



Honourable Sitiveni Rabuka, OBE, MSD, OStJ
**Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change and
Environment, Civil Service, Information and Public Enterprises**

Decisions made at the 13th Cabinet Meeting held on 13 August 2024

The Peoples' Coalition Cabinet held its 13th meeting of 2024 on Tuesday 13 August 2024. The meeting was chaired by the Acting Prime Minister, Hon. Viliame Gavoka.

The decisions of Cabinet include the following:

1. Bus Fare Subsidy for Students

Cabinet agreed that Government fully subsidize increased bus fares effective from 1 September 2024 for all students with blue and yellow bus cards.

The Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission (FCCC) has completed the review of the existing bus fares and adopted a new fare calculation methodology in consultation with the Fiji Bus Operators Association.

Under the new methodology, FCCC has recommended that student fares be the same as adult fares. Currently, the regulated student fare is 50% of the adult fare at every stage.

Government will continue to fully subsidize students with blue cards under the transport assistance scheme, and in addition, subsidize the 50% increase in fares for the rest of the students who use yellow cards.

2. Implementation of the European Union-Pacific Interim Economic Partnership Agreement

Cabinet approved the implementation of the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement (IEPA) and the removal of duties on certain goods coming from the European Union (EU) countries. This decision is part of Fiji's ongoing commitment IEPA, a trade agreement that aims to boost trade and strengthen economic ties between Fiji and the EU.

Fiji is already reaping the benefits of the IEPA, which provides duty-free and quota-free access for Fijian exports to the European Union market. This arrangement helps boost Fiji's exports by allowing Fijian products to enter the EU markets without import taxes.

With the removal of duties on European products, Fijian consumers and businesses will have better access to high-quality goods from the EU, including advanced technology and machinery, that will help improve the quality and efficiency of production in Fiji.

Fiji will now start dialogue with the EU to explore other export opportunities, including the activation of the “global sourcing provision” under the IEPA. Once activated, this will allow Fiji to utilise fish caught by foreign country fishing vessels, process it locally, and then export it to the EU without any import taxes. This could greatly benefit Fiji’s fishing industry and boost exports.

3. **Reinstatement of School Chaplaincy Positions in Government Schools and Cost-Sharing Arrangement for Chaplains in Non-Government Schools**

Cabinet approved the reinstatement of school chaplain positions in government schools. Funding for these positions will be made available through the Ministry of Education.

Cabinet also agreed that chaplains in non-government schools be funded on a cost – sharing basis from the Free Education Grant (FEG).

A school chaplain refers to a cleric (such as minister, priest, pastor, rabbi, pundit or imam) or a lay representative of a religious body, attached to a school.

School chaplains will be guided by the School Chaplaincy Policy.

The reinstatement of school chaplains is part of the People’s Coalition Government’s commitment to mitigate the escalating social problems amongst young people in Fiji.

4. **Amendment to the Personal Property Securities Regulations 2019**

Cabinet endorsed amendment to the Personal Property Securities Regulations 2019 to allow the Personal Property Securities Registry (PPSR) to continue to provide its services without levying any fees to its clients and the general public.

PPSR is administered by the Reserve Bank of Fiji. It is Fiji's online site for searching and filing notices of security interest in movable property.

It enables lenders and other creditors collectively called secured parties to register notices at any time and place, and it allows anyone to conduct public searches on priority rights over collateral.

5. **Letter of Agreement between the Food Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Ministry of Trade, Co-Operatives, Micro, Small And Medium Enterprises and Communications**

Cabinet endorsed a Letter of Agreement (Agreement) between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Communications (Ministry) to establish agribusiness incubation (ABI).

ABI is a process which focuses on nurturing innovative early-stage enterprises that have high growth potential to become competitive agribusiness by serving, adding value or linking to farm producers.

The three – year partnership with FAO for the establishment of ABI in Fiji will lay the foundation for long term agribusiness innovation and enterprise enabling ecosystem towards sustainable agrifood system transformation.

