

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
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Subregional Dialogue
“A common agenda to advance sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific”
Wednesday, 25 May 2022
Remarks by Deputy Secretary General, Dr Filimon Manoni of the Pacific Islands Forum

- *Your Excellencies and Distinguished Delegations,*
- Greetings from the Blue Pacific.
- Let me begin by emphasising the Pacific region's ongoing support and commitment to our global family of nations.
- I am deeply encouraged by the joint efforts and commitments taken by our Pacific Islands Forum family toward SDG localisation, implementation and reporting which is reflective of the Blue Pacific narrative, and an expression of our regional solidarity.
- Excellencies and friends, the Pacific is currently working on our Second Quadrennial Pacific Regional Sustainable Development Report. As with the first, this second report is being prepared through a robust and inclusive process that involves both government and non-governmental stakeholders
- The report will provide a high-level snapshot of where we are in terms of strengthening the prosperity of our people. It will also allow us to identify solutions to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, while we continue to grapple with the externally induced impact of the climate crisis, which has amplified our own challenges and vulnerabilities.
- Recognising this, Pacific Island Forum Leaders continuously reaffirm climate change as the single greatest threat to our region. The ground-breaking 2021 Pacific Islands Forum *Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate Change-related Sea-level rise* further reinforces the Blue Pacific's call to world leaders to urgently commit to decisive climate action that limits global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. We strongly urge our global family to do all that is necessary to achieve this target.
- Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated our debt levels and placed unprecedented pressures on our debt servicing capabilities.

- Given the urgency of this prevailing situation, we must prioritise strengthening economic recovery in the Pacific; we must develop urgent, innovative and transformational solutions that are fit for purpose and address our unique vulnerabilities; and we must strengthen our human and technical capacity to ensure that we have the appropriate mechanisms and resources in place to respond effectively to crises’.
- Excellencies, while we have made some progress, it is clearly not enough given our existing and emerging vulnerabilities as small island developing states.
- We must invest significantly in our own systems and our own human resources if we are to improve our absorptive capacity; and strengthen our national systems. These are essential to securing adequate financing to implement Pacific priorities.
- We cannot do this alone. We must strengthen collaboration and prioritise genuine partnerships that support our priorities. This includes opportunities for funding or technical assistance through south-south cooperation initiatives such as replicating SIDS-relevant solutions through peer-to-peer learning.
- The opportunities in digital economy are limitless. We must accelerate efforts in transformational and innovative interventions that capitalise on new and available technology in the areas of trade and ICT. We have begun to bridge this gap already within existing frameworks such as the *Pacific Aid for Trade Strategy 2020-2025*, and we urge our partners to work with us to realise our potential in this area.
- On this note, I must reaffirm again the importance of more streamlined, coherent global policy implementation and reporting processes tailored to our unique capacities. We call on the UN system and development partners to recognise and work in complementarity with our existing Pacific mechanisms.
- In closing, the decision of Pacific Island Forum Leaders to develop a long-term *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* reaffirms our commitment to harness the power of our collective will and resilience. It will leverage our shared political strength, human and natural resources in new and innovative ways, to address our present and future challenges that will lead to transformative change for present and future generations.

- The 2050 Strategy will not replace national, or regional commitment to the 2030 Agenda, but rather complement national efforts by collectively addressing a range of development issues, where working together is seen to be socially, economically and environmentally advantageous for all. It is our vision for our region, a strategy owned by countries, in order to protect and secure our Pacific people, our place and our prospects.
- I thank you.