



## **PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**

### **United Nations Member States**

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“Check against delivery”

**Statement by H.E. Mr Robert G. Aisi,  
Permanent Representative  
of the Independent States of Papua New Guinea  
to the United Nations  
on Water and Sanitation  
at the Third Session of the Open Working Group (OWG)  
on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)  
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Co-Chairs,

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

We appreciate and commend the seed-speakers for their briefings and the panelists for their insights and thought provoking contributions to the thematic issues for this session, including particularly water and sanitation.

As we approach the end of the “Water for Life” Decade in 2015, concerns over water availability in many parts of the world including within the PSIDS region have taken an urgent turn and already impacting on sanitation and other aspects of human life and also the ecosystem.

The candid discussions on water and sanitation as fundamental pillars to life in all its various forms and the close linkage with environmental sustainability brings to the fore and further reaffirms the critical importance of incorporating these issues into the final set of the Post-2015 SDGs, which the Rio+20 Outcome clearly underscored. We also recognize the work of Hungary, Singapore and other delegations in this area.

Co-Chairs,

For the PSIDS region, though measured progress have been made against the sustainable development agenda in the context of the MSI+5 and the MDGs as a whole, the region however, is collectively not on track to meet many of the international and regional targets set for achieving water security and improved sanitation by 2015. Progress in water and sanitation has been hampered by several factors.

As Small Islands States (SIDS) with communities that are spread over vast distances; with limited and fragile fresh water resources due to no surface water or substantial groundwater reserves and unreliable rainfall as the only natural source of fresh water; limited human and financial resources; and a heightened vulnerability to climate variability and natural hazards such as drought, floods, salt water intrusion of fresh water sources and water pollution; we face particular challenges in accessing, securing and maintaining safe drinking water supplies and for food production and consumption and other uses.

Our vulnerabilities are compounded further by mounting pressures of population growth, increasing urbanization, economic development and emerging impacts of climate change, of which water is a primary medium. Climate change inevitably brings unpredictable changes in freshwater availability.

These factors inevitably are also adversely impacting on sanitation issues.

As examples of the social, economic and environment challenges of development and the impact posed by water and sanitation issues in the PSIDS region, in October 2011, after 6 months of no rain, Tuvalu and Tokelau declared a state of emergency as a result of fast depleting fresh water supplies. Schools had to be closed as residents conserved what little water they had. Fresh water was imported from New Zealand, together with desalination units, hand sanitizers and water tarpaulins to catch rainwater.

Today, Marshall Islands has had no rain over the last 6 months and a serious drought has set in. It has impacted severely on all aspects of life. The depletion of supplies of safe drinking water; limited financial resources diverted to import water and desalinate salt water into safe drinking water which is proving costly due to high energy costs of imported fossil fuel; loss of arable land for cultivation of crops and subsistence agriculture which is causing food insecurity, hunger, health concerns and loss of export revenue. The growing humanitarian needs are placing further strains on the environment.

These issues are not confined only to Small Island States (SIDS) like ours but increasingly becoming a reality worldwide. Is this the signs of the times?

It is a stark reminder to us in our region and beyond of the future that awaits us and our future generations, if we do not act now to put in place not only SDGs that must account adequately for the key sources of life, including water and sanitation but more importantly identify, agree and secure the means necessary to transform aspirations to reality.

Co-Chairs,

We recognize that water and sanitation are multidimensional issues. They are also key drivers of food security, public health, human rights, sustainable economic growth and critical to sound environmental management.

For PSIDS, safe and clean water and sanitation have a direct correlation with the health and productivity of the Oceans, which is our premier source of food security and livelihood.

This therefore requires an integrated and holistic approach to long-term coherent policy frameworks, planning and implementation rather than a piece-meal or sectoral approach. It should include management of disaster risk such as through water conservation, protecting watersheds, growing mangroves in coastal areas, climate change and water and sanitation management. This however, must ensure a balance in economic efficiency, social equity and environmental sustainability.

It is also imperative to foster sustained and genuine partnership at all levels in addressing water and sanitation issues. Inviting investors for surface water projects and develop water conservation and recycling on a nation-wide scale. Community ownership and inclusive engagement by all stakeholders is crucial to the success of water and sanitation improvement efforts.

The importance of data collation, analysis and management is also vital to plan for effective and efficient implementation of water and sanitation projects. This should be supported by easily understood and implementable national and regional indicator frameworks.

Co-Chairs,

It is our view that for a sustainable future for mankind, it is highly imperative that the SDGs must also address the root causes of water insecurity and poor sanitation.

This must include firstly, reducing carbon emissions in the atmosphere to below 1.5 degrees PPM; secondly, strengthen mitigation and adaptation measures such as controlling pollution and waste management in our waterways, sub-soil and the Oceans; thirdly, build human and institutional capacity through education, training and technical assistance to address the issue; fourthly, share knowledge, skills and transfer appropriate and affordable technology for sustainable water management and sanitation; fifthly, strengthen governance and the rule of law to ensure accountability and transparency in providing and fostering access to quality and safe drinking water and promote sanitation; and sixthly reduce and eliminate harmful practices in the patterns of production and consumption.

Co-Chairs,

In conclusion, we hope that this session will further catalyse our commitment that will yield the desired outcomes we all are striving to reach, which is to agree on a new set of SDGs for all that clearly recognizes and incorporates the social, economic and environmental dimensions.

I thank you.