REPORT OF THE SEVENTH PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

“Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions.”
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PART A

CONCEPT NOTE
The annual Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (PFSD) serves as a platform for policymakers and stakeholders to discuss pressing and emerging issues confronting the Pacific region. The Seventh Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development focused on SDG 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 13 (Climate Action), 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Sustainability was at the core of the 2050 Strategy and its Implementation Plan 2023–2030, which Pacific Islands Forum Leaders endorsed at the 52nd Pacific Islands Forum held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands from 6–10 November 2023. The 2050 Implementation Plan lays the foundation for transformational change that balances economic growth, social equity, and environmental stewardship in alignment with global commitments and frameworks, and advocates for the interests of the Blue Pacific Continent on the world stage. The Implementation Plan for the 2050 Strategy was aligned with both regional priorities and national development goals, ensuring coherence, efficiency and localized impact.

Key messages from the Seventh PFSD will be presented to the 11th Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD), 20–23 February 2024, the outcomes of which will be reviewed at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), 8–17 July 2024, under the theme “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”.

As in previous years, the Seventh PFSD included opportunities for policymakers and stakeholders to interact and exchange solution-oriented approaches, along with a capacity-building element for the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on follow-up actions highlighted through Voluntary National Reviews (VNR). The PFSD showcased success stories and lessons learned as members shape the direction for a post-SAMOA Pathway framework.
The PFSD, the Pacific preparatory multi-stakeholder meeting for the APFSD and HLPF, provided a unique platform to share perspectives and learn from one another on common priorities and approaches to address ongoing and emerging challenges of COVID-19, climate change and conflict for the Pacific member States.

The PFSD included discussions on the progress of SDG implementation with a focus on SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17. A related objective was focusing on the VNRs and SDGs’ national implementation and follow-up actions, regional cooperation and global solidarity through a programme of actions for the SIDS.

ESCAP and PIFS co-hosted the PFSD, along with the support of the CROP and UN system, including the Resident Coordinator Offices in the Pacific.

By invitation, 147 participants, including representatives from ESCAP member States in the Pacific, CROP and UN agencies, development partners, civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector and academia attended the Seventh PFSD, with 64% of them attending in-person. The list of participants appears in Annex 2.

To socialize the sustainable development work in the Pacific among a wider audience, the outcome documents and related resources will be published on the ESCAP website here.
PART B

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS
The Master of Ceremony duties were carried out by Ms. Tracey Robin Choko, a student from the University of the South Pacific. She welcomed guests and invited participants on behalf of the event organizers and explained the sequence of events for the Opening Session. She invited the Sustainable Engagement Adviser of PIFS to open the proceedings with a prayer.

**The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Fiji.** offered a warm welcome to everyone, especially as Fiji was the host country of the PIF. Discussions at the recent Forum Leaders Meeting held in the Cook Islands focused on regional leadership for the various challenges and opportunities in Pacific SIDS. Leaders reaffirmed the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent as the region’s long-term strategic policy document and endorsed the Implementation Plan for the Strategy. As the Pacific SIDS were collectively facing structural vulnerabilities, there was a need to address the array of interconnected challenges while sustainably recovering from the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and adapting to the ongoing adverse impacts of climate change-induced and natural disasters.

The Pacific SIDS’ commitment to the sustainable development and resilience of Pacific peoples remained unwavering, and the agenda for the PFSD provided space to discuss these crucial issues and to amplify the Pacific message beyond the Pacific, to the Asia-Pacific region, and to global fora. Fiji presented its 2nd Voluntary National Review (VNR) earlier this year, underscoring a national commitment towards ensuring that no Fijian was left behind. Collaborative efforts within all levels of society and government were urged, along with partnerships with development partners.

The remarks of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Fiji appear on the PFSD website [Link](#).

