The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the most inclusive intergovernmental platform in the Asia-Pacific region. The Commission promotes cooperation among its 53 member States and 9 associate members in pursuit of solutions to sustainable development challenges. ESCAP is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations.

The ESCAP secretariat supports inclusive, resilient and sustainable development in the region by generating action-oriented knowledge, and by providing technical assistance and capacity-building services in support of national development objectives, regional agreements and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

*The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*
In 2023, the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) members of ESCAP continued their efforts towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, though progress has been slow and uneven. Regional and global platforms have given PSIDS an opportunity to convey concerns and challenges in achieving sustainable and inclusive development.

At the 10th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) held in March 2023, Pacific members committed to work together to build back better and ensure stronger recovery responses and strategies to address the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

During the 78th Session of the ESCAP Commission held in May 2023, guided by the theme “A common agenda to advance sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific”, Pacific leaders highlighted the experience of the Pacific to emphasize the importance of regional cooperation.

Pacific leaders continued showing strong leadership in addressing climate change. This included at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP28) where they called for the scaling up of climate action and retaining an ambitious emissions reduction agenda to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level.

Finally, at the Seventh Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development on 21-22 November 2023, co-organized by ESCAP and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, representatives underscored that the SDGs remained an important blueprint for the Pacific advancing the 2030 Agenda. With the endorsement of the 2050 Strategy for the Pacific Blue Continent and its Implementation Plan, and the commitment to achieve the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway), especially its successor in 2024, Pacific members are in a strong position to move forward together in advancing their development aspirations.

ESCAP continued to strengthen its partnerships with regional organizations in the Pacific, signing a revitalized memorandum of understanding with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in May 2023 in Bangkok.

Advancing Pacific Priorities 2023 communicates efforts by the ESCAP Subregional Office for the in supporting Pacific SIDS in their implementation of the SDGs, the SAMOA Pathway, and effectively their own national sustainable development strategies and nationally determined contributions. It lists the key initiatives the Office has implemented in 2023 in close collaboration with Pacific member States, Pacific regional organizations, and the UN development system in the Pacific.

In 2024, ESCAP will continue to work with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks in the Pacific. Pacific SIDS will be heavily involved in the process of adopting a revised SIDS agenda to replace the SAMOA Pathway, which ESCAP will continue to support.

We look back at a very productive year with much satisfaction and look ahead to 2024.
Advancing Pacific Priorities 2023 is a publication of the Subregional Office for the Pacific of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The publication was produced under the overall direction of Andie Fong Toy, Head of the Subregional Office for the Pacific of ESCAP. The 2023 edition of the publication was prepared by a core team led and managed by Sudip Ranjan Basu, which included Nobuko Kajiura, Sanjesh Naidu, Jasmine Wai Mun Hong, Christopher Ryan, Khanh Ha Tran and Ranhee Kim of the ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific. Patricia Momoivalu and Leba Petersen provided administrative assistance and valuable logistical support for the publication. Mark Borg and Nikhil Lal supported the review and dissemination of the publication.
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The Asia-Pacific region is home to a new and diverse set of solution-focused actions and initiatives. Policies to accelerate inclusive economic growth, social inclusion, and climate-resilient development are now being integrated more than ever.”

Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana
Under-Secretary-General of the UN and Executive Secretary of ESCAP
speaking at the Pacific Islands Forum on 9 August 2023.
I. About the UN ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific

The ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific (SOP), which is also commonly known as ESCAP Pacific Office (EPO), covers Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu, as well as American Samoa, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Niue, and the Northern Mariana Islands as associate members.

II. Pacific Small Island Developing States at a Glance

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<tr>
<th>Net ODA received per capita (% of GNI) (2021): 4</th>
<th>GDP growth (annual %): 1</th>
<th>Export of goods and services (% of GDP) 2022: 3</th>
<th>Land area: 7</th>
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1. Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2023: Rethinking Public Debt for the Sustainable Development Goals | ESCAP (unescap.org)
5. https://www.spc.int/updates/blog/2022/06/population-dashboard-for-all-pacific-island-countries-and-territories-now
III. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana Visits the Pacific

ESCAP’s Executive Secretary visited the Pacific from 6 to 17 August 2023, during which she had meetings in Fiji, Tuvalu, Samoa and Tonga. Ms. Alisjahbana participated in the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (8 to 9 August 2023) and held bilateral meetings with Leaders and Ministers of all four PSIDS, as well as with the Fiji and Samoa UN Multi-Country Teams and other stakeholders.

In Fiji Ms. Alisjahbana met with the Prime Minister, the Deputy PM and Minister of Finance; the Deputy PM and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications; the Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management; the Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection; and the Assistant Minister at the Office of the Prime Minister. In Tuvalu, she had meetings with the Prime Minister; the Minister of Justice, Communication and Foreign Affairs; the Minister for Public Utilities and Environment; and the Minister of Finance. In Samoa she met the Prime Minister; the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment and Tourism; and the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, whereas in Tonga she met the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Ms. Alisjahbana also delivered a keynote address and a public lecture at the University of the South Pacific (USP) and the Special Remarks at the Pacific Preparatory Meeting in Tonga for the fourth International Conference on SIDS.

