## G77 a -rare opportunity- for the Pacific

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内容：BRISBANE - For the first time in 48 years, a Pacific Small Island Developing State (PSIDS) is gearing up to assume chairmanship of the Group of 77 developing nations plus China. In 2013, the Republic of Fiji - located between Vanuatu and Tonga in the South Pacific and currently under a military government led by Prime Minister CommodoreVoreqeBainimarama - will take leadership of the largest intergovernmental coalition within the United Nations, replacing the incumbent chair, Algeria. - Fiji - s election to the Chair of the Group of 77 and China (G77) for 2013 demonstrates the international community-s (confidence in us) to preside over the 132member organisation in its endeavour to advance international matters that are of great importance to all developing countries,- said Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, Fiji-s minister for foreign affairs and international cooperation. The G77 was formed in 1964 with 77 founding member states, representing a collective ambition by developing nations to advance their international voice and influence on world trade. Since then, the G77, now comprising 132 member states, has championed SouthSouth cooperation as a key strategy to boost standards of living and economic fortunes in the global South. The intergovernmental group, which has identified the eradication of poverty as one of its greatest challenges, was also influential in developing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to a United Nations report last year, South South cooperation has boosted development and investment between developing countries and is a formidable driver of economic growth. Between 1990 and 2008 world trade expanded fourfold, while South South trade multiplied more than 20 times. Fiji-s new role within the UN was confirmed at the G77 foreign ministers- meeting in New York on September 28. The island state, with a population of about 868,000 spread over more than 330 islands, has an economy dominated by the sugar and tourism industries, as well as the highest national human development ranking within the Pacific subregion of Melanesia. However, an ongoing struggle for political power between indigenous Fijians and IndoFijians - descendants of nineteenth century Indian immigrant labourers - has fuelled four military coups since 1987. During the most recent one in 2006, Bainimarama, commander of Fiji-s military forces, took over the presidency and dissolved parliament in an alleged attempt to stifle corruption. His declared aim is to reform the racebased electoral system and draft a new constitution, following nationwide consultations, ahead of planned democratic elections in 2014. But Fiji-s refusal to hold democratic elections by 2010 led to international sanctions and its suspension in 2009 from the Commonwealth and the Pacific Islands Forum, a regional intergovernmental group of independent and selfgoverning states. The government of Fiji currently receives significant economic aid and political support from China. Engaged It also remains politically engaged in the Southwest Pacific as an active member of the Melanesian Spearhead Group(MSG), anintergovernmental group comprising Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, FijiandNew Caledonia. Nikunj Soni, board chair of the Pacific Institute of Public Policy (PIPP), an independent regional think tank based in Port Vila, Vanuatu, said that with the emergence of a range of advocacy platforms, such as the MSG and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the Pacific Islands Forum was no longer the sole organisation through which the islands could coordinate a voice. -Fiji-s chairmanship of the G 77 will give the country - s leadership a chance to reach out to the rest of the region by way of consultation in order to make sure a regional voice can be heard on the international stage,- Soni told IPS. -The Pacific will have a rare opportunity to represent itself on the global stage-- This is becoming increasingly important for the Pacific Islands as China and the US set their sights on the archipelago as a crucial geostrategic location. China is increasing its investment and presence in the islands, while the US has made moves to renew its engagement with the Pacific region in areas ranging from aid to security, and has deepened defence ties with Australia. The Pacific Islands are also rich in mineral, forest and marine resources. The PIPP emphasised that increasing the region-s international voice on issues of security and resource management in the context of climate change was a top priority. -With the Pacific Ocean covering half of the world-s ocean area and onethird its total surface area, the region contains some of the largest unexploited natural resources and some of the most climate vulnerable nations on earth,- Soni explained. - It remains important that small island developing states are not used by larger powers as proxies for their own geopolitical battles. At the same time, we must be able to protect our natural resources for the benefit of our own peoples.- The global influence of the G77 will only increase as developing countries, especially Brazil, China and India, emerge as the new leaders of world economic growth. According to this year-s UN global economic outlook, developing countries will grow an average of 5.9 per cent in 2013, while developed countries are likely to average only 1.9 per cent growth. But this year-s G77 Ministerial Meeting in New York also highlighted many challenges ahead for the coalition of developing nations, including the impact of the global financial crisis on world trade, food security, the fight against poverty, technology transfers and efforts to combat the severe effects of climate change. -