**The Under-Secretary-General of the UN and Executive Secretary of ESCAP** then delivered special remarks via a pre-recorded video. The climax of the SDG Summit, which took place in September this year in New York, USA, was when member States adopted a political declaration that reaffirmed their continued resolve and shared commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Climate change-induced and natural disasters, and rising food and fuel prices, exacerbated hardship across Pacific communities. An estimated one in four Pacific Islanders were likely to be living below their respective national poverty line, while food insecurity and lack of nutrition were widespread. As such, there was a greater need to improve inclusion in socio-economic outcomes; build resilience; strengthen strong institutions and policy coordination mechanisms and systems; and promote robust data and statistics for monitoring and evaluation.
The Pacific Youth Council noted that this year’s PFSD covered crucial SDGs – 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 – and that this aligned with the focus placed on these goals globally. Civil society organizations (CSOs) contributed to the achievement of the SDGs through advocacy, monitoring, capacity-building, partnerships, community engagement, innovation, and social entrepreneurship, among other areas. Governments must include CSOs in all national processes, such as that of the VNR. Regional collaboration was crucial in achieving these SDGs, and the role of youth was also key. Youth were ultimately the custodians of the 2050 Strategy and become catalysts of change when given the right space. Representatives were urged to include youth in all societal development discussions. Similarly, the views of marginalized groups must be brought into discussion. Data could be used in identifying where key issues lie and aid in any monitoring and reporting processes. The region must work towards Pacific solutions to sustainable development that have all our peoples at its core.

The remarks of the Pacific Youth Council appear on the PFSD website (Link).

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Fiji was congratulated for presenting its 2nd Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report at the HLPF this year, and it was noted that Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Samoa would present their VNRs at the 2024 HLPF. This clearly demonstrated the importance the Pacific region placed on achieving the SDGs, but there remained a need to accelerate collective actions in areas where progress was limited. ESCAP’s commitment to supporting the VNR process was reaffirmed, as well as its support towards Pacific members’ and associate members’ voices at the 4th International Conference on SIDS scheduled to be held in Antigua and Barbuda in May 2024. Regional cooperation that centered on the six transformative entry points could have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs. These entry points were in food systems; energy access and affordability; digital connectivity; education; jobs and social protection and climate change; and biodiversity loss and pollution.

The special remarks of the Under-Secretary-General of the UN and Executive Secretary of ESCAP appear on the PFSD website (Link).

The Resident Coordinator, UN Multi-Country Office, Fiji, acknowledged the representatives from Governments, development agencies and regional and national organizations. The PFSD was an opportunity to pause, take stock, recalibrate, and sharpen the focus on solutions needed for people, planet, prosperity and peace. Escalating global conflicts, the climate emergency, widening social and economic inequalities, and a global pushback against human and civil rights and gender equality have hindered progress towards achieving our global goals. While important national accomplishments on the SDGs were made, the Pacific regressed on 6 of the 17 SDGs, and with the current trajectory, it is unlikely that even 20 per cent of the SDG targets will be met by 2030. This status quo must not be accepted.

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The remarks of the Pacific Youth Council appear on the PFSD website (Link).

The special remarks of the Under-Secretary-General of the UN and Executive Secretary of ESCAP appear on the PFSD website (Link).
The six major transitions necessary to drive SDG achievement were emphasized, and Governments, CSOs and all development partners were urged to work harder, smarter, and together on the complex development challenges the Pacific faces. A blueprint for the region and the world we want is possible with the SDGs and the 2050 Strategy, and the solutions to make these blueprints a reality lie in communities, businesses, governments, youth and CSOs across the Pacific.

The remarks of the Resident Coordinator, UN Multi-Country Office, Fiji, appear on the PFSD website [Link].

The Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, noted that the Pacific had been busy in recent weeks – the PIF Leaders’ Meeting in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, was a key event, as was the signing of the Samoa Agreement in Apia, Samoa. Underpinning discussions in Rarotonga was the importance of aligning the 2050 Strategy with national plans and ambitions. The decisions emanating from this PFSD will catalyze the change the region needs, especially in ensuring that combined efforts and partnerships towards our common goals are reinforced with our Leaders’ vision for 2050 in mind. The time for talk and discussions was behind us, and action needed to be intentional and meaningful. 2024 will be a big year for the Pacific, and for SIDS. This will be a chance for key stakeholders to gather collective efforts and chart a way forward.

The remarks of the Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, appear on the PFSD website [Link].