IV. Pacific Perspectives 2023: Advocating the aspirations of Small Island Developing States

Pacific Perspectives is a publication of ESCAP’s Subregional Office for the Pacific that every year focuses on issues of particular importance to PSIDS. Last year’s issue of the publication dealt with climate action. This year, it deals with the discussions around the SAMOA Pathway and what will follow for SIDS (and PSIDS in particular) in the next iteration. It discusses the opportunities and challenges for PSIDS, and potential scenarios for development focusing on three major themes: inclusive and equitable economic and social development; resilience to climate change and other crises; and partnerships for development.
ESCAP prepared the Pacific Regional 10-Year Review of the SAMOA Pathway to inform the discussions of the PSIDS meeting of the SAMOA Pathway in Tonga in August 2023. The report summarized the progress in the 13 PSIDS (Fiji, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Tuvalu) and the seven associate members (American Samoa, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Niue and the Northern Mariana Islands) since the adoption of the SAMOA Pathway in 2014. It explained how SIDS in the Pacific have evolved over the past decade and examined how they have utilized the SAMOA Pathway to support national and regional development. It also specifically focused on the five thematic priority areas identified in the SAMOA Pathway as vital for development of SIDS and assessed the progress of Asia-Pacific SIDS in each area. The report considered some of the differences in the performance of PSIDS and identified emerging gaps, challenges and opportunities facing PSIDS. The report also made several recommendations to boost development in the PSIDS in the next decade, with the aim of progressing the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs.
If we are going to uphold and deliver on our strong commitment to ‘leave no one behind’ and ‘reach the furthest behind first’, we will have to leave nationalism behind and urgently put action to the rhetoric we have been propagating for the past eight years.”

Fiame Naomi Mata’afa
Samoan Prime Minister

speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) at the UN High Level Political Forum, 19 September 2023.
I. Seventh Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (PFSD)

The seventh PFSD was held from 21 to 22 November 2023 at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Suva, Fiji. Its theme was “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”.

The meeting brought together representatives from all the PSIDS as well as representatives of civil society and the private sector. The meeting took stock of the progress made by Pacific countries in achieving the SDGs, particularly SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 13 (Climate Action), 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Once again, the meeting recognized the importance of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and the advantage of aligning national development initiatives with the aspirations reflected in the 2050 Strategy and the SDGs.

Read more here.

II. Tenth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

The 10th APFSD was held from 27 to 30 March 2023 at the United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok. Its theme was “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels in Asia and the Pacific”.

In alignment with the focus of the 2023 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the 10th APFSD assessed progress on the SDGs under review: SDGs 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation); 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy); 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure); 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities); and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).
The Forum also supported the presentation of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) for the 2023 HLPF. Additionally, the APFSD fed into the 2023 SDG Summit by providing a regional platform to comprehensively review progress at the mid-point of the 2030 Agenda’s implementation and identify priorities and solutions for accelerating the implementation of the SDGs in the remaining years to 2030.

Read more here.

III. The 79th session of the ESCAP

The 79th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) was held from 15 to 19 May 2023 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok. Guided by the theme “Accelerating climate action in Asia and the Pacific for sustainable development”, it brought together government leaders from across Asia and the Pacific and other key stakeholders to discuss policy options and the areas of regional cooperation required to accelerate climate action in the region and beyond. With dedicated discussions on catalyzing climate finance and investments, complemented by a climate solutions fair, the meeting identified opportunities, shared solutions and facilitated engagement of a broad set of partners and stakeholders, to both reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.
At the meeting, the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands and Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum highlighted that catastrophic human-induced climate events affected the Pacific even though the subregion had one of the smallest carbon footprints. He stated that greater climate ambition could be achieved, and mitigation and sustainable development efforts could be accelerated, but that limited access to the necessary financing remained a barrier. The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent served as a road map for achieving carbon neutrality in the Pacific by 2050. He emphasized the alignment between the Commission and the Pacific Islands Forum and called for a strengthened partnership to deliver results effectively. The operationalization of the fund for loss and damage was a priority, along with the achievement of a breakthrough in climate financing.

The meeting was attended by several PSIDS representatives from Fiji, FSM, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and the Cook Islands.

Read more here.

IV. SAMOA Pathway PSIDS Meeting in Tonga

As part of the preparation of the Fourth International Conference on SIDS, the UN convened a SAMOA Pathway Pacific Regional Review from 16 to 18 August 2023 in Tonga. It also conducted several prior consultations so that diverse perspectives could be reflected in the final review.
ESCAP and PIFS co-hosted the launch of the Pacific Regional Consultation Meeting on the SAMOA Pathway Regional Report 2023 on 13 July as a special event during the PIFS Senior Officials meeting held from 10 to 14 July. It aimed to gather the views of the Pacific member States and other stakeholders on the key priorities of the next plan of action for PSIDS. The Tonga meeting reaffirmed that PSIDS remained a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique, inherent and particular vulnerabilities, including their small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export base, and exposure to global economic, social, political and environmental shocks. The SAMOA Pathway will be coming to an end in 2024. The UN will convene the Fourth International Conference on SIDS in 2024, which will aim to assess the ability of SIDS to meet the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The meeting will take place in Antigua and Barbuda.

Read more here.