6. **Memoranda of Understanding between the Government of Fiji and the Government of the People’s Republic of China on Trade Facilitation And Cooperation and Blue Economy**

Cabinet endorsed memoranda of the understanding with the People’s Republic of China (China Government) with respect to promoting Trade Facilitation and Cooperation (Trade MOU) and Deepening Blue Economy Cooperation and Sustainable Development (Blue Economy MOU).

The Trade MOU establishes a Working Group focused on enhancing bilateral trade relations and supporting the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), whose main responsibilities include assessing and promoting trade growth, developing effective communication channels, encouraging enterprise engagement, supporting industry associations, and addressing trade challenges.

It will operate under the China-Fiji Trade and Economic Cooperation Commission, with regular meetings and a mechanism for resolving trade disruptions.

The Blue Economy MOU aims to deepen bilateral cooperation in the blue economy and advance sustainable development and it establishes a framework for enhancing practical cooperation, fostering new growth drivers in the blue economy, and promoting high-quality bilateral investment.

It focuses on building a mutually beneficial partnership to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, fostering high-quality investment cooperation, and promoting sustainable development.

It also supports businesses in exploring investment opportunities, establishing marine economic cooperation parks, and creating effective investment platforms.

7. **Beijing Platform for Action 30-Year National Review Report**

Cabinet approved the Beijing Platform for Action 30-Year National Review Report (Fiji BPfA+30).

The report highlights achievements, challenges, and core elements of the review process, emphasizing the advancement of all women and girls. The Fiji BPfA+30 draws extensive insights from the Fiji Country Gender Assessment which was launched in 2023.

The report will now be submitted to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the UN Women online portals.

8. **Hosting of the 48th Annual Indo – Pacific Army Management Seminar**

Cabinet approved the hosting of the 48th Annual Indo-Pacific Army Management Seminar from today.

The Indo-Pacific Army Management Seminar is an annual multidimensional conference that brings together Chiefs of Armies and senior representatives of nations from the Asia-Pacific region to discuss mutual security challenges, improve mutual relationships, and foster security cooperation across the region.

The 2024 Indo-Pacific Army Management Seminar will be co-hosted by the Republic of Military Forces and the United States Army Pacific.

9. **Protocol Agreement between the Ministry Of Home Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Fiji and the Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China on China's Provision of Military Assistance Gratis to Fiji**

Cabinet endorsed the Protocol Agreement with the Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China on the provision of China's military aid gratis (Aid) worth 20,000,000 RMB.

Through this agreement, the Government of the People's Republic of China will continue to provide peacekeeping equipment and other logistical supplies for the Republic of Fiji Military Forces.

The agreement will be for three years.

10. **Improving Multi-Sectoral Investments in Early Childhood Development In Fiji**

Cabinet endorsed the Fiji National Early Childhood Development Policy.

The policy will be jointly implemented by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), the Ministry of Education (ME), and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection (MWCSP).

The policy aims to ensure all young children in Fiji, particularly during the first 1,000 days, are well nourished and healthy, receive proper care, stimulation, and opportunities for early learning, and grow up in nurturing environments protected from all kinds of violence, abuse, neglect, and conflict.

11. **Review of the Mental Health Act 2010**

Cabinet endorsed the review of the Mental Health Act 2010.

The Mental Health Act 2010 provides a framework for the prevention, treatment, care, management, rehabilitation and protection of people with mental disorders.

The aim of the review is to revise the law to allow for the delivery of a modern mental health service that respects the patient's voice and empowers individuals to shape their own care and treatment.

12. **Sub-Recipient Agreement between the United Nations Development Fund and the Ministry of Health of Medical Services**

Cabinet endorsed the Sub-Recipient Agreement (SRA) between the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (Ministry) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for a Global Fund programme to fight Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Tuberculosis (TB) and Malaria in Fiji.

The intent of the project is to combat and control the increasing number of HIV and TB cases in Fiji through a designed work plan.