Key messages from the Opening Session

- While there have been important national accomplishments on the SDGs in the Pacific, 6 of the 17 SDGs have regressed. It is unlikely that even 20 per cent of the SDG targets will be achieved by 2030.
- There was a need for bold, ambitious and accelerated actions to implement national development priorities and the 2030 Agenda.
- Countries should leverage data to inform decision-making, implement targeted interventions, and engage with communities.
- Governments of the region must work with CSOs and youth to find solutions to the Pacific’s many problems.
- The time for talk and discussions was behind us, and action needed to be intentional and meaningful.
SESSION 1

STOCKTAKING SDGs IN THE PACIFIC

This session was moderated by the Cook Islands.
In the introductory presentation, ESCAP highlighted that to truly reflect on the SDGs, there was a need to first acknowledge how far behind we were. Pacific Governments reported on progress and set out concrete national commitments to SDG transformation. Significant progress on some SDGs was noted, but a notable lack of progress on others was also evident – both regionally and globally. Discussions at the PFSD would focus on SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 and feed into the Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD). At recent high-level political meetings, partnerships and engagement were noted to be a key component for developing a blueprint for the future. Climate resilience, the sustainable energy transition, SDG localization and partnerships were identified as key enablers in ESCAP’s Advancing Pacific Priorities publication. In Fiji, Suva City’s Voluntary Local Review (VLR) was mentioned as being a stellar example of SDG localization. It was important that national achievements and challenges in its SDG implementation be shared by countries, and to identify priority actions. Regional partnerships, practices, and innovative solutions on SDG delivery in the context of the current polycrises would bode well for implementation of high-impact regional collective initiatives.

ESCAP’s presentation appears on the PFSD website (Link).

As part of its introductory presentation, PIF highlighted that the 2050 Strategy set a long-term strategic framework for the Pacific. There are seven key thematic areas and the implementation plan endorsed at the PIF Leaders’ Meeting in the Cook Islands was the first phase of the overall strategy. An important question to consider now is, “How do we achieve the leaders’ vision for 2050?” PIFS acknowledged the contribution of development partners to development work done in Pacific SIDS but added that continued support in monitoring the strategic areas of the 2050 Strategy will further aid the region’s development targets. The Pacific Partnerships for Prosperity was an initiative brought up by leaders at the Leaders’ Meeting as part of the 2050 Implementation Plan approval process. In time, a document will be prepared and shared with all key stakeholders that covers the inclusive policy process and engagement strategies with CROP governing councils, the working groups of regional organizations, and partner roundtables.

PIF’s presentation appears on the PFSD website (Link).

### Advancing Pacific Priorities (stock-taking since 6th PFSD 2022)

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Mr. Sudip Ranjan Basu, Deputy Head, ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific
PIANGO requested that more information be provided on the strategies to actively engage CSOs.

PIFS noted that one of the working groups in the design of the 2050 Strategy’s implementation plan included CSOs. The PIF has its own processes around engagement with CSOs, which has proven to be successful on several occasions. Nevertheless, in relation to the 2050 Strategy, work will be done to devise specific strategies and approaches.

Samoa commented that “charity starts at home” and explained that while the Pacific had an abundance of resilience, there was a need to “get our own houses in order first” before contributing to efforts regionally. While work was being done collectively at the regional level, there was a need to be honest with each Pacific SIDs’ national situation. We must act now, and not dwell on challenges, but focus on solutions.

**Key messages from the Session 1**

- While there was significant progress on some SDGs in the Pacific, there was also a notable lack in progress on others.

- Climate resilience, the sustainable energy transition, SDG localization and partnerships were identified as key enablers by ESCAP.

- The 2050 Strategy sets a long-term strategic framework for the Pacific. There are seven key thematic areas, and the implementation plan was the first phase of the overall Strategy.

- The role of non-government stakeholders was recognized, and efforts would be made for processes to be more inclusive for other stakeholders.

- It was also reiterated that there was a need for less talk and more action.
SESSION 2A

SDG 2 (NO POVERTY)

This session was moderated by Republic of the Marshall Islands.
The difference between poverty and hardship was explained by the UN Multi-Country Office, Samoa in the introductory session. Poverty was noted to be a state or condition in which a person or community lacked resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living, while hardship was noted as a condition that signaled constant suffering, toil and danger. The poverty-hardship relationship was explained as linear and two-way – that is, one could cause the other, and both have similar key factors such as health conditions and ailments, global economic shocks, war and so forth, and both had similar means of being addressed by governments through social protection policies and taxation measures. Climate change exacerbated the extent of poverty and hardship across the world and made it more difficult for governments to address them using fiscal measures. SDG 1 stressed the importance of eradicating all forms of poverty because of this very reason. The Pacific experience with poverty and hardship were noted, for instance, Samoa had one of the highest mortality rates (81 per cent), and research had shown that this led to other societal issues such as violence against women and children and substance abuse. Global economic shocks, such as those that stemmed from COVID-19, made matters worse, and it was encouraging to see Pacific SIDS show resilience and build back from them. Graphical representations of the effect of external shocks on the GDPs of Pacific SIDS were displayed, as were graphs showing how Pacific SIDS were addressing the poverty-hardship cycle. In conclusion, it was mentioned that the Pacific was exposed to poverty and hardship, which made it difficult to reverse their impacts. In this context, Governments and development partners must build strategies and action plans.

