



**STATEMENT BY
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**ON BEHALF OF THE PACIFIC SMALL ISLANDS DEVELOPING STATES
AT THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE 17TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE THEMATIC CLUSTER: "AGRICULTURE"
24TH FEBRUARY 2009, NEW YORK, USA**

Thank you Chair,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States comprising Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and my own country, Papua New Guinea.

At the outset, we wish to associate ourselves with the statement delivered by Jamaica on behalf of the Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS). Additionally, I would underscore the important parts of the Statement delivered by the Permanent Mission of Tonga, as Chair of the Pacific SIDS yesterday.

Chair,

Agriculture and rural development are key factors in the socio-economic progress within our region. Subsistent farming and the reliance on collective sharing of agricultural resources and lands are ways in which we sustain our food sources. Agricultural and fisheries are our main sources of exports. We face serious challenges in agriculture rural development, and our use of land will determine the future development of our region. The adverse effects of climate change, the increase in global oil prices and the increasing threat of the global food scarcity have enormous impact on the sustainable development of our region.

However, a growing dependence on imported food in the Pacific SIDS, leading to escalating rates of 'lifestyle' diseases and vulnerability to price shocks have coincided with a decline in the budgets of extension and research services in the region.

As the arm of government operating at the community level in many of our countries, extension services need to be re-strengthened and adopt innovative approaches to service delivery. The use of participatory techniques that engage all community members in developing their own solutions to food security issues have proven to be an effective mechanism in supporting local production systems.

They have also proven to empower extension officers to identify linkages between agriculture, fisheries and other important development outcomes such as gender equality, health and income generation to provide a more holistic service to their communities.

Increased resources for agricultural research must be provided if 'new' products are to be identified and underutilized species promoted. Fish, a good source of protein and essential fatty acids, are an important contributor to food security in the Pacific.

Chair,

Climate change and over-fishing threaten to reduce the ability of many of our countries to meet the needs of growing populations. Harvests of coastal fisheries need to be kept within sustainable limits through, for example, the creation of locally managed marine areas that involve the community in the establishment and monitoring of harvest rates. The development of small pond aquaculture for freshwater fish can help diversify the supply of fish in rural and urban areas.

To enhance the value for food security of the Pacific's tuna stocks, low-cost inshore fish aggregating devices (FADs) should be installed to assist rural subsistence fishers in catching tuna. We also note the need for regulations to be introduced to require the landing of 'discards' and 'bycatch' from commercial vessels to provide low-cost fish.

Food security challenges can be improved with partnerships which address reliance on imported food by strengthening domestic agriculture in a climate-sensitive basis. Strengthened domestic agriculture would also provide valuable economic opportunities for rural communities and address urban stress.

Chair,

Pacific SIDS sustainable development goals are already identified and can be immediately implemented through direct partnerships while the role of national development strategies and national ownership cannot be overstated.

These Pacific sustainable development goals and policy options have been well-researched and are already identified in international documents such as the MSI and regional plans, as well as national development strategies.

The direct partnership MOUs that the Pacific SIDS have with Austria, Italy and the City of Milan, among others, serve as a useful models to achieve observable benefits in local communities through "people-centered and driven" approaches that move beyond policy to activities and actual implementation on the ground.

Thank you