

**UNDESA Workshop on National Sustainable Development Strategies
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Strengthening of national sustainable development strategy (NSDS) or equivalent is regarded by the Pacific Leaders as one of the early wins under the Pacific Plan. Initiative 5.1 of the Pacific Plan, is seen as one of the high priorities by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), as the regional coordinating agency for NSDS, particularly if we are to assist member countries to achieve their national goals, as well as international commitments such as the MDGs, and make effective use of their own limited national and development partner resources.

A strengthened NSDS process, including the NSDS document (similar to development plan) linked to sectoral strategies and priorities and budgetary process, is expected to provide countries the necessary platform for the government to better engage with national stakeholders, including local communities, NGOs, and the private sector. The NSDS, particularly if developed adopting a participatory stakeholder approach, will have the local level ownership and will help forge appropriate partnership between the government on the one hand and the local communities and private sector on the other hand, to address national development goals that has wide ownership.

A clear NSDS, with clear national vision statement, and clearly articulated development goals, and time bound measurable targets, can also be useful in placing countries in the driver's seat when negotiating with development partners. By using the sectors priorities linked to NSDS, countries would identify a harmonised and sequenced program of projects needed to achieve the staged development goals/ national strategies. It will also help government better engage with development partners, and more effectively coordinate and harmonise development partner support for high priorities.

The PIFS strongly believes that a credible NSDS process will help development partners, too, to meet their international commitment under the Paris Declaration, and coordinate their ODA with other development partners, such that member countries do not become overwhelmed by donor interest, often stretching their limited resources.

On the basis of these key principles, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is providing advice and technical assistance to PICS on demand to help strengthen their NSDS processes, linked to national budgetary processes and sector strategies. Amongst the countries recently assisted are Nauru, Cook Islands and Tuvalu. PIFS is currently having discussions with a few other countries, Niue and Vanuatu, to identify the nature of assistance required by them. In conclusion, the PIFS is committed to providing country focused assistance on demand under the Initiative 5.1 to help strengthen their NSDS processes, including the country engagement with donors.