



Background Press Release

Pacific States to meet in Fiji to help boost participation of Small Island Developing States with the United Nations' premier human rights body

GENEVA/NADI (17 November 2019) -- From 19 to 21 November, government officials from the Pacific region, together with the President of the Human Rights Council, [Coly Seck](#) of Senegal, and other representatives from Small Island Developing States (SIDS), will gather in Nadi, Fiji to explore ways to strengthen the participation of SIDS in the 47-member Council aiming to improve human rights conditions in their countries and in the region.

The three-day [workshop](#) will bring together 24 former delegates from the 12 UN member States of the Pacific Region who have either participated in a regular session of the Geneva-based [Human Rights Council](#), or in a Fellowship Programme supported by the [LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund](#). The meeting provides a unique opportunity for the delegates to exchange views on their experiences at the Council and as Fellows to help translate those experiences into concrete results seen by improved human rights situations on the ground.

The workshop, which marks the first official visit of a sitting Human Rights Council President to the Pacific region since the global human rights body was established in 2006, aims to ensure that human rights concerns, challenges and opportunities regarding LDCs/SIDS are included, sustained and strategically addressed in the HRC's agenda.

The event follows up to a similar workshop held in Georgetown, Guyana last November where Caribbean beneficiary delegates adopted the "[Georgetown Declaration Towards 2022](#)" which endeavours to enhance the participation of SIDS in the CARICOM region in meetings of the Human Rights Council, the only intergovernmental organisation responding to all human rights abuses across the globe. To date more than 50 per cent of the action points of this Declaration have been implemented.

Some [35 participants](#), who include the 25 Pacific delegates (21 women and 4 men), as well as government representatives from Barbados, the Seychelles, a representative of the Chair of the Forum of Small States from Singapore, the Commonwealth, staff from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and Ambassador [Nazhat Shameen Khan](#) of Fiji, who has been serving as Vice President of the Council in 2019, will engage in specific discussions on violence against women and children, human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, and climate change and human rights. Climate change, in particular, is an issue that has received increasing attention at the Council for which the human rights body has adopted several resolutions mindful of the devastating effects of a rapidly warming planet on the basic rights of all of us who inhabit it.

The Permanent Representatives of Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea and the Permanent Observer of CARICOM all based in New York will participate as former beneficiary delegates of the Fund.

At the conclusion of next week's gathering, participants will adopt a new declaration, to be dubbed the "Nadi Declaration Towards 2022", noting 2022 as the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund.

The media is invited to attend the opening session on 19 November at 9:00 a.m., at the Sheraton Denarau, Orchid Conference room, and the closing session at 5 p.m. on 21 November, same venue.

The Nadi gathering is the second of four regional workshops to take place as mandated by Council [resolutions 34/40](#) and [19/26](#) and guided by the activities of the LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund. Since it became operational in 2014, the Fund has supported the participation of 143 delegates and fellows (89 women, 54 men) from 71 of the 72 LDCs/SIDS worldwide, including 34 delegates from the 12 UN member States of the Pacific region*. Among the 12 Pacific region LDCs/SIDS only five (Fiji, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) have established a Permanent mission in Geneva seat of the Human Rights Council.

The convening of next week's workshop takes place just weeks after the Marshall Islands was elected to serve as a member of the Human Rights Council, for a term commencing on 1 January 2020. Next to Fiji, the Marshall Islands is the second Pacific State to become a member of the human rights body. This is the first time since it was established when two SIDS from the Pacific are members of the Human Rights Council.

The President of the Human Rights Council will travel to Suva on Wednesday, 20 November to attend meetings with the Fijian Government. This will be followed by a public lecture which is being organised between the OHCHR Regional Office for the Pacific and the University of the South Pacific in Suva on 20 November, whereby the President will be speaking on the theme: "Emerging and Pressing Issues at the Human Rights Council"

Background on the LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund

In accordance with its resolution [19/26](#) of 23 March 2012, the Human Rights Council established the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the work of the Human Rights Council.

The Fund, which is managed by the Human Rights Council Branch of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), provides funding for the following activities:

Targeted training courses and capacity-building activities, including [e-learning](#), on the international human rights system, international human rights law and the rules and functioning of the HRC and its mechanisms;

Fellowship programmes for government officials from LDCs/SIDS to undertake three-month work placements relating to the work of the HRC; and

Induction training sessions for government officials of LDCs/SIDS to provide them with information on the multilateral human rights system as well as focused, practical training related to the work procedures of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms.

Human Rights Council resolutions [34/40](#) and [19/26](#) encourage the Trust Fund to hold a series of workshops prior to its tenth anniversary in March 2022, in the three geographical regions that the Trust Fund supports, namely Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the Caribbean.

The objective of the workshops is to assess the contribution of the Trust Fund in building the capacity of LDCs/SIDS for the promotion and protection of human rights, and to provide the opportunity for States to benefit from sharing and learning from each other's expertise and experiences, and also draw best practices and lessons learnt from member States in the context of the engagement with the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms.

* UN member States of the Pacific region: Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu).

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Additional information about the LDCs/SIDS [Trust Fund](#)

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