



PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

United Nations Member States

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Intervention Remarks
by
H.E. Mr Robert G. Aisi
Permanent Representative of the
Independent States of Papua New Guinea
to the United Nations and
Chair of PSIDS Permanent Missions to the United Nations
at the
Fourth Session of the Open Working Group (OWG) on
Sustainable Development (SDGs)
17 June 2013, New York

“Check against delivery”

Co-Chair,

1. I speak for the Pacific Troika in the OWG on SDGs, namely Nauru, Palau and my own country, Papua New Guinea. I am also speaking on behalf of the 11 Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) represented at the UN, namely, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. For PSIDS members who are affiliated with G77 and China, we align ourselves with the Statement made by Fiji as the Chair of G77 and China. Similarly, for PSIDS members of the Least of Developed Countries, we align ourselves with the Statement made by Benin.
2. We thank the UN Technical Support Team (TST) for the informative and useful briefing papers and for the presentation by the Panelists on the first segment of the thematic issues for this OWG session. We also welcome the Guiding Questions, as a good initiative, that will ensure a focused and streamlined discussion. Time constraints necessitate me to primarily focus on our proposal and rationale for a stand-alone Post-2015 SDG on Education and a concluding brief remark on Employment, Social Protection and Youth issues. The full text of this intervention can be found on the OWG internet website.

Co-Chair,

3. On education, most countries, particularly of the South, over the last 8 years have invested substantively in MDG 2 on “Achieving Universal Primary Education” by 2015. This has also galvanized commendable international efforts in support of this important Goal. This work, in our (PSIDS) region, like many others, remains unfinished, with less than 1,000 days remaining for its achievement. There is a varied but measured progress on MDG 2 in our region and this continues to be a priority, which requires further support.

4. The valuable lessons we have learnt from MDG 2 such as strategies for increased primary school enrolment and retention, especially for the girl-child; awareness of the gaps and challenges in providing affordable and quality education; partnerships; education as a human right; and the catalytic effect on governments, families and individuals becoming more responsible for education; provides a solid basis for a people-centered transformative universal stand-alone Education SDG in the post-2015 development agenda.
5. The next challenge in a Post-2015 Education SDG is to improve on quality, equity and access in service delivery, early childhood care and education, primary retention and completion and progression into secondary level of education and beyond as well as a better focus on providing life-skills education for a dynamic and evolving circumstances. Focused efforts will also be required to address the educational needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups so as not to leave them behind. The enhancement of these key areas underpin job creation opportunities, decent work, social protection and improved health and living standards.

Co-Chair,

6. We are therefore supportive of a stand-alone Post-2015 SDG on Education and for this to be also made a cross-cutting issue for all other SDGs, including our proposal for a “**Healthy, Productive and Resilient Oceans**”, given that education is a fundamental pillar for sustainable development.
7. We note and welcome the UN Secretary General’s High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons proposal for a stand-alone Post-2015 Education SDG that calls for ‘**Providing Quality Education and Lifelong Learning**’ and a similar proposal made by the TST entitled “**Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All**”. These are a helpful start for our conversation on the formulation of a Post-2015 Education SDG.
8. We would however, suggest for the inclusion of the critically important issue of accessibility as a key component of such a Goal. Like many other countries, access to basic education for PSIDS is determined by certain factors such as isolation and distance from existing schools, absence of relevant policies and legislations that enforce school attendance, weak and ineffective support to education from parents, low levels of school preparedness, the high cost of education for poor families and the wide spread of islands poses a major challenge to education service delivery, and poses a particular challenge for those persons with disabilities.

Co-Chair,

9. PSIDS, like many other countries, are highly reliant on biological resources and healthy ecosystems, including the Oceans and Seas. These systems are being threatened as a result of the loss of biological diversity, land and coastal degradation, land and sea-base pollution, changing weather patterns, and increased salinity levels of fresh water to mention a few. Lack of in-depth understanding of new scientific knowledge among our peoples and weak institutional capacity in environmental planning and management makes the region vulnerable to these threats.