V. Energy Forum

The Third Asian and Pacific Energy Forum was held from 19 to 20 October 2023 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok. The Forum culminated in the adoption of a ministerial declaration on “Building a Secure, Sustainable and Interconnected Energy Future for Asia and the Pacific” that will guide the partnership between ESCAP and its member States in addressing these pressing energy challenges towards a sustainable energy future in the region. The Forum played a critical role in securing policies, strategies and initiatives that address energy resilience and security, and progress on Sustainable Development Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). Countries also have agreed on a Regional Road Map on Power System Connectivity for creating secure, sustainable and affordable power systems. The Road Map also underscores the importance of multilateral power trading to unlock the flexibility needed to enable the integration of high shares of renewable energy. This event brought together more than 265 participants from 42 countries including Federate States of Micronesia, Fiji, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Cook Islands.

Read more here.
The Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference was held from 15 to 17 November 2023 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok. In the lead up to the Conference, Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting was organized in Fiji in September by UNFPA Pacific Sub-regional Office. The outcome of APPC7 in November 2023 will feed into the global review by UN Member States of ICPD+30 at the 57th UN Commission on Population and Development (CPD57) in April 2024 in New York, providing the Pacific Small Island Developing States with opportunities to reflect on past successes and lessons learnt in implementing the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (POA) in the last 30 years, and explore areas of common interests for Pacific members, speaking in ‘one Pacific voice’, also with a view to influencing the Post 2030 population and development agenda. This event brought together more than 400 participants, including officials from Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Cook Islands and Niue.

Read more here.
Fiji’s second Voluntary National Review is a significant milestone for our nation. It underscores the importance of strong partnerships to fulfill our global commitments and advance implementation of the SDGs. It also acknowledges the technical challenges related to data and statistics. Fiji collaborated with ESCAP and utilized the SDG tracker to produce a comprehensive and evidence-based second VNR report.”

Sitiveni Rabuka
Fiji’s Prime Minister

speaking at the SDG Summit at the UN HQ in New York on 18 September 2023.
ESCAP-WMO Report on the State of the Climate in South-West Pacific 2022

ESCAP and WMO jointly launched the State of the Climate in South-West Pacific 2022 report on 18 August 2023. The report provides a snapshot of climate indicators including temperatures, sea level rise, ocean heat and acidification, and extreme weather events in 2022. It also highlights the socio-economic risks and impacts on key sectors like agriculture. The report notes that weather-related disasters and climate change impacts are unravelling the fabric of society in the South-West Pacific. Sea level rise threatens the future of low-lying islands while increasing ocean heat and acidification harms vital and vulnerable marine ecosystems. The three-year-long La Niña event had a clear influence on temperatures in 2022, however, despite the event’s temporary cooling influence, it was still a warm year for the region. The mean temperature in 2022 was 0.2 °C to 0.3 °C higher than during the last strong La Niña event in 2011.

Read more here.

II. Social inclusion

Leaving No One Behind Training in Fiji and Tonga

Leaving no one behind (LNOB) is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. LNOB means moving beyond assessing average and aggregate progress, towards ensuring progress for all population groups at a disaggregated level. To support the promise, ESCAP developed a user-friendly diagnostic tool called the Leave No-One Behind platform to improve the understanding of how various circumstances intersect and create inequalities in access to basic opportunities covered by the SDGs. To enable them to understand the inner workings of the platform, ESCAP provided technical training for participants from Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tuvalu and Tonga. The training was organized in hybrid format in Nadi, Fiji, from 1 to 2 March 2023. Following this, ESCAP conducted another training in Suva, Fiji for participants from the Fiji government and development partners to learn how to use the front-end of the platform.

From Fiji, the ESCAP team (Selahattin Selsah Pasali and Ms. Sejal Surendra Sood) went to Tonga where, in collaboration with the Tonga Statistics Department, they conducted another training from 8 to 9 March. Thirty-two staff members from nine government ministries, including Health, Education, Justice, Internal Affairs, the Energy Department (MEIDECC), Agriculture, Food and Forests, Fisheries, National Planning, and the Statistics Department participated in in the training. These ministries were selected based on the indicators produced and discussed during the training.

Read more here.
Tuvalu Readiness Assessment for Cross-Border Paperless Trade

ESCAP and Tuvalu’s Ministry of Fisheries and Trade launched the Readiness Assessment for Cross-Border Paperless Trade: Tuvalu report at an event on 7 June 2023. This report provides an assessment of Tuvalu’s readiness for cross-border paperless trade, that is, the conduct of domestic and international trade in the form of electronic data and documents using electronic systems. Following a brief overview of trade facilitation implementation in Tuvalu, findings from the technical and legal readiness assessments for cross-border paperless trade are presented. Recommendations on both technical and legal aspects of cross-border paperless trade are then provided, followed by a proposed action plan for the way forward for Tuvalu.

Read more here.

ESCAP Supports Tuvalu in the Review of the Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessment
ESCAP supported Tuvalu with its review of progress made in the implementation of the recommendations provided in the Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessment. The assessment was conducted by the UN Conference on Trade and Development to identify opportunities and barriers for Tuvalu to engage in and benefit from e-commerce and the digital economy. ESCAP also supported consultations with key stakeholders and provided recommendations for consideration by the Tuvalu Government.