Samoa UN Multi-Country Office’s presentation appears on the PFSD website (Link).
Marshall Islands (RMI) noted increasing inflation and rising costs of living as ongoing challenges. RMI was noted to be heavily reliant on imported goods, because not enough could be grown on their comparably small land mass. Not importing goods to meet the demand would lead to food insecurity. RMI also imported fuel to ensure its vital transport sector continued running smoothly and increasing global fuel prices meant that customers would end up paying for increases in local prices. It was also noted that people in the outer islands of the Marshall Islands had restricted opportunities as they could not access basic services due to their distance from the mainland. CSOs had a critical role in creating awareness within the country and in coordinating with Marshallese who are abroad in the USA. Recently, a support package for single mothers was launched, as was an initiative for access to goods and services and health care for elderly people who could not afford it.

FCOSS said that increasing hardship and poverty were common in rural communities in Fiji. The Government was acknowledged for the assistance it provided to assist these communities, and examples of Narocake Village, Nukutubu Village, Kalekana Settlement and Muanikoso Settlement were noted. The lack of education, unemployment and underemployment, low wages, inability to afford basic food, poor health, lack of affordable housing, poor access to transportation, family structure, economic policies that favour some, not all, and climate change were noted as examples of hardship in Fiji. Rising costs of living and additional government taxes made access to food and reliable transport services more costly. Political will is needed to review existing public finance mechanisms that lead to these types of flow-on effects.

Nauru mentioned that every country in the Pacific, and indeed the world, had a different capacity to respond to these types of challenges. Each country faces challenges unique to its situation, and this needs to be considered in regional approaches to addressing poverty and hardship.

Solomon Islands noted geographical challenges encountered in attempting to address poverty and hardships in outer island communities. Connectivity and digital inclusiveness proved difficult to implement because the vast distances had implications on capital costs and operational expenditures.
Kiribati noted the lack of resources available to address SDG 1 in the country. Kiribati is barely 3 metres above sea level, and a simple spring tide can restrict the lives of its residents. Kiribati also lacks arable land, and sea water intrusion is making things worse. Increasing fuel prices have a flow down impact on every Kiribati citizen. Increases in the cost of goods are putting upward pressure on final prices of goods and services.

Palau mentioned its Lifeline Subsidy Programme, which was implemented some years ago. It included policies such as implementing a cap on fuel prices and increasing social protection measures by almost 10 per cent. It was noted that those suffering from poverty and hardship sometimes choose not to seek assistance because of shame. CSOs were advocating and creating awareness in communities, requesting them to take up assistance provided by the Government. There were also social protection schemes that focused on assisting people with disabilities.

Cook Islands said that partnerships between Governments, the private sector and development partners needed to be reinforced by data showing the reality of the situation on the ground. This will move the conversation from a somewhat hypothetical one to one that is centred on hard facts and numbers. To address disability, the building code in Cook Islands was recently updated to require new buildings to have at least one disability access. The week prior, a disability-friendly elevator was installed at the Ministry of Justice building in Rarotonga, making its services easier for people with disabilities to access.

The Pacific Disability Forum agreed with comments made by Cook Islands. Observations show that people with disabilities shied away from accessing services because buildings did not have disability-friendly access points. Furthermore, the criteria required for accessing disability allowance were cumbersome and a bit costly. It was noted that only six countries in the Pacific SIDS had a disability monograph, and that only in six countries in the Pacific SIDS were disability allowances provided to those with disabilities.

RMI was observing impacts of climate change firsthand. Seawater intrusion, especially during king tides, makes lands unusable for farming and damages homes, other infrastructure and any progress made in these areas. Coastal erosion was worsening the situation, and access to land was becoming increasingly limited. New homes cannot be built, and the population living in remote communities faces food insecurity and loss of income.

