incitement of racial hatred.

32. **Mr. de Gouttes** asked to what extent the courts were involved in property disputes and whether the delegation could provide examples of relevant rulings and describe their impact.

33. **Ms. Waqainabete** (Fiji) said that land disputes, which were mainly over agricultural leases from iTaukei landowners, to whom the land reverted when leases expired, were heard by the agriculture court. Most leaseholders were Fijians of Indian decent. Disputes over ownership and land titling were dealt with by the Native Lands and Fisheries Commission and there was a mechanism to appeal its decisions.

34. **Mr. Calí Tzay** asked whether communal landownership was a recognized form of land tenure in Fiji. He requested additional comment on the State party's apparent view that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples did not apply to the iTaukei, owing to their majority status. He cited the examples of Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru which had all taken the Declaration on board despite the fact that their populations

were overwhelmingly indigenous. He also asked whether the various minority languages were taught at all education levels.

35. **Ms. Waqainabete** (Fiji) said that the Fijian Government's interpretation of the Declaration was that its provisions applied to minority groups. However, given that a disproportionate number of iTaukei were underprivileged, measures would be taken to protect them, in accordance with the Declaration.

36. **The Chairperson** asked who was considered the official owner in the case of communal land.

37. **Mr. Vocea** (Fiji) said that all iTaukei land was communally owned and registered with the Native Lands and Fisheries Commission. It could not be alienated and was only open to lease, the royalties of which reverted to the clan through the iTaukei Lands Trust Board. English was the common tongue among Fijians, but minority languages such as Fijian, Hindi and Rotuman were also taught at the primary level.

38. **Mr. Lindgren Alves** asked for clarification of the different names used for the various population groups and said, citing the example of Bolivia, that there was such a thing as overcategorization.

39. **Mr. Vocea** (Fiji) said that all citizens were called Fijian, irrespective of their ethnic origin, but the indigenous population had chosen the name iTaukei, meaning "owners of land".

40. **Mr. Lahiri** said that, regardless of whether the term "indigenous" was used to refer to the iTaukei, it would be useful to know whether the concept of indigenous people would be relevant in the application of the proposed system of proportional representation.

41. **Mr. Walker** (Fiji) said that, under the system of proportional representation proposed under the People's Charter, the country would be divided into four or five electoral regions, along administrative divisions as opposed to provincial lines. No groups of the population would be given special treatment under the proposals. While the Government had done away with most of the preferential treatment it had previously afforded the vast majority of iTaukei people, it would rely on the protections offered under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly for residents of iTaukei villages, many of whom earned less than US\$ 1 a day. They were not poor in terms of food, as they had access to resources, but they had very low incomes and deserved special protection.

42. **Mr. Diaconu** said that the Committee's concerns about indigenous peoples' rights had little to do with whether they were categorized as indigenous or not; that was more relevant to the question of self-identification. The Committee's focus was the protection of indigenous communities' rights to land, to preserve their culture, language and traditions and to use their traditional system of justice, provided it did not violate fundamental human rights and freedoms. As for land rights, like many indigenous communities in other countries, the iTaukei had a system of communally held lands. Since that land could be leased only with the approval of the majority of the inhabitants, it would appear that their land rights were protected. It would be useful to learn how iTaukei culture, language and traditions were protected and promoted and whether the iTaukei used a system of justice that was separate from the main legal system.

43. **Mr. Vocea** (Fiji) said that the land rights of the iTaukei people continued to be protected under the iTaukei Land Trust Act. Any leases of land for development purposes had to be approved by two thirds of the inhabitants of a village. The iTaukei language was taught in schools.

44. **Ms. Waqainabete** (Fiji) said that the justice system was equal for all people and made no distinction on the grounds of race, colour or creed. The determination of iTaukei lands was carried out by a separate adjudicating body with a different composition and structure from the courts, although similar principles of natural justice applied in both systems. The different composition and structure of the adjudicating body was necessary in order to ensure it functioned in line with the customary practices that were in place. While there were different dialects, there was only one iTaukei language in Fiji.

