

Statement by

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**to the United Nations**

**On Behalf of the Pacific Small Islands Development States**

at the

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On Sustainable Development (CSD-16)

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(Please check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

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

We wish to associate ourselves with the statement made by Grenada on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

At the outset, we would like to congratulate you and other members of the bureau for your election and thank you for convening this meeting. CSD is instrumental to the implementation of the Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, as well as the Mauritius Strategy and the themes chosen for this year's CSD are of high priority to the Pacific SIDS. It is of particular importance also given the harsh realities of today's world including the food crisis and the consequent increase in commodity prices; as well as the international financial situation.

We thank the Secretary General for the report on the overview of sustainable development. Sustainable development is key to poverty eradication and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly for the rural poor. Our region faces many challenges in agriculture, rural development, land management, drought and desertification and the challenges are further exacerbated by the adverse impact of climate change.

Mr. Chairman,

Agriculture and fisheries contribute to the livelihoods of our region and are central to sustainable rural development. Agriculture and fisheries are our main sources of employment and export, with subsistence farming contributing over 90% of domestic market for many Pacific SIDS. Our region is prone to natural disasters such as tropical cyclones, flash floods and droughts. The rise of sea level and the increase in temperature due to climate change further decreases available arable land, causing the loss of livelihood. The effects of climate change also negatively impacts upon the food security and the economies of our region as we are forced to import basic staples from the volatile international commodities market.

The limited arable land of our region restricts our capacity to develop economies of scale in agriculture, and the drive to plant commercial crops aimed at export contributes to environmental degradation. While the recent drive for bio-fuels is a potential market for our region, the over-exploitation of arable land for bio-fuels threatens food security in our region due to the decline in the cultivation of food crops.

Mr. Chairman,

The sustainable development of our rural areas faces further challenges with sector-deforestation, loss of preferential trade agreements, rapid population growth and the lack of land access. Other difficulties include soil erosion; the lack of access to markets and finance, weak infrastructure, and costly transportation makes our rural products less competitive.

Mr. Chairman,

Drought has an adverse impact on sustainable development of our region by decreasing the availability of water. Natural disasters such as frequent tropical cyclones destroy our drinking water supplies and increase our need for imported water. The desertification of land due to poor land management and the over exploitation of arable land is a challenge faced by our region.

Mr. Chairman,

We must also seriously consider the impact of climate change on sustainable development and poverty eradication. It is particularly important for Pacific SIDS; without timely assistance in mitigation and adaptation, not only is sustainable development an impossible task, the human security of our region will also be at stake.

Mr Chairman,

In order to effectively address the constraints and challenges posed, we continue to call on development partners to further advance efforts to implement its commitments in the Monterrey Consensus on realizing the 0.7% target. In addition, there is a further need to upscale and improve the quality of ODA provided, as well as to facilitate improved access to these funding mechanisms in a timely fashion.