Under the SRA, the Ministry will receive \$USD213,609.17 for a period of 3 years.

13. **Reviving the Fiji Heritage Foundation**

Cabinet approved the revival of the Fiji Heritage Foundation (FHF) to graduate from Government funding and provide better support the expansion of culture and heritage sector

FHF was created to address the need for dedicated funding and support for culture and heritage initiatives in Fiji. The beneficiaries of the FHF include all cultural institutions and sites, artists and artisans, local communities, schools, libraries, researchers, and cultural tourism initiatives.

Work will be undertaken to strengthen FHF's governance structure, strategic vision and operational capabilities.

14. **Standing Trees Compensation for Water Catchment Leases**

Cabinet endorsed the development of a policy to address the compensation of standing trees for land owning units (LOUs) whose land were leased to the State for water catchment purposes.

Standing trees compensation for water catchment leases means financial remuneration provided to resource owners for trees that are still standing and cannot be felled under the terms and conditions of the lease.

Fiji has no existing policy on standing tree compensation.

The policy will be developed to foster a balanced approach between environmental conservation, the water needs of the populace, the need of the State in providing water, and the economic interest of LOUs.

15. **Insurance Payout Survey in Partnership with the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security within the Framework of the Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Programme**

Cabinet endorsed the partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways (Ministry) and the United Nations University for Environment and Security (UNU-EHS) to undertake a payout survey to evaluate the impact of parametric insurance payouts on the economic decisions of beneficiaries following hazard events for the Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Programme (PICAP).

PICAP was designed to improve the financial preparedness and resilience of Pacific households, communities, small businesses, organisations, and governments towards the economic impacts of climate change-induced disasters through the development and deployment of market-based parametric meso- and micro insurance products.

Since its inception in 2021, PICAP has facilitated the introduction of climate risk micro insurance products with first claims payouts disbursed to beneficiaries following excess rainfall events in 2023 and 2024 in Fiji.

16. **Phase 2 of the National Housing Policy Review**

Cabinet agreed that the Ministry of Housing proceed with Phase 2 of National Housing Policy review with consultation on the draft of the revised National Housing Policy (NHP).

The revised draft NHP reflects contemporary issues identified through research and stakeholder consultations conducted to date.

The extensive public consultation process is expected to conclude later this year with the finalization of the revised draft NHP.

17. **Letter of Agreement with the Pacific Community for Pacific Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Administration**

Cabinet approved the execution of the Letter of Agreement (LOA) with the Pacific Community – Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (SPC-EQAP) on the administration of the Pacific Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA).

PILNA is a measurement of regional standards on literacy and numeracy based on a common scale for fifteen Pacific Island countries including Fiji.

PILNA's intention is to provide a benchmark platform for regional countries to measure the literacy and numeracy standard of students and provide recommendations against findings of the report.

18. **Memorandum of Understanding on Joint Chinese Language Education Programme Between the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Education of the Republic Of Fiji**

Cabinet endorsed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the People's Republic of China (PRC) to develop a Chinese Language Education Programme (Programme) for implementation in Fiji schools.

The MOU provides an overarching framework to allow for further discussions on the following areas of cooperation:

- (i) teaching of Chinese language, cultures and its values in Fijian schools;
- (ii) recruitment and terms and conditions of Chinese language teachers for the Ministry of Education under the Chinese Language Education & Cooperation (CLEC); and
- (iii) student and teacher cultural exchange programs at TVET level.

19. **Fiji's Human Rights Task Force**

Cabinet endorsed Fiji's Human Rights Task Force (FHRTF) to coordinate, advice, and foster regular interaction between State institutions to facilitate Fiji's fulfilment of its international human rights obligations.

The FHRTF will administer effective coordination of Fiji's engagement with international human rights mechanisms, including United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies, Universal Periodic Review, and Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, and for following up on the implementation of their outcomes.

The FHRTF will be chaired by the Office of the Attorney-General.

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