10. We are therefore advocating for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) that includes enhanced climate change and disaster risk management education, through formal schooling, informal learning, and awareness activities which can and should play active roles in stimulating the next generation to demand, generate, interpret, and apply information on current and future environments, and bolster peoples' abilities to build resilience and adaptive capacity whilst at the same time provide sustainably for their social and economic needs.
11. To ensure relevance and effective learning, the delivery of knowledge, for example on climate change, should be oriented towards local contexts and experiences, and should prioritize traditional and indigenous knowledge and cultures to deal with changes. This will require inclusion of approaches in existing curricula, to prepare specific and relevant material and to support training for teachers, curriculum developers and policy makers. Other related issues such as non-communicable diseases, sexually transmitted infections and reproductive health, culture and traditions, and civic education amongst others, will also need consideration in future curriculum development.
12. It is also necessary for a relevant bridging mechanism for countries of the South to transition MDG 2 to a new Post-2015 Education SDG to ensure that the different development stages of developing and developed countries are adequately accounted for in the implementation of a new Post-2015 Education SDG. A possible pathway could be to retain MDG 2 as a Target of the Post-2015 Education SDG to be achieved by a new timeline, for example, in 2020.

Co-Chair,

13. We recognize the growing importance, emerging challenges and linkages between employment and decent work, youth, social protection and culture, not only in our region but globally. Employment and decent work are enablers that combat poverty, foster economic growth and development and provide a sense of security and wellbeing. In the context of the continuing global economic crises, providing tax relief and other incentives for small to medium enterprises, setting an enabling fiscal and monetary environment, establishing a equitable and fair international trading system are critical to creating employment opportunities for all, including youth. This requires focused attention in the post-2015 development agenda.
14. The PSIDS are flexible to integrating these as targets in one higher-order goal such as poverty eradication, as suggested by several delegations or alternately as a stand-alone Goal, as advocated by the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons.
15. Like many SIDS, PSIDS view the Oceans and the Seas as our mainstay for employment generation, wealth creation, pays for our children's education, caters for our social protection, source of our food security and lives and livelihood. Our cultures, traditions, heritage and identity are also shaped and closely intertwined with the oceans and seas, and which requires to be safeguarded to keep it alive.

16. On social protection, our region continues to face poverty of opportunity and access rather than food poverty. Inequality however, continues to increase with disparities between urban and rural areas becoming more pronounced. A serious lack of social protection remains a growing concern. Similar circumstances also prevail in other regions of the world. It is highly vital to identify and target specific populations with appropriate fiscal and monetary measures such as micro-credit schemes, providing basic services to rural populations; strengthen governance in the allocation of resources; support traditional structures offering services to protect the most vulnerable and marginalised in society such as persons with disabilities, the elderly, women and girls and the sick from poverty and want; and the establishment of a Social Protection Floor that is nationally defined and context-specific that promotes social security, vital social services and at the same time encourage the promotion of socio-economic development.
17. For PSIDS, we are supportive of safeguarding human rights and respect for person's dignity in the context of employment, decent work and social protection, including for migrants and their families. We would however, urge for caution and sensitivity and allow for country-specific pathways to be developed to suit different national contexts.

Co-Chair,

18. On youth, like many parts of the world our region, has a increasingly significant youth bulge with 15 – 24 year olds, constituting a fifth of the region's total population and as much as a third of the working adult population. Unemployment and underemployment are the most significant issue facing young people, which is compounded by the continuing global economic crises. Other youth concerns include gender inequality, education, health issues such as mental health, teenage pregnancy and high rates of sexually transmitted infections, and lack of participation in decision-making. These are some of the drivers of discontent and social unrest, law and order problems, and violence against women.
19. In conclusion, government programs on youth development are often poorly resourced in terms of capacity of staff and funds, as the majority of investment in young people has traditionally been through education and health. However, careful targeting of labour and employment strategies to reach marginalised youth, greater use of preventive health strategies, addressing gender discrimination and a greater engagement of young people will accelerate an improved status of youth. There is a critical need to address employment through a range of strategies including refocusing and improving the quality of education, expanding livelihood options, and providing youth-focused employment services and new support structures to nurture the talents of young people. Development efforts must be mainstreamed across sectors to effectively address youth challenges.

I thank you.