



**Statement by Mr. Pita Wise, Permanent Secretary for Strategic Planning,  
National Development and Statistics at the Ministerial Segment of the  
70<sup>th</sup> session of UN ESCAP  
Bangkok, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2014**

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

Thank you very much for giving me the floor. Let me first, on behalf of the Fijian delegation, congratulate you on your election as Chair of the Ministerial Segment. Our delegation is confident of your Leadership.

We wish to congratulate the Executive Secretary on her visionary policy statement in steering the work of ESCAP and using the post 2015 development agenda as a platform where member states can genuinely work together. We note in particular her commitment that all countries will be given equal opportunity. This is reassuring as it means that the special needs of the Pacific will be given due consideration in the work of ESCAP.

We commend the theme of the 70<sup>th</sup> Commission Session, of ***“Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity,”*** as it embodies the aspirations we hold together in finding solutions to challenges we have in common and thereby leveraging our collective ability to achieve prosperity together.

I would like to make some general observations on the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2014 Report which was launched by the Executive Secretary on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2014.

First, the Report advocates the mobilisation of domestic resources to raise revenues. In our view, such approach is neither practical nor relevant for the Pacific SIDS since the capacity of our private-sector is limited in scope. Most of the pacific island economies are so small with very narrow economic base and the mobilization of domestic resources is quite limited. In the case of Fiji, we have reduced the personal and corporate tax rates to encourage investment in addition to simplification of tax administration. The challenge for Fiji is to identify sustainable sources of revenue without stifling the development of the private sector. 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.

In Part II of the Report, we note with interest the regional strategy on Statistical Standards for strengthened accountability and better policymaking. Fiji is cognizant of the fact that the availability of timely, reliable quality baseline data is a pre-requisite for informed decision-making across the entire Government machinery, including the private sector and Civil Society. There is no doubt that the timely availability of quality data is critical for making the appropriate policy choice.

In recognition of the importance of the availability of accurate statistics in a timely manner, Fiji in the past two years embarked on an institutional strengthening programme to boost organizational capacity in our National Statistics Office. We are very fortunate to benefit from the technical support that has been provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This 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. Moreso, the focus is also to establish the Statistical office as a depository of all data including environmental data.

To facilitate a more coordinated approach to national sustainable development efforts, the Fijian Government has adopted a home-grown "Green Growth Framework" last month. The impetus for green growth emanates from the need to ensure the sustainable use of our natural resources, reduce our vulnerability to environmental risks and promote socially inclusive development. The theme of Fiji's Green Growth Framework is ***"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. Should Fiji continue down this development path, the balance between the three pillars of sustainable development will be lost. This requires rebalancing our development priorities to ensure the pursuit of economic prosperity is balanced with social and environmental fundamentals.

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. We believe that ESCAP can play a more catalytic role to ensure better coordination and synergy.

While some progress has been made in our efforts to achieve the MDGs, we recognize that a concerted effort is needed to achieve all the goals in the time

remaining before its expiry in 2015. A more coordinated, well-targeted approach is necessary to enable us to achieve the MDGs, effectively implement the Rio+20 commitments and follow-up processes, including effective engagement in the post-2015 development agenda preparations. In our view, being inclusive and a better co-ordinated approach will surely bear results and foster ownership as we move forward in the preparations for the Third International Conference on SIDS to be held in Samoa next month. Whilst we acknowledge with appreciation the support towards SIDS in the preparations for that once-in-a-decade conference, the implementation of the Samoa conference outcomes demands even greater collaboration and commitment to ensure that we achieve our development agenda in the years to come.

As we forge ahead in the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda, we must address the unique vulnerabilities and challenges of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. We believe that the theme of “**Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity**” sets the platform to ensure that we all work together for our common good. We therefore look forward to the continuing understanding, commitment and support of all our development partners in this endeavour.

Thank you.