ESCAP collaborated with Tuvalu’s Department of Trade on a regulatory gap-analysis on e-commerce in the country to assess the need to update and/or upgrade key laws such as those regarding e-transactions and consumer protection. With new developments in the ICT/e-commerce sector, an updated regulatory framework to protect consumers, maintain the integrity and security of data, and guide the development of e-commerce was needed.

National Investment Policy Statement for Republic of Marshall Islands

Consistent with ESCAP’s support to countries in attracting and facilitating investment for sustainable and inclusive growth, through capacity building and technical assistance, a partnership with the Government of Marshall Islands resulted in the preparation of a National Investment Policy Statement. The rationale for, and principal benefit of, this Policy Statement was to highlight the policies and regulations for investment in the Marshall Islands. This Policy Statement is important, inter alia, as it provides clear information to investors on the policies and requirements to obtain investment approvals. For instance, the Statement outlines the various sectors open to investment, and presents the procedures for setting up businesses, acquiring permits, and complying with regulation.

Read more here.
Review of the Federated States of Micronesia’s (FSM) Trade Policy

Led by the PIFS and funded through EU’s Strengthening Intra-regional and International Trade (SPIRIT), ESCAP provided additional technical advisory support to the review of the FSM’s Trade Policy and Implementation Plan, including through state- and national-level consultation. This project is at the final stages and a draft final report is ready to be presented to the FSM National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) for consideration.

Kiribati and the Federated States of Micronesia’s SDG7 Roadmap

ESCAP is supporting the Kiribati Energy Division with the development of a SDG 7 Roadmap for Kiribati. An inception workshop was held on the 28 July 2022 in collaboration with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Sustainable Energy (MISE) of Kiribati. The workshop was aimed to achieve three objectives: (i) inform the process of SDG7 roadmap development, (ii) explain the benefits and outcomes of the SDG7 roadmap, and (iii) identify strategies and plans to customize the roadmap in the context of Kiribati. In partnership with SPC, through the FSM Sustainable Energy Project funded by the EU, ESCAP is also supporting the FSM to develop the National SDG 7 Roadmap. The Roadmap is expected to be finalized soon, contributing to the review of FSM National Energy Policy Review.

ESCAP worked with a broad range of stakeholders, particularly agencies and departments involved in planning for the SDG7 targets, as well as participants from government departments, private sector, research institutes, NGOs, and international agencies.

Pacific Internet Exchange Point: Internet Service Providers (ISPs) Online Survey

ESCAP commissioned the conduct of an online survey for ISPs on the Pacific Internet Exchange Point. The survey focused on five areas: (i) the International cable capacity, which activated from now, 2 years forecast, 5 years forecast; (ii) the Upstream Internet transit providers, which activated from now and plans to increase or decrease up to 6 months, 2 years, 5 years forecast; (iii) peering exchanges present at – now, increase/decrease over 6 months, 2 years, 5 years forecast; (iv) traceroutes to Fiji, Samoa, and New Zealand - to establish current baseline paths and latency to proposed Pacific-IXP nodes; and (v) likelihood of connecting to Pacific-IX, and interface port size likely required. Read more here. This work follows other work that ESCAP has done for the past four years on this.
As part of ESCAP’s support for Fiji’s Voluntary National Review process, ESCAP supported Fiji in establishing its National SDG Tracker. The National SDG Tracker is a tool for countries to track progress on the SDGs. It allows countries to add their data, enter national target values, and visualize progress in a few simple steps. ESCAP supported Fiji’s Bureau of Statistics with capacity development to enable it to maintain an updated SDG Tracker for Fiji.

Read more here.

Guidelines for the Production and Use of Key National Indicators for National, Regional and Global Reporting

Commenced in October 2023 and due for completion in 2024, the ESCAP project titled Development and Piloting of Guidelines for the Production and use of Key National Indicators for National, Regional and Global Reporting is targeting Fiji, Tonga and Kiribati. The project aims to support improved data availability for evidence-based policymaking on climate-resilient development. It also aims to strengthen capacity to implement and monitor the 2030 Agenda while ensuring that no one is left behind and that development activities address socio-economic conditions and reach people in vulnerable situations.

National SDG Trackers

As part of ESCAP’s support for Fiji’s Voluntary National Review process, ESCAP supported Fiji in establishing its National SDG Tracker. The National SDG Tracker is a tool for countries to track progress on the SDGs. It allows countries to add their data, enter national target values, and visualize progress in a few simple steps. ESCAP supported Fiji’s Bureau of Statistics with capacity development to enable it to maintain an updated SDG Tracker for Fiji.

Read more here.

Assessing Inequalities in Registration of Births and Deaths in Fiji

ESCAP, together with the Fiji Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the Ministry of Justice, with the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies, launched a report titled Assessing Inequalities in Registration of Births and Deaths in Fiji. Fiji is the first country to embark on an in-depth quantitative inequality assessment, examining differentials by sex, age, ethnicity and mother’s marital status. Information obtained from the assessment will inform future research and policy interventions to bridge gaps in registration between different population groups.
ESCAP also supported the Vital Statistics Report 2016-2021 launched in September 2023. The report provides statistics on births recorded by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and registered by the Ministry of Justice’s Civil Registration Office of babies born during 2016–2021; and deaths recorded by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services that occurred during 2016–2021.

