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Fiji



Country Statement: Fiji

Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (UNESCAP)

UNCC Building, Bangkok, Thailand– April 04th 2016

Mr. Chairman

Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies & Gentlemen

May I take this opportunity, Mr. Chairman to congratulate you on your appointment as Chair and we will be guided by your wisdom in the conduct of this august forum. Bangkok is always a place away from home, and we convey our heartfelt appreciation to the people and Kingdom of Thailand for the warm hospitality accorded to our delegation upon arrival two days ago. We thank ESCAP for the kind invitation and for according Fiji the privilege to deliberate on issues pertinent to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr. Chairman, a month ago Tropical Cyclone (TC) Winston decimated our livelihoods back at home and Winston was one of the most severe cyclones to ever hit the South Pacific. 350,000 people have been affected by the cyclone – approximately 40 per cent of the country's population.

As we speak, the declaration of the State of Natural Disaster has been extended for an additional 30 days since the 21st of March given the surge for continuous humanitarian response. As part of our on-going humanitarian efforts, we will continue to maximise operational presence and ensure that deployment and mobility become visible on the ground.

Whilst we are gathered here today, government officials, volunteers, NGOs, development partners are still on the ground ensuring those affected by Winston have access to food, water and shelter. May I take this opportunity to convey the Prime Minister's heartfelt appreciation to ESCAP and its member states, development partners for the condolences for our people and generous support received to date. We express our profound gratitude for your unwavering support and for standing by our side in these difficult times.

We are again grateful to ESCAP for deploying the Regional Adviser on Disaster Risk Reduction to assist in Fiji's recovery process and no doubt his presence will complement

the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) for TC Winston currently underway at home.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to make reference to the regional priorities and status of integration and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia-Pacific. Addressing the regional megatrends will be the focus of member states in the years to come.

Inequality still exists and back at home our poverty level has slightly decreased to a mere 28% from the recent household survey in 2014. However, ongoing work is still needed to grapple with Fiji's growing ageing population. Urbanization is an issue confronting Fiji's development's agenda and on-going work is underway to provide some stability to the carrying capacity and competing demand for urban infrastructure. On climate change, Fiji has committed to 30% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions compared to a business as usual scenario by 2030. As part of Fiji's commitment to the Paris Agreement, on Friday 1st April, Fiji's Prime Minister signed the Instrument of Ratification for the Agreement and this is a demonstration of Fiji's commitment to combating climate change.

On resource use efficiency, much of the work will take precedence from the implementation of Fiji's Green Growth Framework. We will ensure that the SAMOA

Pathway will be an instrument of sub-regional cooperation for Pacific SIDS and we call on the ESCAP Pacific Office's to assist us on this.

Mr. Chairman, I must commend the great work rendered by ESCAP thus far in putting these documents for our deliberation, which will inform the modalities of intervention for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The highlight of which is the need to address the systemic issues to deliver on development that is sustainable. We are on the verge of finalizing our National Development Plan and these issues will be operationalized and mainstreamed accordingly.

Having said that, I would like to place special emphasis on the importance of reliable and quality data for informed decision making. We are amending our Statistical Act to improve our survey framework, boost capacities in administrative data provision and mostly importantly, to be responsive to the needs of key users of statistics. This work is closely guided by the oversight of the Australian Bureau of Statistics and ground assistance from the Pacific Community.

Mr. Chairman, the role of ESCAP will become increasingly ever important in the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While disasters will become a regular occurrence for the region, we will still need to put food on our table, send our children to school, care for the elderly, look after the vulnerable, provide safe

transportation, provide affordable health care, employment opportunities for our people and most importantly, a stable future for posterity.

We are equally excited about the daunting prospects associated with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. ESCAP is not in a position to do it alone and concerted efforts will be required from member states to collaborate with ESCAP to realize the ambitious 2030 Agenda, and at the same time, **we owe it to our people back home.**

I thank you Mr. Chairman.

Vinaka.

