Pacific Small Island Developing States Statement

Round table 1
Population dynamics, sustainable development and climate change

16 November 2023 0900hrs - 1030hrs

Mr./Madam Moderator

Thank you for this opportunity to deliver this intervention on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States under the supervision of UNFPA Pacific Sub Regional Office including, Cook Islands, Federated State of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Niue, Tokelau and Marshall Islands.

We commend the invaluable insights and enlightening contribution from the distinguished panelists this morning. Their guiding observations are thought provoking.

Mr./Madam Moderator,

Pacific populations are on the frontline battling sea level rise, ocean acidification, coral bleaching, drought and the increasing frequency and severity of storms and natural disasters. Women and children including persons with disabilities are the first to bear the negative impacts of climate change. These negative impacts have disproportionately high financial, economic, social and political costs. It is therefore difficult and challenging to talk about sustainable development without addressing climate change in the Pacific. Climate change is an existential threat to the Pacific.

While the principal cause of climate change is high consumption in the developed countries, its impacts are disproportionately affecting the poorest sectors within Pacific countries, thereby exacerbating inequities in health status and access to adequate food, clean water and other finite resources in the Pacific region.

The Pacific is a region of great diversity and high vulnerability, and as such, has long presented a unique case for targeted support to advance development, and ensure sustainability. Socio-economic development and
environmental sustainability of all Pacific states are impacted directly by population dynamics both at national and sub-national levels.

Human development in the Pacific is endangered due to the negative impacts of climate change. Pacific governments are challenged in providing basic services to our communities, particularly to those in remote areas, brain drain and shortage of skilled workforce due to movement of people and migration are experienced, land fertility and drought are impacting food security, poverty is increasing and its eradication is greatly hindered, and national governments are limited in managing and expanding inclusive services and essential infrastructure to all citizens.

Sustainable development is embedded in all Pacific Island and regional aspirations. All Pacific countries regularly present their SDG implementation progress under the voluntary national review mechanism. At the regional level, the Pacific roadmap for sustainable development and the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy provide guiding principles for implementation. However, these aspirations can only be realized if climate change is addressed.

The Pacific is calling for greater political will from Asian Leaders including global leaders to combat climate change and decry any postponement of the Paris Agreement commitment. Reducing the vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions will help the Pacific to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

We are encouraging global and bilateral partnerships that help develop a low carbon economy through transfer of clean technology, finance and capacity-building that would represent concrete action with impacts at the national level.

The Pacific firmly believes that the “one size fits all” approach and doing business as usual does not complement Pacific aspirations. We need to match commitments with action and inject a sense of urgency and responsibility to do the right thing. More resources must be dedicated towards population development dynamics.

International partners can make far greater efforts to ensure the effectiveness of their assistance for climate-change adaptation and mitigation.
Now, if I may take the last moment of this regional statement to present RMI's brief intervention on the matter. For a low-lying atoll country that spans nearly 800,000 square miles, whose land, waters, and people are still suffering from the effects of a nuclear legacy, sustainable development in the midst of the effects of climate change, sea level rise, and other global crises can only be achieved when these challenges affecting our population and territory are addressed.

I thank you.