

Forum on advancing statistical development in SIDS towards sustainable development in the Post 2015 era

1 September 2014, 15:00-16:30, Faleata Sports Complex

Keynote Message by Mr. Jean Claude de l'Estrac, Secretary General, Indian Ocean Commission

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am indeed very pleased to be associated with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), the Government of Samoa and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community Statistics Development Division.

We are meeting to take stock of emerging challenges and issues in statistics with the view of coming up with recommendations on strategies and modalities. We are hoping to achieve this goal by fostering partnership and cooperation on statistical development in SIDS through strengthening of national statistical systems.

Data collection and management is indeed one of the enabling factors of sustainable development. We are happy to see that the conference has recognized the important of data to development. The *Zero Draft* recognizes the contribution of statistics to promote sustainable development policies and in evaluating the implementation of internationally-agreed sustainable development goals.

Progress on advocacy for SIDS will also depend on our capacity to generate indicators on country progress on MDGs. A prerequisite is the formulation of

National Strategies for the Development of Statistics. It seems that significant progress has been achieved in regional cooperation in Pacific, Caribbean and Eastern Caribbean regions, but I fear, I cannot say so for the rest of the SIDS region. There is a need for global partnership of national, regional and international statistics experts and policy makers.

Our recommendation is that we should aim at establishing a mechanism towards a sustainable Audit system which allows inter-state, regional and interregional comparisons.

It is necessary to have indicators across a selected range of key issues relevant to the Post 2015 Agenda to allow for benchmarking against the variation in inter-state performance, the resources allocated for improvements and the models of intervention adopted related to best practice.

This then becomes the basis for an audit of action on sustainable development. It thus requires indicators of economic, social and environmental performance together with data on resource allocation deployed through the best cost-effective means to remedy deficiencies in performance. The audit reports compiled at country level should provide guidance for management on how best to make further progress based upon interstate and regional comparisons as benchmarks.

The scope of BPoA, MS and MDGs as an agenda for Post 2015 action on sustainability: Much has been written about the flaws and gaps in the agenda, the methodology and the gaps in the previous strategic approach to the promotion of sustainability for SIDS. Two elements are required for this:

1. Agreement on a set of internationally standardised indicators to provide interstate, inter regional and international comparisons in performance on MDGs, MSI and other subsequent targets that may be agreed. It is well acknowledged that there were many missing elements in the MDG and MSI sets, including much of the field of governance, business, competitiveness, demography, life expectation, investment, migration, infrastructure, physical connectivity, human development, income distribution, professional and technical skills and capacities, resources, fiscal policy, non-communicable disease, human rights, ecological footprint, bio-capacity, environmental accounting for assessing the capital assets of environmental services and their rate of accretion or depletion etc. These gaps need to be remedied to establish a basis for audit of sustainable development programmes.
2. Country and regional weightings to allow for the pursuit of local priorities

Multi-stakeholder participation and choice of indicators: Much can be gained from participation in development of the agenda and indicators, but clear guidance is desirable on the choices to be made to ensure comparison of performance over time, between countries and between parts of each country.

Management: Chapter 20 of MS is on management and finance. This is an issue for promoting sustainability and should be included with the other 19 thematic chapters when monitoring progress of MSI. There are many internationally adopted indicators in this field including Ease of Doing Business, Competitiveness, Freedom, Environmental Performance, together with standard macro-economic indicators such as GDP growth, Industrial production, Consumer prices, Unemployment, Current account balance, Budget balance, Interest rates, purchasing power parity etc. These should be core indicators to ensure sustainable development takes into account economic and business issues.

Monitoring and evaluation: studies have shown that even with the modest list of MDGs there are at least 40% data missing inhibiting the monitoring of many of the targets. Much of the data base maintained by the UN from country sources is out of date. Macro-economic data is normally reported every quarter in arrears, the MDG data base alone is often 2-4 years in arrears. If the system of monitoring is to be extended then countries should have further technical support and commit more resources to collecting and maintaining data files and ensure that the results are linked into fiscal and mainstream government and private sector policy development.

I thank you for your attention.