Excellency, Mr. Henry Puna, Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum,

Mr. Esala Nayasi, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Fiji,

UN Resident Coordinators,

Distinguished participants, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the sixth Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

This Forum unites the aspirations of the people and communities in the Pacific as it considers strategic policy directions necessary for socio-economic development.

At the onset, I would like to extend my most sincere appreciation to our member States as well as partners, including members of the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific and civil society organizations, for your support.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat for co-hosting this discussion.
Excellencies, Distinguished participants,

Based on our progress to date, we are unlikely to meet the Sustainable Development Goals in the Pacific by 2030. Progress, both nationally as well as regionally, has either been limited if not reversed.

The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and current geopolitical tensions have led to food, fuel and finance crises and further slowed the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We must ensure that sustainable development remains at the front and centre of development.

The theme of the next High-level Political Forum and the Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Forum is “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels.”

In line with this theme, we will consider the progress towards the attainment of clean water and sanitation (Goal 6); affordable and clean energy (Goal 7); industry, innovation, and infrastructure (Goal 9); sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11); and partnership for the goals (Goal 17) in the Pacific.

Discussion on voluntary national reviews will highlight the importance of multi-stakeholders engagement for follow-up and review process.

I am, therefore, pleased to note the wide range of stakeholders, from governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and youth, present in this Forum.
Excellencies, Distinguished participants,

In this context, please allow me to present three policy priorities that could be considered to aid recovery and ensure the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

To ensure the sustainability of communities, let us first focus on raising our ambitions and accelerating the implementation of climate action.

I commend the Pacific leadership for its role in strengthening the Sharm-el Sheikh Implementation Plan emanating from COP27 last month and the establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund.

This is indeed an important step towards securing climate justice, building trust and ensuring solidarity, which lies at the heart of global climate action.

Through our engagement in the Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security Program, we are committed to addressing the displacement of people in the Pacific.

I am also pleased to note the launch of Pacific Perspectives 2022: Accelerating Climate Action later today, which was prepared in consultation with many of you.

By considering the dynamics between the ocean and climate, between disaster, climate and health, and energy transition, the report highlights solutions from the Pacific to accelerate climate action.

Second, we must harness regional cooperation to address the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis resulting from geopolitical tensions.
Universal access to social services requires the mobilization of comprehensive policy packages to protect marginalized and vulnerable groups in the Pacific.

In coordination with regional partners, we are developing SDG 7 roadmaps to ensure affordable and clean energy, and promoting digital technologies, in line with SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, to strengthen women’s entrepreneurship in several countries of the Pacific.

These solutions, together with climate-smart and digital trade facilitation policies, could support post-pandemic economic recovery and strengthen resilience to future shocks.

Third, we need to strengthen global solidarity and partnership for the Goals, especially for the small island developing States in the Pacific.

As we near the end of the decade for the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, we will need to identify the continued structural vulnerabilities in the Pacific and consider what we will need to do next in order to advance development at all levels.

Let us strengthen the regional cooperation necessary for solution-oriented policy advice and assistance.

ESCAP will work with the United Nations development system to support the preparatory process leading to the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States in the Pacific.

Excellencies, Distinguished participants,
The regional and global forums next year will draw on the outcomes of your discussions at this Forum.

We remain committed to strengthening our partnerships and stand ready to provide all necessary support, in line with existing country frameworks, for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

I wish everyone a successful Forum.

Thank you very much.