**Fiji National Workshop on the Use of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)-Related Evidence to Inform Gender-Sensitive Policies**

A national capacity-building workshop on using CRVS-related evidence to inform gender-sensitive policies in Fiji was held from 21 to 22 September 2023, in Suva, Fiji. The workshop, which targeted a core group of CRVS data producers, data users, and decision makers in the country, as well as other relevant stakeholders, explored ways that CRVS could be used to inform gender sensitive policies, and to generate and leverage collaboration mechanisms for iterative and sustainable improvement and engagement.

This followed a Fiji Evidence to Action (E2A) consultative meeting held on 21 June 2023, which engaged a core group of CRVS knowledge producers and users in Fiji to determine (i) the types of synthesized knowledge useful for decision making around CRVS; (ii) the preferred delivery mechanisms of synthesized knowledge; (iii) the existing gaps and challenges for access and sharing knowledge; (iv) the skills and capacity gaps for E2A, (v) the training needs for data users and producers to improve utilization of data for policy; and (vi) the priority topic areas for the country, related to existing CRVS data using a gender lens.

CRVS data analysis workshops have also been conducted in Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu.

*Read more here.*
Fiji was the only PSIDS to submit a VNR during 2023. Fiji’s second VNR was presented at the High-Level Political Forum (PFSD) by Fiji’s Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua, at the UN HQ in July 2023. Fiji’s second VNR was motivated by the desire to enhance coordination, strengthen stakeholder engagement, build a robust statistical process, and improve the reporting mechanism used for its first report in 2019. The VNR process was supported by ESCAP and UNDP. ESCAP supported the Bureau of Statistics with the compilation of the SDG Indicator data, whereas UNDP supported the report writing. Both organizations supported the stakeholder consultations. Fiji improved on its first VNR by having more data for analysis and by improving its stakeholder consultations with civil society organizations, academics and private sector entities. This was reflected in the report with information on non-state actors’ contributions to SDG progress in the country.

Read more here.
Voluntary Local Reviews

Suva City, Fiji’s Capital, has embarked on an exercise to develop its first (and the first for the Pacific) Voluntary Local Review (VLR). A VLR is a process through which sub-national governments undertake a voluntary review of their progress toward delivering the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. They are guided by the same principles as those of the SDGs: leave no one behind; the right to the city and multi-stakeholder engagement; universality across developed and developing countries; adoption of an all-encompassing strategy to envision the desired future by 2030; the need for a robust evidence base for action; and embracing and integration of environmental, economic, spatial, and social systems. Localizing the SDGs or translating the Global Goals into relevant, actionable and attainable priorities at the local level is a vital first step in leveraging action for addressing the multiple interlinked crises and promoting sustainable urban development.

Suva City Council organized an inception workshop from 30 to 31 May 2023 for stakeholders to discuss the SDGs and the targets that would be most relevant for Suva’s first VLR. The workshop identified several targets within eight SDGs that would be prioritized: SDG3 (Good Health and Well-being), 5 (Gender Equality), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 13 (Climate Action), and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

Following Suva’s example, other cities and towns in Fiji and other PSIDS have expressed interest in developing their own VLR. As the Pacific Islands continue to experience rapid urbanization, integrated urban development planning and actions will become increasingly important. By leveraging economic opportunities, promoting sustainable infrastructure and resource management, enhancing climate change resilience, and fostering regional cooperation, the Pacific Island nations can build a sustainable future for their citizens. With a careful balance between development and environmental conservation, the Pacific Islands can transform urbanization into a catalyst for prosperity, social well-being and environmental resilience in the years leading up to 2050. This work is being carried out in partnership with the University of Melbourne.
Our survival is no longer up for debate. Let us work together in an equitable, ambitious, decisive and inclusive manner. We must heed the warnings; WE must be prepared and we must take collective action. WE MUST work together and take BOLD steps toward a low carbon, climate-resilient future that leaves no man, no woman, no nation behind.”

H.E. Surangel S. Whipps Jr.
President of Palau

speaking at the 79th Commission session, UN ESCAP HQ, Bangkok, 15 May 2023.
I. Working with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and CROP Agencies

1. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Signed Between ESCAP and PIFS

The Under-Secretary-General of the UN and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, and the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Mr. Henry Puna, signed an MOU on behalf of the two respective organizations on 16 May 2023. In the MOU, ESCAP and PIFS reaffirmed their desire to work together in areas of mutual interest in the service of SIDS and Least Developed Countries with common membership in the two organizations in the Pacific. The MOU seeks further cooperation in four priority areas: (i) promotion, implementation and monitoring of the SDGs in the Pacific; (ii) strengthening climate action and resilient development; (iii) improving social inclusion and equity; and (iv) increasing regional economic and trade cooperation opportunities in the Pacific.