FCOSS said that increases in fuel and food prices would make the dire situation for those facing hardship and poverty in Fiji worse. Stakeholders were urged to work together to lift some of the burden.

Vanuatu is prone to tropical cyclones. Earlier this year, three had hit Vanuatu in the span of about one week. The impact of this is still being felt by its residents, which naturally made life more difficult for those already on the margins of society. In Vanuatu, they prefer to use the term hardship as it includes poverty. Recovery efforts burdened the government with additional financial responsibilities.

Samoa said that access to food was not really an issue within Samoa, given that food is what is leading to high rates of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in the country. In Samoa, a mindset change is required. For example, sometimes money from selling fresh fish is used to buy tinned fish. There is a need to promote a healthy lifestyle and self-sustenance rather than reliance on imported foods.

Tonga gave an example of how school fees were being paid by the Tongan Government to those who qualified for it. Subsidies were also provided to these families for their grocery purchases and some other expenses. Disasters such as the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai volcanic eruption also highlighted its ability to respond to shocks, and building back better was a strategy that the Tongan Government employed in its response. Close to 120 houses and buildings needed to be rebuilt. Close to $5 million was spent by the Tongan Government in recovery efforts.
Key messages from Session 2A

- While extreme and absolute poverty by international standards is relatively low in the Pacific, an estimated one in four Pacific Islanders are likely to be living below their respective national poverty line.

- Attention from Governments needs to include improving quality education; increasing minimum wages; improving health services; investing in social protection systems and affordable housing; scaling up access to sustainable transport; and investment in climate adaptation.
The session was moderated by the FCOSS.

SESSION 2B
SDG 2 (ZERO HUNGER)
The FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands noted that the Pacific was being marginalized in the global discussions on food security and nutrition. This led to a joint report produced by FAO, IFAD, SPC, UNICEF, WHO and WFP. The objective of the report was to describe the current state of food security and nutrition across the assessed countries and the main findings noted that COVID-19 disrupted and reversed progress on food security. The report also established that more data was needed to track the changes and impact of development programmes implemented to address food security and nutrition. Child nutrition needed urgent attention. Alarmingly, while local, healthy foods were available, consumption of unhealthy foods prevailed. There was a call made for development partners to address the identified critical gaps, and for countries to include nutrition relevant data in their national household surveys. It was also recommended for this report to become a continuous production.

FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Island’s presentation appears on the PFSD website (Link).

Cook Islands said that during its COVID-19-related lockdown, the Government implemented a grant funding system for agricultural businesses and farmers to help increase production of local produce to meet demand, as imports had ceased. An outcome of this approach was a trial of climate-resilient crops being planted in different areas of the country, in partnership with SPC, and exploring hydroponic gardens as opposed to traditional methods. Efforts were also directed towards implementing a “grow your own food” campaign in partnership with the Ministry of Health. The Government also invested in a crop-processing facility where high value items are processed.

Food security and nutrition were crucial for countries – such as Vanuatu – facing adverse impacts of climate change. While the aim of Government response was to ensure that people have access to food, there was also an element of ensuring that NCDs are curbed in Government programmes and initiatives. A key challenge was to change consumption patterns – many ni-Vanuatu were content with consuming imported, processed foods high in sugar and fats. There were many farm-to-school, farm-to-hospital, and farm-to-household type projects that helped increase access to healthy foods. The Ministry of Agriculture is mandated to work with commercial scale farmers and to provide them with tools and capacity-building necessary to increase productivity. Farmers cultivate their root crops and a subsidy is provided by the Government. There is also a re-integration policy in place, where students who study abroad in New Zealand and Australia return to toil the land with climate resilient crops. Pre-made food baskets have been a success as an outcome from government initiatives during times of disasters, first with COVID-19 and then in the aftermath of recent cyclones.
Cook Islands said that regional and international partnerships were crucial in devising innovative solutions to SDG 2. While Pacific SIDs are resilient, they are vulnerable to global and external shocks. Stakeholder engagement is key – with farmers, women’s groups, Governments, development partners, the private sector, and others – as farming techniques and knowledge have become widespread. There is a need to work collaboratively to create a better, food-secure future for our children.

