



**Statement by Mr. Pita Wise,  
Permanent Secretary for Strategic Planning, National  
Development and Statistics-  
Third Small Island Developing States(SIDS) meeting,  
Apia-Samoa, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2014**

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Mr. President,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies & Gentlemen.

At the outset, Mr. President, like other delegates who spoke before me, may I also take this opportunity to express the Fijian delegation's overwhelming appreciation to the government and people of Samoa for the excellent arrangements and facilitation provided to ensure that our stay in Samoa is like home away from home.

I convey the well wishes of the Prime Minister of Fiji to the Government and people of Samoa for a successful meeting that all Pacific SIDS can be proud of and remember as a key milestone in our effort to achieve sustainable development for this and future generations.

The Samoan Pathway with its focus on Accelerated Modalities of Action and the theme of Sustainable development of small island developing states through genuine and durable partnerships is very relevant, most practical and the necessary approach to achieve sustainable development.

Mr. President, despite our collective efforts to achieve sustainable development in the past, existing challenges have been further exacerbated with new and complex ones. Therefore, we have to change the way we do things. As we address our common mounting challenges, we must reconsider and revisit the concept of the “Pacific Way of Doing Things” to complement our effort to accelerate modalities of action through genuine partnership.

The Pacific Way entails a more holistic approach where Pacific island nations collaborate to achieve common goals. It involves dialogue and collaboration in sharing our island heritage, independence and the right to self-governance, as we strive to establish effective communities, strengthening social networks, and promote environmentally friendly sustainable economic development.

We believe there is strong complementarity between the SAMOA Pathway and the Pacific way, which could be nurtured and a conduit for all SIDS to achieve sustainable development.

In this regard, we would like to underscore the importance to further review and improve mechanisms on global, regional, sub-regional, inter and intra-regional cooperation. More effort must be directed at making the necessary adjustments to existing institutions so that they are robust and responsive to demands. The current system with complex bureaucratic processes must be changed in order to be relevant and flexible and respond effectively to its respective mandate.

In the spirit of genuine, durable partnership and inclusiveness, Fiji on its part has championed the formation of the Pacific Island Development Forum. The PIDF encompasses the collective efforts of Governments, civil society organizations and the private sector to address issues of common interest, challenges, and map out solutions tailored to the needs of Pacific island countries.

Moreover, Fiji has been working closely with its sub-regional neighbours under the auspices of the Melanesian Spearhead Group to deal with the unique vulnerabilities and common challenges that confront the MSG countries.

For its part, rather than waiting for development assistance, Fiji has taken some bold steps to ensure the successful implementation of its international commitments through the formulation of its own development agenda that is considered sustainable. Part of this commitment is manifested through Volunteer Service schemes in partnership with our Pacific Island neighbours, which is under the umbrella of South-South cooperation.

In the spirit of the Rio+20 outcome document (para 58), Green Growth has been considered as a tool to support sustainable development with the relevant guiding principles associated with it.

Realising the importance of this tool, the Fijian Government embarked in the formulation of its own home-grown Green Growth Policy framework using the Green Growth guideline. The framework was approved last month after six months of consultation.

This is the first of its kind in the Pacific and was only possible through the generous contribution from the Asian Development Bank. The bank provided the necessary resources to allow consultation to be undertaken at all levels and in particular with the grass-root level. The impetus for green growth emanates from the recognition that we must ensure the sustainable use of our natural resources, reduce our vulnerability to environmental risks and promote socially inclusive development.

Fiji's Green Growth Framework is focused on "Restoring the Balance in Development that is Sustainable for Our Future". It recognizes that while Fiji remains relatively pristine, there is a need to manage emerging challenges such as population growth, increasing urbanisation, unsustainable consumption patterns, unsustainable resource use, deficiency in infrastructure stock, and increasing frequency of natural disasters due to climate change, which in turn increases the risk of food and energy insecurity, while threatening economic and social progress. If Fiji continued down this development path, the balance between the three pillars of sustainable development will be lost. This requires rebalancing our development priorities to ensure that the pursuit of economic prosperity is balanced with social and environmental fundamentals.

This is consistent with the key direction underpinning the SAMOA Pathway.

In addition, due to the urgency in the development of the national platform on disaster management and climate change, we are currently working very closely with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to undertake a series of consultation with all the relevant stakeholders, before it is finalized. The rationale behind this process is to create awareness and foster ownership to all stakeholders.

Another significant development that has been given priority is the protection of our marine resources. The Government has revisited its commitment made in 2005 at the second SIDS conference in Mauritius. The commitment was that Fiji will protect 30% of its marine resources by the year 2020. Although some progress has been made with the support of our development partners as well as through the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Network (FLMMA), there remains a lot to be done and we are committed to achieving the 30% target.

We have put into place the necessary enabling environment, which includes the Offshore Fisheries Management Decree 2012 and supported by its associated regulations in 2014 to ensure success and better policing.

In recognition of the importance of the Fiji marine resources, the Fiji Government approved the way forward and the processes to be followed to achieve the 30% of marine managed areas by 2020. That approval last week gives the mandate to the Fijian delegation to have dialogue, strengthen partnership and networking during this conference.

Whilst we recognize the need to protect our seas for sustainable livelihood, this has to be balanced with other competing demands for our marine resources and land for other development purposes which threatens food security. This has placed added stress and pressure on our urban infrastructure and utilities. In view of this, a robust national land-use plan is being formulated to ensure greater synergy and coordination in the use of all types of land and coastal areas to ensure that our food security is not compromised but protected.

Mr. President, in relation to health, it is pleasing to note that NCDs and other existing and new diseases have been adequately covered in the SAMOA Pathway outcome document. However, we must be reminded that this priority issue should not remain simply as a subject of discussion on paper but be translated into tangible results of healthy lifestyle because it is the biggest cause of death in the region. Similarly, we should not lose sight of the scourge of HIV/AIDS. We therefore urge all leaders and stakeholders to remain resolute and continue to increase resources and effort in addressing HIV/AIDS.

On the issue of the availability of accurate and timely data, we recognize that it is a pre-requisite for informed and sound decision-making not only for Government but for other stakeholders such as private sector, civil society, academia and development partners.

In the past two years, Fiji embarked on an institutional strengthening programme to boost organizational capacity in our National Statistics Office. We are fortunate to benefit from the technical support that has been provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.



That arrangement has been assured for the next five years through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Australian Bureau of Statistics on specific areas of technical support.

Mr. President, the 'One Size Fits All' development paradigm has not been effective and we have to look at innovative and robust ways that will work for Small Island developing States. We have to consider a balanced approach and pursue modalities that are relevant to our environment. We recognize that all developing countries must be given room or policy space to better determine their priorities based on their specific needs rather than being driven by those that provide them with the necessary financial resources.

We are of the view that interventions and priority-setting should be country-driven as opposed to being donor-driven. At the same time, there must be a clear demarcation of priorities that need regional solutions against those that are country-specific to maximize the use of resources.

Whilst we acknowledge with appreciation the support towards the SIDS Conference, the implementation of the Samoa Pathway demands even greater collaboration and commitment to ensure it is harmonized with the post-2015

development agenda and that we achieve our development agenda in the years to come.

We therefore look forward to the continuing understanding, commitment, support and genuine partnership from our development partners to achieve the future that we want.

Thank you.