2. Executive Secretary of ESCAP Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana Attends the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM)

Ms. Alisjahbana addresses the FEMM

FEMM is an important standing meeting of the PIFS for Forum Finance and Economic Development Ministers to assist and inform Forum Leaders of relevant regional and international economic and development issues facing the region. Forum Economic Ministers have a critical role in deepening regionalism through strengthening policy cohesion on agreed regional economic priorities and policy positions and advocating these in other regional and international fora. During her keynote address at the 2023 FEMM meeting on 9 August 2023, Ms. Alisjahbana said that the Asia-Pacific region is home to a new and diverse set of solution-focused actions and initiatives.
Policies to accelerate inclusive economic growth, social inclusion, and climate-resilient development are now being integrated more than ever. She added that keeping alive the 1.5-degree goal is a matter of now or never, but with the poly-crisis, there is a growing temptation to delay climate action. Ms. Alisjahbana also spoke on the need to raise ambitions beyond economic growth; many developing countries are recovering better and faster by prioritizing well-being and prosperity at all levels, she noted. Finally, Ms. Alisjahbana spoke on the need to harness the potential of the digital economy as digital solutions are rapidly pushing the advancement of youth entrepreneurship, including women’s entrepreneurship, access to finance and accessibility of goods and services.

Ms. Alisjahbana delivers a keynote address at the University of the South Pacific (USP)
Ms. Alisjahbana delivered a keynote address at USP titled “Securing future prosperity for all people of the Blue Pacific Continent: Role of Regionalism” on 9 August 2023. In her address she focused on regional integration through trade and investment, value chains and financial markets strengthening in the Pacific. She encouraged countries in the Pacific to take advantage of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.

This UN treaty provides an enabling platform to advance the streamlining of trade procedures and reduction of trade costs, which could help expedite cross-border flows of critical goods during a crisis. She also talked about resilient and sustainable connectivity across and within the Pacific, noting that the region needed to mobilize regional cooperation in energy, digital and transport connectivity through regional cooperation mechanisms to enable greater resilience. Again at USP, Ms. Alisjahbana mentioned the need for a digital transformation. She suggested that policymakers and stakeholders work together to identify challenges and find solutions to harness this transformation at regional and national levels, and coordinate policies and actions. She added that a key part of this was the need to strengthen digital infrastructure in the Pacific.

3. Pacific Urban Forum

The Pacific Urban Partnership co-hosted the 6th Pacific Urban Forum with the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat in Suva, Fiji, from the 5th to the 7th of September 2023. The Forum released the High Level Suva Statement for a Sustainable Urban Pacific and was supported by various partners including the Fiji Government, Suva City Council and Commonwealth Local Government Forum.
The Suva Statement encouraged countries and stakeholders to:

• Deepen regional cooperation on sustainable urban development and the Pacific New Urban Agenda;

• Commit to fostering sustainable risk informed urban development practices that prioritize resilience, justice, equity, and the protection of vulnerable communities – especially those residing in informal settlements – against the devastating impacts of climate change, disasters, health emergencies and non-communicable diseases in Pacific Island nations;

• Draw on, respect, and revive cultural and traditional knowledge systems within sustainable urban development approaches that uphold indigenous rights in ways that reflect their critical role in generating urban resilience in the region;

• Recognize and rectify gender inequalities and barriers in urban areas in the region by supporting representation of women in subnational and local government and communities as part of climate and disaster responses, to pave the way for more inclusive, effective, and sustainable recovery efforts that benefit entire societies in the Pacific Islands;

• Acknowledge the role of cities and towns across the Pacific in maintaining national stability and in providing pathways for mobility and livelihood transformation as the climate crisis accelerates;

• Strengthen the pivotal role of cities, towns, and local communities and their regions to pave the way for a brighter future, empowering youth to drive economic opportunities, foster innovation, and contribute to the resilience and prosperity of the entire Pacific region.

4. Support for the Pacific 2050 Strategy

a. The Pacific Roadmap for Economic Development (PRED)

ESCAP’s support for the Pacific 2050 Strategy included supporting the development of the PRED, a regional policy instrument that will support the achievement of the 2050 Strategy’s vision. ESCAP commissioned a report that reviewed and expanded the Pacific Economic Ministers’ Concept Note for the PRED. The Concept Note outlined the high-level linkage between the 2050 Strategy and the strategic approach to the PRED, and the critical considerations for the development of a robust and responsive economic and financial strategy for the sustainable economic prosperity of the Pacific. The review aimed to tease out potential actions that the region could undertake to strengthen Pacific economic defenses from domestic and external shocks, grow and diversify the economic pie, future-proof Pacific economies, and optimize the blue economy revenue potential.
b. Climate Mobility

The Pacific region is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change, with its low-lying island nations facing multiple threats, including sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and ocean acidification. These threats are impacting the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental systems of PSIDS, resulting in increased climate-induced human mobility, including migration, displacement, and planned relocation. Over the course of three years, Pacific Island members, with the support of the Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security (PCCM-HS Programme), have been actively developing a regional collaboration framework on human mobility related to climate change. The development of the Regional Framework on Climate Mobility has progressed under the guidance of the Joint Working Group (consisting of Pacific member governments and PCCMHS partners including SPC, PIFS and the Platform on Disaster Displacement) and its Co-Chairs (the Governments of Fiji and Tuvalu). The Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility will provide a coordinated approach to climate-related human mobility in the Pacific region, which takes into account its unique socio-cultural, economic, and environmental contexts. It contributes to the implementation of the thematic area “Climate change and disaster 1” of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

c. Regional public debt management issues

A Pacific Regional Debt Conference was convened in April 2022 in response to a mandate from the Forum Economic Ministers’ Meeting (FEMM) to bring together Forum Island Countries and their creditors to discuss and explore options for debt relief. The Conference was co-convened by Fiji and Tuvalu and co-hosted by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and ESCAP. Read the Conference outcomes here. Based on proceedings, two policy briefs were published on the following issues: impact of the COVID-19 and climate change on debt profile of Pacific Island Countries (PICs); and fiscal governance in ensuring that debt sustainability remains at prudent levels in PICs. Read the policy briefs here.
d. Regional cooperation on Satellite-derived damage assessment