Fiji spoke on a multi-sectoral policy which is currently in draft form and said that discussions such as those in this Session help devise policy outputs and practices that are best for any country, not just Fiji. Apart from core agricultural strategies, it was important to devise supporting strategies such as farm access road and market development and access work. Fiji’s farm mechanization programmes, driven by the Ministry of Agriculture, provide farmers with mechanical advantages where necessary. Public-private-partnership (PPPs) were suggested as a means of funding innovative solutions as well as technical assistance. In the next few months, efforts would be made towards gathering and analyzing food consumption data and information. A Youth in Agriculture Policy was developed, and the Ministry of Agriculture was working on its implementation plan. It was also collaborating with the Ministry of Education to create awareness and knowledge of self-sustenance and consumption of healthy foods.

The Pacific Youth Council spoke about the Tonga Youth Hub and its ambitions to progress this initiative into an organic learning farm. This would address the issues of better utilization of land and better use of input (grains/seeds/other farming inputs). However, there were difficulties in sourcing seeds, especially if a special variety needs to be brought in from another country. The PYC is aware of youths who studied agriculture and land use in Israel and hopes that the knowledge they return with will help structure the PYC’s programme. A good example of how farming techniques can lead to improved financial outcomes is Grace Road Company in Fiji. It was able to use idle land to produce a significant amount of fruits and vegetables and the business is now one of the largest of its kind in Fiji. This also raises the question of availability of funding to small-scale farmers to help them graduate into mid-scale and then large-scale farming.

Palau said that the SDGs should not only be about data and numbers, emphasizing that there are many stories that reflect the effort put into achieving the SDGs. Palau used stories as a tool in its first VNR to depict efforts made by stakeholders towards the SDGs. It was important to engage CSOs and non-government actors to get the best stories. The National Environment Protection Council was set up by the President and includes Directors of all Government departments. This council produced the State of the Environment Report, and then sought to improve the indicator set for various SDGs related to zero hunger and poverty and to food security and nutrition.
Tuvalu said that soil quality was quite poor. Because of this, not much can be grown, and many shops resort to importing vegetables. Unfortunately, long supply chains mean that these spoil by the time they end up on shelves in Tuvalu. The biggest of the nice islands of Tuvalu does, however, have some arable land. Each year the Department of Agriculture trains people from all islands on the largest island to share knowledge, and devise ways of growing at least enough to feed their populations.

Samoa recalled an agriculture show in the country where farmers competed in a positive way to produce crops using sustainable methods. It was suggested that something of this sort could spur a sense of innovation and lead to new farming methods and techniques in other Pacific SIDs.

Vanuatu commented that while food security and nutrition affects youth acutely, they are the ones who were coming up with solutions and suggestions on how to curb it. Affordability, not only accessibility, is another consideration. Governments and other partners need to also look at income, and not just focus solely on investing in sustainable agricultural methods. Efforts must be intertwined.

Key messages from Session 2B

- Food insecurity and lack of nutrition requires attention.
- Policies implemented by Governments include grant funding to incentivize farmers to increase efficiency and profitability of local food production; provision of seeds and advice on climate-resilient crops; support for hydroponic gardens in household and schoolyard gardens; along with raising consumer awareness of healthy food.
- It was recognized that these initiatives required an enabling environment such as farm access roads, agricultural machinery, technological support, and market development.
SESSION 3

SDG 16 (PEACE, JUSTICE, AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS) – TACKLING THE CHALLENGES THROUGH GOOD GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Session was moderated by Tonga.
The UN Resident Coordinator, Papua New Guinea, said that climate change posed a threat to Pacific SIDS unlike any other, and that the UN stood with the Blue Pacific continent in solidarity and recognized the Pacific’s leadership on climate security, especially efforts focused on advancing the Boe Declaration and ensuring that “1.5 to stay alive” is truly at the heart of global discussions. However, at a time of rapid change and disruption, Pacific SIDS must collectively face a triple planetary crisis: deepening inequality, conflict and instability, and social polarization. Measures to advance sustainable development must also mitigate climate change and address systemic discrimination. He recalled the recent PIF Leaders’ Meeting in Cook Islands, where leaders welcomed Fiji’s presentation on the concept of a Zone of Peace and its alignment with the 2050 Strategy and its Implementation Plan, the Biketawa Declaration, the Boe Declaration, and other complementary initiatives including the Joint Heads of Pacific Security (JHOPS). Leaders also recognized the leadership of the Teieniwa Vision, including the proposal to establish a taskforce to oversee its implementation, and particularly Kiribati for its continued leadership on anticorruption in the Pacific.

