



**Statement**

**by**

**His Excellency Peter Vincent, OL  
High Commissioner of Papua New Guinea**

**And**

**Permanent Representative to ESCAP**

**On the**

**Eighth Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development**

**Bangkok**

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## **Madam Chair, Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,**

I am delighted to deliver these remarks on behalf of the Government of Papua New Guinea.

It is unfortunate that majority of the Member States are not able to participate in person at this important Forum today given the situations surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, allow me to thank the UNESCAP Secretariat for hosting the Eight Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development during these extraordinary times.

I further acknowledge the Secretariat in preparing the “Progress Report on the Sustainable Development Goals in the Asia and the Pacific, 2021” and making it accessible to all member states. This is appreciated and welcomed by my delegation as it provides a clear view of our progress and gaps as well as identifies priorities and mechanisms for accelerating actions in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

## **Excellencies, Distinguish Guests**

As highlighted in the Progress Report, we cannot deny the fact that we were not on track in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda even before the pandemic. Our common existing vulnerabilities and development challenges from limited finance and resources to governance issues and capacity constraints continue to hinder our progress in the implementation of the SDGs. At the same time, climate change continues to remain the greatest threat facing humanity.

Our progress on the 2030 Agenda will be determined by how best we tackle these on-going challenges through ambitious and robust strategies, hence, such Forum provides that opportune moment to critically analyze the current situations for Governments to take the step in the right direction.

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Papua New Guinea has long been advocate for sustainable development and building resilience. Our profound commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is reflected in our national efforts to contextualize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and was completed through extensive multi-sectoral consultation with the support of the UN Country Team, particularly, the UNFPA and the UNDP that led to the integration of the localized SDGs in our national plans.

The 241 UN SDG indicators were localized through disaggregation and generated 279 indicators of national significance which are now being

implemented through the Medium-Term Development Plan III (MTDP III) 2018-2022 and sectoral and sub-national plans.

### **Madam Chair, Distinguish Delegates**

Papua New Guinea presented its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the United Nations Economic and Social Council Commission High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development in July 2020.

This Review was a milestone achievement for the country as part of our commitment to the 2030 Agenda. Despite the challenges in data availability, the Review indicated significant level of progress in national efforts including identification of gaps and challenges that hinder our efforts. Overall, positive steps were taken by the Government through policy reforms in relevant sectors including establishment of national policies and strategies to drive the implementation of the SDGs.

In this context, I am pleased to report that we have made significant improvement in SDG 1 on “No Poverty”. A portion of our population living below the extreme poverty line has declined from 53.2 percent in 1996 to 39 percent in 2017, which is a remarkable achievement. This result was achieved through improvement in access to transportation and development of basic infrastructure, services in the SME, primary healthcare, education as well as community development programs that are showing considerable progress to date.

There has been a marked improvement in the implementation of SDG 3 as well. According to the 29 high-level indicators of our National Health Plan, life expectancy improved to 64 years for males and 68 years for females. The cases of malaria, maternal mortality rate; and childhood illness have reduced significantly. Maternal mortality rates improved from 733 in 2006 to 145 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2019 in both urban and rural areas. Antenatal care services received by mothers improved from 53% in 2014 to 76% in 2018 whilst infant mortality rate reduced from 47.3 percent in 2013 to 40 per cent in 2018. This was achieved through the implementation of key reforms in the health sector such as restructuring health administration and bringing services closer to the people.

PNG has also taken significant steps on SDG 13-Climate Action as part of our climate compatible approach to development. The PNG Government recognises

both the major impact that climate change will have on the country and the country's responsibilities, as part of the international community, in the global effort to mitigate climate change. The actions that PNG is taking now, and those we will need through the coming decade, to respond to climate change are outlined in the PNG's SDG 13 - 30 by 30 Roadmap and its enhanced Nationally Determine Contribution under Article four (4) of the Paris Agreement.

### **Excellencies, Distinguish Delegates**

Notwithstanding these achievements, the on-going challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have heavily strained our efforts. The urgency in meeting the growing needs to restructure and rebuild the economy of Small Island States like Papua New Guinea cannot be overstated. This is particularly so given our high vulnerability and fragility to climate change and natural disasters, which continues to challenge our efforts to progress the SDGs.

The severe impact of COVID-19 for us include the biggest ever budget deficit in our country's history due to the strained economy with increasing loss of jobs, decline in revenues, loss of tourism activities, loss of SME activities, decline in foreign currencies and international remittances, loss of investment, strained health and education services and other related challenges.

It is times such as this, where decisive national leadership, ownership and pragmatic actions, including enhanced multi-stakeholder partnership, are needed to put us back on track to deliver on the promise of the 2030 Agenda. The current situation surrounding the pandemic must not only be seen as a challenge only but an opportunity as well for us to take critical steps and make the hard decisions necessary to enable us build back better, resilient and greener.

In this connection, the use of long-term sustainable solutions to accessing finance, investments and debt servicing options to complement the support and assistance received so far from our partners is crucial.

We therefore call on the Member States and partners to increase collaboration and partnership to work on the priority areas through mechanisms identified in the 2021 Progress Report on the Sustainable Development Goals in the Asia and the Pacific as well as taking into consideration the 2020 High-Level Mid-Term Review for SAMOA Pathway and the options put forward under the ambit of the Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19.

In closing, Papua New Guinea is appreciative of the crucial supportive role the UN system plays in assisting UN Member States take forward the 2030 Agenda.

We remain committed to the Secretariats leadership in the region in supporting our collective and national efforts and reiterate our commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development under the Decade of Action to deliver on the SDGs, as a key driver for the future we want.

I thank you!