Through the long-standing Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development (RESAP), Pacific SIDS affected by disasters have been provided with high-resolution satellite data to inform their disaster response and damage assessment, such as during the Hunga Tonga–Hunga’Ha’apai eruption and tsunami (Jan. 2022, a satellite imagery is attached) and the recent Tropical Cyclone Lola that affected Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Through the close collaboration with the UN Satellite Center (UNOSAT), satellite-derived damage assessments were provided to inform disaster response and recovery efforts. The ESCAP secretariat could activate this mechanism upon request by disaster-affected countries. Request may be sent to escap-sas@un.org.
ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific has been actively engaging with all the Resident Coordinator Office including i) Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu; ii) Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau; iii) Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, Kiribati; iv) Papua New Guinea and v) Timor Leste, especially for the SAMOA Pathway follow-ups.

ESCAP worked closely with MCO-Fiji for a coordinated support to Vanuatu, in the immediate aftermath of Cyclones Judy and Kevin in March 2023. In coordination with the UN Inter Agency Taskforce on LDCs, and in liaison with the RCO, ESCAP is leading support to Solomon Islands to, inter alia, prepare a transition strategy for graduation from LDC status. ESCAP worked closely with MCO-Samoa, UNDP and UNWOMEN to deliver a Joint SDG Fund project in Samoa, which was focused on integrated planning and financing issues. ESCAP lead support on public investment planning, and selected tourism sector policy and implementation issues in response to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, with the placement of a Regional Adviser-Micronesia within the MCO-FSM not only signifies ESCAP’s commitment to strengthen technical assistance and capacity building support to member States in Micronesia, but also enhancing UN-wide coordination mechanism to provide a more integrated and whole-of-government and society support.

ESCAP has been coordinating with all MCOs in the Pacific to support the Voluntary National Reviews of five Pacific members for 2024: Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Samoa, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.
IMF and PFTAC coordinated regional workshop on Public Investment Governance and Management, in collaboration with Government of Samoa and ESCAP

The IMF’s Fiscal Affairs Department, and the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre in close collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, Government of Samoa, and ESCAP organized a regional workshop focused on strengthening public investment governance and management in the Pacific on 27 Nov–1 Dec 2023. The need for efficient and effective public investment is clear. But most Pacific countries lack institutional arrangements and capacities required for improved infrastructure outcomes. Support towards strengthening public investment planning and governance in-country, as well as, building technical capacity to manage investment are critical needs for the Pacific. The workshop aimed to strengthen countries’ capacity in managing public investment with focus on economic, social and climate related projects. Key areas covered included project identification and planning; appraisal and selection; implementation and monitoring; and evaluation. Countries shared how public investment is managed in their context offering a platform for interaction among participants to foster peer-to-peer exchanges.
Monash University, Incept Labs and Institute of Public Accountants: Sustainable Futures Challenge 2023