45. **Mr. Calí Tzay** asked why the iTaukei were still disadvantaged relative to the rest of the population, given that the Government had apparently been giving them preferential treatment in terms of economic, social and cultural benefits. He would welcome the delegation's reaction to reports that some indigenous people had disagreed with the decision to start referring to them as iTaukei people.

46. **Mr. Vocea** (Fiji) said that, while the Government's reform package aimed at benefiting the whole of society, it was normal that some sectors of the population would resist change, particularly those who were losing out on benefits. The reforms had been widely debated and submissions had been made to the Constitution Commission. The reform process would give the Government the opportunity to undertake a thorough analysis of Fijian society in the coming years and ascertain whether some groups remained vulnerable and required targeted assistance to ensure they were properly integrated in society. Once that analysis had been completed, the Government would be in a position to allocate resources and design appropriate programmes for such groups.

47. **Ms. January-Bardill** said that the process that was under way in the State party was not unusual; similar reforms had taken place in many countries, where people who had previously been considered members of racial, social or ethnic groups had been reclassified as citizens of the State. The challenges Fiji currently faced were to achieve reforms that democratized the State and ensured that all its people had equal rights to justice, and to develop the entire society, particularly the most disadvantaged groups. The State party would need to pay significant attention to the development challenge as well as to democratizing institutions and society. While the two challenges would always remain juxtaposed to some extent, ultimately it was essential that the State used its resources to improve the social status of the most disadvantaged members of society.

48. **Mr. Lindgren Alves** added that the Committee should bear in mind that the State party was in a period of transition and the Government would continue making changes for several years. Its main priority was to ensure it could govern democratically, by changing the country's entire institutional framework.

49. **Mr. Vocea** (Fiji) agreed that his country was going through a transition period which, he hoped, would result in a better life for all its citizens.

50. **Mr. de Gouttes** asked to what extent the effects of climate change were being felt in the State party.

51. **Mr. Vocea** (Fiji) said that Kiribati was in the process of purchasing land in northern Fiji, with the approval of Cabinet, in order to mitigate the effects of global warming on its population. Since many people from Kiribati and Tuvalu had resettled in Fiji in the 1950s, the potential relocation of that population might be facilitated by links with their compatriots who had lived in Fiji for over 60 years. Some people living in north-western Fiji were feeling the impact of climate change on their low-lying lands and had sought relocation to the main island of Viti Levu.

52. **Ms. Crickley** said it appeared that the challenge before the Government in the current period of transition was to reconcile the realities of racial discrimination with its new policies that were perceived by some groups to threaten the iTaukei people. She asked

how the Government would work to reconcile those two elements over the next few years. She urged the State party to set up a body that was truly independent and had the power to comment on the procedures being put in place during the transition period.

53. **Mr. Vocea** (Fiji) said that the acting head of the current Human Rights Commission had recommended a candidate to be the new head of the Commission to the Office of the Prime Minister. There was also the option of seconding legal officers to the Commission. It was expected that, once the new Constitution was in place, Government policies would be evaluated to ascertain whether any population groups would be vulnerable under the new structures. The results of the evaluation would indicate whether affirmative action needed to be taken to ensure that certain groups were better integrated into society. It was impossible to comment on the outcome of that process at the current time.

54. **The Chairperson** drew attention to the Committee's guidelines regarding affirmative action contained in general recommendation No. 32, on the meaning and scope of special measures in the Convention.

55. **Mr. Thornberry** expressed support for the comments made by Mr. Diaconu regarding certain key indigenous issues. In that regard, it was worth recalling that the definition of racial discrimination in article 1 of the Convention referred to the enjoyment of human rights, which included indigenous rights. The adoption of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples had further sharpened the Committee's focus on indigenous rights. Discussions were ongoing as to how those standards affected the understanding of discrimination in areas such as land, culture, justice, representation and intellectual property. Regarding general recommendation No. 32, he affirmed that special measures should be taken whenever necessary. The recommendation drew a distinction between special measures and permanent indigenous and minority rights.

