



PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES United Nations Member States

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Statement by

**H.E. Mr Robert G. Aisi
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of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations and
Chair of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS)
to the United Nations**

at the

Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

18 April 2013, New York

Co-chairs,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), represented at the United Nations; namely, Fiji, Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and my own country Papua New Guinea. I am also speaking for the Pacific Troika on the Open Working Group on SDGs, namely Nauru, Palau and Papua New Guinea.

Co-chairs,

Thank you for the opportunity to start our conversation by discussing conceptual issues. We believe that the conceptual discussions will help us frame our discussion into some common understanding of not only what we agreed to in the RIO+20 Outcome but also in light of other important development agendas, such as the MDGs, the SDGs, and the post 2015 development agenda, and where and how they all fit together.

For Pacific Small Island States, what we agreed to in RIO provide some conceptual framing in terms of how we see the issues for PSIDS. In RIO we agree that the MDGs are a useful tool in focusing achievements of specific development gains as part of a broader development vision and framework but that we remain firmly committed to the full and timely achievement of the MDGs, and that the SDGs should not divert focus or efforts from the achievement of the MDGs.

For PSIDS, the post-2015 development agenda must include Agenda 21, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and the BPoA and the MSI, which contain the blueprints for sustainable development for many countries, including SIDS. It must also build on the lessons learned from the MDG and take into account the Outcome Document from the third International Conference of Small Island States to be held in 2014.

We must also learn from MDGs in terms of not only what it delivered but also where it failed SIDS. The MSI+5 Review showed that while SIDS were making progress in areas such as gender, education and health, we are far from meeting our environmental goals. The Review of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy also showed that the major constraints in the implementation of the Strategy have included declining levels of official development assistance in some island developing states, lack of technical expertise, and financial, technical and institutional challenges in terms of monitoring and evaluation. In comparison to other groupings, the review concluded that SIDS have made less progress than most other groupings, or even regressed, in economic terms, especially in terms of poverty reduction and debt sustainability.

The MDG architecture, as many have also noted, had gaps that must be addressed in the post-2015 development framework. But one enduring legacy is clear - they demonstrated a structure that successfully galvanized international action and created tangible gains. They deployed targets and indicators that were resonant, strategic, and quantifiable and could be tracked over time. The SDGs should be structured similarly, with targets and indicators that can be used to monitor implementation and encourage progress. It is a proven model and one that will allow us to readily integrate the MDGs into our emerging framework in whatever capacity they are ultimately included.

As we embark on the SDG process, we must ensure that our international system is accountable, transparent and capable of delivering on our objectives and goals. We are looking into the future for the next 15-20 years, and we must set ourselves up for success, by ensuring our national and international organizations, systems and governance structures are appropriately equipped to manage the challenges.

It is clear that in relation to addressing the unique and particular vulnerabilities of SIDS, that current international support is inadequate, and will require systemic change and improvement to be in a position to assist SIDS meeting SDGs – in whatever form we agree. As others have said, the work of the OWG must be more than what are the goals we set for ourselves, but about how we achieve those goals and how we work together as a global community.

At the core of setting ourselves up for success is transparency and accountability. This must extend to our own commitments, but also those of our partners, and of the UN system. Let us ask the hard questions, is the current global governance structure adequate to respond to the challenges that are embedded in the sustainable development agenda and our collective will to eradicate poverty and provide all people with the benefits of development? Our view is that it isn't and we must take this opportunity to find solutions.

As one step forward, we must ensure that the voices of all countries, particularly the most vulnerable and disadvantaged are equitably, by region, represented in the most important decision-making bodies, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank, and the United Nations.

On universality, it must be inclusive to recognize and wield in the needs of the disadvantaged including PSIDS. Our statistical data may not be at a scale to influence the aggregation of global data, but it is vital for implementation and measurement of success of outcome indicators and targets of the SDGs.

As we move forward into substantive discussions on specific SDGs, we must ensure that they all contribute to poverty eradication. For the Pacific SIDS, like many developing countries, oceans, climate change and energy are essential to the eradication of poverty.

We cannot eradicate poverty without ensuring the health of our ocean ecosystems that are essential for food security, livelihoods and economic development. This framework must include a goal, with corresponding targets and indicators, calling for healthy, productive, and resilient oceans. Small island states have long been recognized for their unique attributes, but our dependence on the oceans is a shared trait for many coastal and island States and other members of the international community. Ensuring ocean sustainability is necessary to uphold the environmental dimension of sustainable development and to ensure economic opportunity and social advancement not only for island peoples but everyone

In relation to energy, as we recognized in Rio+20, access to energy is critical to poverty eradication and helps to provide for basic human needs.

Our energy needs must of course be compatible with our commitment to protect the global climate and ensure the survival of every nation. It was a fundamental outcome of Rio plus 20 that we recognized climate change is a cross-cutting and persistent crisis that undermines the ability of all countries, in particular, developing countries, to achieve sustainable development and threatens the viability and survival of nations. Our conceptual understanding of the SDG framework must capture the need to increase our response to the global climate change crisis, and mainstream this into all development processes and our global governance structures as a matter of urgency.

In conclusion, too often, capacity building means one-off workshops and short-term consulting work. The Pacific is the most workshoped region in the world, but it is clear that workshops alone do not lead to the meaningful and enduring transfer of critical skills and expertise necessary to achieve our development priorities. For the Pacific, we must move beyond capacity building to real "institution building." What is needed is long-term in-country engagement backed by real resources that leaves in place durable institutions run by capable staff. This will be a crucial determinant of success for the implementation of strategies leading toward the achievement of set SDGs and Post-2015 development agenda, and will have far reaching positive impact on the lives of our people and eco-system.

We stand ready to support you in this work and to provide more concrete proposals as we focus on more substantive issues.

We thank you.