The writing is on the wall as confirmed by the recent FEMM and ESCAP SDG Progress Reports and it is comforting to note that regionally we want to keep the messages in full view as we are doing here to ensure that it receives the attention demanded and deserved. I therefore commend PIFS and UNESCAP for the leadership initiative to conjointly host this event for all stakeholders including civil society and the private sector.

The fact that the ongoing challenges of the (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change and conflict are contributing to the slow progress by the small island developing States (SIDS) in the Pacific of the advancement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) warrants the assembly of all stakeholders as it indeed continues to impact all our citizens. While we move at a slower pace than we wish we also acknowledge the opportunities created for employment in the larger economies for our citizens as we observe an escalation in labour mobility bringing in its wake challenges of skill supply.

The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, endorsed by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in July 2022, provides a pathway to enhance regional coordination, and accelerate the SDGs progress in the Pacific. The critical list includes I quote: "political leadership and regionalism, people-centred development, resource and economic development, climate change and disasters, ocean and natural environment, and technology and connectivity. These are at the heart of boosting socio-economic recovery and protecting the planet through advancing collective actions at all levels."

It is inspiring to note words like “pathway” and “acceleration” which in the plethora of diplomacy to delivery can be a real challenge demanding a real spirit of cooperation and commitment at every level and from every stakeholder.

The private sector and our people components from investors to organizations large to micro, small and medium enterprises, have employees and customers with no exclusion, have and continue to feel the adverse impacts of the triple traumas some more than others. The proverbial economic engine rooms have been grossly affected and have borne the brunt of loss and damage and beckons the leadership of our regional governments, the international communities and donor agencies to streamlining efforts and initiatives to ensure the optimum returns for all. We've declared we are in catch up mode thus the need for acceleration and leaving none behind.

PIPSO and its member organizations have not been spared the impacts as national members have sort relief with subscriptions and naturally this has impacted the regional body with funding in the wake of the cessation of funding by Australia a few years ago resulting in the closure of our secretariat in 2021.. A review undertaken by FEMM in 2020 has to date not yielded any further developments to sustain the regional body.

The management guru Peter Drucker stated...“Culture eats strategy for breakfast” therefore I believe the strength of this dynamic of Pacific people is not only what describes us but also what has driven us throughout history and its challenges and will continue to deliver for us.

PIPSO recognizes the immense value of the talanoa table as a forum of dialogue with all stakeholders and deems it essential to addressing all
challenges of conflict, covid and climate for the vast region of small island states. People must experience the outcomes of our participation at such forums en-route to achieving not only the SDGs and defined strategies but in lifting the standard of wellbeing of our people from urban to rural to the maritime zones. The need for identifying the resources necessary for our private sector enterprises and entrepreneurs have been identified by both private sector and civil society allowing us to also be mindful of the social impacts in labor laws and business ethics. The nearer the ground we get the greater the responsibilities of private sector, civil society and government to ensure accountability, productivity and progress.

I close with the acknowledgment of the efforts and initiatives by our hosting agencies PIFS and UN ESCAP in bringing us together to track and drive progress so we don’t lose sight of our noble and strategic goals.

**Vinaka and thankyou ladies and gentlemen for your attention.**