56. Regarding the naming of ethnic groups, he said that the general standard was that groups should not be assigned names to which they might object, as names were an expression of identity.

57. He highlighted that all communities, regardless of whether they were indigenous or not, should be able to participate in decisions that affected them. He asked whether it was correct that Fiji would shortly be discussing its first report to ILO under Convention No. 169.

58. Regarding Fiji's state of transition, he said that the Committee's praise, concerns and possible recommendations would contribute to discussions under way at the domestic level. It was important to ensure that processes within that transition phase be kept as open as possible and that the outcome be subject to review.

59. **Mr. Vocea** (Fiji) said that he was not sure when Fiji would be discussing its first report with ILO. He acknowledged the importance of affirmative action, but said that the State would be reluctant to apply blanket measures for the indigenous community regardless of the distribution of wealth within that community. With regard to participation in decision-making, the commission responsible for drafting the new Constitution was inviting submissions from all sectors of society and all ethnic groups, in line with the provisions of international instruments. He was confident that the final text would represent a positive outcome for all Fijians.

60. **Mr. Thornberry**, in clarification of his earlier comment, said that general recommendation No. 32 expressly indicated that affirmative measures for the benefit of indigenous peoples were distinct from their human rights, the former being temporary and the latter permanent. Affirmative action should be undertaken for all those in need of it.

61. **The Chairperson** asked what the obstacles were to appointing a head, secretary and commissioners for the Fiji Human Rights Commission. He also requested clarification on the incident in which 52 families had faced eviction and had later been allowed to remain in their homes. Had that incident involved any element of ethnic or racial discrimination? Had there been any legal basis to the eviction order and had the order been revoked simply as a goodwill gesture?

62. **Mr. Vocea** (Fiji) said that he was unable to explain why a head, secretary and commissioners had not been appointed for the Fiji Human Rights Commission, but that he could request further information in that respect from the Office of the Prime Minister.

63. With regard to the incident concerning the eviction of 52 families, he drew attention to section 4, paragraph 5, of the Fiji Human Rights Commission's report to the Committee. It had been considered that the issue related to racial discrimination. The Fiji Human Rights Commission had mobilized the relevant authorities to act on the complaint it had received; the eviction order had subsequently been revoked and the land authorities were working to grant the families access to plots of land through the Native Land Trust Board. The resolution of that incident demonstrated the effectiveness of the Fiji Human Rights Commission in addressing human rights issues despite its lack of a leader. Furthermore, as a result of the Commission's investigations of prison conditions, the Government was improving facilities at remand centres throughout the country.

64. **The Chairperson** said that he welcomed the efforts of the Fiji Human Rights Commission. He was aware that Fiji was undergoing a period of transition and was in the midst of an economic crisis, and expressed appreciation for the fact that the State had nevertheless respected its reporting obligations under the Convention. The Committee looked forward to a fruitful dialogue on the basis of the country's next periodic report, following the adoption of a new Constitution.

65. **Mr. Saidou** thanked the delegation of Fiji for its responses and the representatives of Fijian NGOs for their attendance. The dialogue with Fiji had revealed the State party's considerable efforts to counter discrimination and the challenges it faced in the effective implementation of reforms. The Committee's concluding observations would help the State party to progress in its fight against racial discrimination. In closing, he wished Fiji every success in establishing democratic institutions and running open and transparent elections, free of conflict on racial grounds.

66. **Mr. Vocea** (Fiji), noting that it would be a challenge for the Committee to formulate recommendations for a country in transition, said the next periodic report would reflect a more stable situation, based on a new Constitution, and include information requested by Committee members at the current session. He assured the Committee that Fiji would establish modern, democratic institutions under the new domestic legal framework. He thanked the members of the Committee for their constructive questions, which would help to guide Fiji in its efforts to implement the Convention.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.