ESCAP partnered with the Monash Business School, research consultancy Incept Labs, and the Institute of Public Accountants (IPA) to organize the Sustainable Futures Challenge, held in Melbourne, Australia from 20 November to 2 December 2023. During the intensive ten-day program, multidisciplinary teams collaborated to undertake independent research, create stakeholder analyses, and find holistic solutions to problems as part of Building Resilience with a focus around disaster recovery and disaster planning in the Pacific. This initiative commenced in 2022 to provide practical understanding, knowledge and educational experience to graduate students in proposing solutions to create a more sustainable future for all.
## I. Policy dialogue, capacity building and technical assistance for Pacific SIDS 2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title (Country)</th>
<th>Programme of Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06 to 07 February</td>
<td>Civil Registration Vital Statistics (CRVS) Closing Workshop for Assessing In-equalities in Registration</td>
<td>Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>01 to 02 March</td>
<td>ESCAP Technical R Training for LNOB Analysis in the Pacific</td>
<td>Social Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>06 March</td>
<td>An Introduction to the Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) Analysis: A Hybrid Training for Fiji</td>
<td>Social Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>09 to 10 March</td>
<td>ESCAP Technical R Training for LNOB Analysis in Tonga</td>
<td>Social Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 March</td>
<td>Pursuing wellbeing in the Pacific and beyond</td>
<td>Statistics, Environment and Development and Office of the Executive Secretary</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 April</td>
<td>Tuvalu Indicator Workshop</td>
<td>Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 April</td>
<td>Kiribati Indicator Workshop</td>
<td>Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 May</td>
<td>Pacific perspectives on accelerating climate action</td>
<td>Environment and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 May</td>
<td>Approaches to Loss and Damage from a Pacific Perspective</td>
<td>Environment and Development</td>
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<td>17 May</td>
<td>Fossil Fuel Free Pacific</td>
<td>Energy Division</td>
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<td>30 to 31 May</td>
<td>Regional Webinar on the Draft Pacific Climate Mobility Framework</td>
<td>Environment and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>07 June</td>
<td>Launch of Tuvalu’s Readiness Assessment for Cross-Border Paperless Trade Study and Findings of ETrade</td>
<td>Trade, Investment and Innovation</td>
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<td>13 June</td>
<td>SAMOA Pathway Consultation: Strengthening Partnership with Universities and Research Networks</td>
<td>Office of the Executive Secretary</td>
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<td>13 July</td>
<td>Pacific Regional Consultation Meeting on the SAMOA Pathway Regional Report 2023</td>
<td>Office of the Executive Secretary</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 to 14 July</td>
<td>Regional Dialogue on the Draft Pacific Climate Mobility Framework</td>
<td>Environment and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 to 20 July</td>
<td>Expert Group Meeting on SAMOA Pathway</td>
<td>Office of the Executive Secretary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Organizing Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 to 18 August</td>
<td>Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Pacific Region: 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States</td>
<td>Office of the Executive Secretary</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 October</td>
<td>Kiribati Industrial Policy Inception workshop</td>
<td>Trade, Investment and Innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 to 22 November</td>
<td>Seventh Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (PFSD) 2023</td>
<td>Office of the Executive Secretary</td>
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<td>23 November</td>
<td>Pacific 2024 Voluntary National Reviews Clinic</td>
<td>Office of the Executive Secretary</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 November</td>
<td>Developing Pacific Guidelines for National Indicator Production Approaches for Policy Making</td>
<td>Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 November</td>
<td>Tonga Policy Coherence for Implementation of TSDF II, SDGs &amp; 2050 Strategy</td>
<td>Office of the Executive Secretary</td>
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<tr>
<td>02 to 04 December</td>
<td>Pacific Sub-regional Training on Digital Technologies for Disaster Risk Management</td>
<td>Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [https://www.unescap.org/events](https://www.unescap.org/events)
II. List of knowledge products for Pacific SIDS in 2023

Flagship:

Pacific Perspectives 2023: Advocating the aspirations of Small Island Developing States, November 2023, Pacific perspectives 2023 : advocating the aspirations of Small Islands Developing States | ESCAP (unescap.org)

Reports:

Readiness Assessment for Cross-Border Paperless Trade: Tuvalu, June 2023, Readiness assessment for cross-border paperless trade: Tuvalu | ESCAP (unescap.org)

REVIEW OF E-TRADE READINESS ASSESSMENT REPORT, June 2023, eTrade Readiness Report FINAL_140423.pdf (unescap.org)

POST DISASTER NEEDS ASSESSMENT: Vanuatu Tropical Cyclones July and Kevin, July 2023. Vanuatu Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin - Post Disaster Needs Assessment | ESCAP (unescap.org)

Pacific Regional 10-Year Review of the SAMOA Pathway, August 2023, Pacific SIDS_10 year review_SAMOA Pathway_29 August 2023.pdf (unescap.org)

PROMOTING SIDS PRIORITIES A selected list of ESCAP Expert Opinion Blogs: 2018-2023, August 2023, ESCAP PACIFIC_BLOGS_LAYOUT_V2.pdf (unescap.org)


Advancing Distributed Energy Resources (DER) Development in SIDS to Support Energy Transition, October 2023, Advancing Distributed Energy Resources (DER) development in SIDS to support energy transition | ESCAP (unescap.org)

Policy briefs:

FISCAL GOVERNANCE AND DEBT SUSTAINABILITY IN PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES, June 2023, Fiscal governance and debt sustainability in Pacific island countries | ESCAP (unescap.org)

Review of the Small Islands Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway in the Pacific Region: Economic growth, social development and Partnerships, August 2023, 1-UN ESCAP Policy Brief Samoa Pathway (T145) 14 August 2023(adv unedited copy).pdf

Review of the Small Islands Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway in the Pacific Region: Climate change, biodiversity and Oceans, August 2023, 2-UN ESCAP Policy Brief Samoa Pathway (T23) 14 August 2023 (adv unedited copy).pdf

Review of the Small Islands Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway in the Pacific Region: Scenario analysis’, August 2023, 3-UN ESCAP Policy Brief Samoa Pathway (Tscenario) 14 August 2023 (adv unedited copy).pdf

Manuals & Training materials:

Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) FIJI, February 2021, Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) : Fiji | ESCAP (unescap.org)

Harmonization Of National Laws With the Convention On the Rights of Persons With Disabilities: Country Case Study Australia, July 2023, Harmonization of national laws with the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities : country case study Australia | ESCAP (unescap.org)

Inequality of Opportunity in Asia and the Pacific Assessing birth registration in Fiji, August 2022, Inequality of opportunity in Asia and the Pacific : assessing birth registration in Fiji | ESCAP (unescap.org)

Public investment and project planning : a guidance note for Pacific Island Countries, November 2023, Public investment and project planning : a guidance note for Pacific Island Countries | ESCAP (unescap.org)
ESCAP REMAINS COMMITTED TO SERVING MEMBER STATES THROUGH STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION IN 2023.

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