

Plenary Statement

**The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
(ESCAP)**

**The 3rd International Conference on Small Island Developing States
(SIDS)**

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Chairperson and Distinguished excellences

Thank you for opportunity to deliberate on Asia Pacific Regional Commission's perspective and support for the implementation of the future sustainable development path as reflected in Samoa Pathway.

ESCAP, the regional arm of the United Nations, by virtue of its mandate is an intergovernmental platform where leaders and top policy makers along with civil society, private sector and other stakeholders deliberate and agree on a common vision and mission.

The Samoa Pathway provides us with a unique opportunity to build on our work to help implement past international and regional agreements of SIDS. SAMOA pathway not only builds on these agreements, but augments the agenda by bringing in newer dimension of integrated approaches to sustainable development. This offers unique opportunity to the regional commissions to accelerate, align, sharpen and deepen our engagement for Pacific SIDS.

SAMOA Pathway, being a product of collective thinking requires that we launch collective efforts with our Asia Pacific members to promote policy coherence, cooperation and coordination – an area where regional commissions are well placed to offer leadership given their edge and mandate.

Recognising this, SAMOA Pathway and its action plan reinforces the role of Regional Commissions in supporting the implementation and monitoring the sustainable development across the SIDS economies.

Delivery of the central theme of durable and genuine partnership of the SAMOA pathway is outcome driven and result oriented. ESCAP will also be outcome driven and result oriented in Pacific SIDS.

In strategizing the ESCAP regional commission and our secretariat, we:

- i. respect the new pathways of Pacific regionalism as articulated by the Prime Minister of Samoa.
- ii. recognise the need to support Pacific's call for regional solidarity among states.
- iii. recognize the need for nurturing and supporting the Pacific's sub-regional cooperation and integration; and
- iv. recognize the need to develop regional policy, legal and institutional architecture, based on best practice and harmonized standards, that facilitates Pacific SIDS to navigate and implement the complex futuristic sustainable development agenda, recognising the context and specificities of vulnerabilities faced by the ocean-based Pacific SIDS.

So, how are we planning to achieve these broad objectives:

Enhancing Pacific's ownership and voice. ESCAP now offers multiple new stakeholder subregional platforms within the Asia Pacific platform and this would help reinforce Pacific's voice in defining their priorities and ensuring that forward looking SAMOA Pathway implementation is very much a SIDS product. To illustrate my point, in recent months, we have made use of existing and introduced new sub-regional platforms to feed effectively our regional dialogue. For example, we have convened special sessions to hear the priorities of the Pacific within the Asia Pacific Forum for Sustainable development, at the outreach of the Asia-Pacific

Sustainable Finance and the Asia-Pacific Monitoring, Accountability and Evaluation dialogue.

Drawing on the voice of the sub-region we are reorienting and shaping ESCAP's sub-regional strategy for the Pacific region. This strategy recognises the need for mainstreaming effectively sustainable development across all sectors and seeking support from our inter-governmental platform to help with finance, technology and other means of implementation for the effective execution of SAMOA Pathways.

Promoting green transformation. At the centre of policy making for us has been the need to equip and institutionalize Pacific inclusive, sustainable, and green growth path. This has called for policy makers to adopt suitable models and effective approaches and tools for holistic planning and policy coordination. Some countries and groups in the Pacific have already started to draw on the technical expertise and knowledge platform of ESCAP on green growth and more countries are forthcoming to adopt this path.

Capacity development for the national sustainable development strategies. To encourage effective national sustainable development strategies, their assessment and operationalization ESCAP is working with Pacific regional bodies to develop capacities of Pacific SIDS in this area.

Promoting regional connectivity. Economic and trade diversification, key for sustainable, inclusive and high growth of the region cannot occur without regional connectivity. This has led us to reflect on how we can contribute to an enabling environment for sustainable regional development of the maritime sector with supportive conducive renewable energy policies. ESCAP will also be supportive of Pacific ICT and will explore the sub-regions connectivity with the rest of Asia through the Asia Pacific Information Superhighway.

Response to shared vulnerabilities. Pacific SIDS face a range of vulnerabilities induced by climate change which aggravate social and economic disparities. Enhancing climate change adaptation frameworks, we are examining the impact of climate change on migration. In this area, regional cooperation supported by proper policy and legal frameworks will have high payoffs and lay preconditions for engagement in seasonal jobs that would help augment remittances for the economy and livelihoods of people. To deal with social vulnerabilities we have in place a broad based social inclusion strategy for the Pacific which, among others will involve supporting the Pacific Disability Forum which has been instrumental in raising political profile of the disability issues, and using Beijing+20 gender platform to promote further work on Pacific disparities.

Sustainable development of Pacific's natural resource management. Nurturing integrated policy and management approaches regional commission of ESCAP and its secretariat will support the implementation of Pacific regional initiatives such as the Palau Declaration on Oceans which recognizes the Pacific's Oceans as a regional and global commons.

Natural disaster risk reduction (DRR) programme. ESCAP, through its DRR programme offers the remote sensing information generated by space satellites. Capacity development of disaster management authorities and installation of geo-portals will facilitate early warning signals to SIDS of weather disruptions.

Regional statistical and data development. Getting statistics and data right will help Pacific's craft region's sustainable development goals and targets and facilitate their implementation. In this area, ESCAP Statistical Committee has already mandated our secretariat to launch a broad based approach to statistics development and building capacities of the national statistical offices/systems. Durable and genuine and holistic partnerships will help in this context. ESCAP's Statistics Division in partnership with ESCAP's Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific in Japan and in close collaboration with the regional statistical bodies of

the Pacific will contribute to enhancing capacities and innovations to generate new data such as for the system of environmental and economics accounting and explore ways to exploit and use big data to enhance statistics. Effective coordination in statistics is critical as today we only have reliable data for twenty one per cent of the proposed 169 targets for the SDGs in the Pacific.

To conclude, the SAMOA Pathway has rightly defined the role and responsibilities of the regional commissions in the implementation of the SIDS sustainable development agenda and associated areas. Regional advocacy, policy coherence, cooperation and coordination is critical to catalyse effective and harmonised national strategies and implementation as well as promote durable results, policies and partnerships.