The remarks of the UN Resident Coordinator, Papua New Guinea, appear on the PFSD website (Link).

PIFS offered contextualizing remarks on its stance on good governance. By virtue of its historical foundations, broad issues of ‘governance’ have been an integral component of PIFS’ fabric since its formation. The Pacific’s journey is unique, particularly within the context of a region that has deep roots bound in tradition, custom and culture. Reconciling these principles and values with democratic principles and values has at times been a sensitive issue. Over the years, Forum Leaders have made a number of notable commitments to good governance, such as the 1998 Eight Principles of Accountability; the 2000 Biketawa Declaration; the 2003 Forum Principles of Good Leadership; the 2014 Framework for Pacific Regionalism; the 2019 Boe Declaration; the 2020 Teieniwa Vision; and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and its Implementation Plan. Governance is an incredibly broad and abstract term, and no single instrument can tackle all the issues of weak governance alone. The outcome relevant to good governance in the 2050 Implementation Plan is the Pacific demonstrating “strong and accountable leadership that is consistent with existing regional commitments on good governance, accountable leadership, democratic principles and values.” The political will and mandate to progress this important work is clear, and will be driven in the region by the 2050 Strategy.

PIF’s presentation appears on the PFSD website (Link).

PIANGO emphasized the importance of transparent and accountable public financial management systems and of empowering people to increase their participation in them. PIANGO, for example, partnered with UNDP in an EU-funded initiative whereby citizen’s guides were published explaining the budgetary processes. For the communities that would be most impacted by climate change, access to information was critical in order to know how best to plan for it. Vanuatu and Cook Islands were acknowledged for establishing information commissions, while Fiji was acknowledged for setting up its Accountability and Transparency Commission. A key component of development work is for Governments to ask their citizens whether they are aware of climate change and its impacts. PIFS was urged to use different means of ensuring this transmission of information and knowledge in its 2050 implementation plan. The Kacivaka Tool was mentioned as one means, and Tonga’s Constituency Fund another, which could be used to address good governance initiatives.

The Resident Representative, UNDP Pacific, presented on human-centred development and SDG 16. The term ‘polycrises’ was expressed as Pacific SIDs are almost always in some sort of battle with several crises. There was marked backward progress in human development, and indicators for SDG 16 all show regression, which was concerning. There were serious setbacks, especially in health and gender equality. Future fit governance was explained as something that can start at any point in time and is a journey of continuous learning and improvement.
There was a strong need for qualified civil servants who are not subject to political cycles. A future fit system of governance is a set of new approaches, including anticipation, adaptability, and agility. Political will, collaborative leadership and civic engagement are proponents of such a paradigm shift.

The Resident Representative, UNDP Pacific’s presentation appears on the PFSD website [Link].

**Palau** pointed out the importance of focusing on the different levels of governance – not just local, national or international. This is especially so in an interconnected world. Different levels of governance will require different levels of partnerships and different levels of investments.

**Vanuatu** commented that a report on governance in social protection was prepared and will be submitted through appropriate channels. The findings will help the Vanuatu Government improve governance structures and devise better social protection policies. The report also encompassed a section on addressing rural-urban drift, as dwellers started to build homes wherever they found space, and that these turned out to be in areas vulnerable to climatic events. There needed to be effective policy frameworks in place from which implementation plans can be developed.

**UNDP** affirmed the existence of the rights of individuals to participate in national affairs. Unfortunately, there have been many instances globally where citizens complain about not being informed about their government’s actions or complain about not being involved in decisions that impact them. It was suggested that outputs from LNOB be considered in measuring national efforts towards the SDGs and reach out to those who are furthest behind. Technology and digitalization have some role to play in this.

The **Resident Representative, UNDP Pacific** commented that governance systems in place today are more dynamic than ever before. The future fit system of governance was reiterated, and the set of new approaches included anticipation, adaptability and agility. With this new, dynamic approach, a congruent dynamic system of resource allocation is required to be strategically flexible, and for governance systems to acknowledge those that are furthest behind and then work with relevant partners to bring them out of that cycle. Digitalized solutions can work for the benefits of the people who are furthest behind.
Cook Islands’ Information Disclosure Act sets the tone for making information public. Last year, the Cook Islands introduced the Budget Support Group – made up of experts – to act as a check on its budgetary process. Following the announcement and tabling of the budget in Parliament, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) deliberates on it, and requests for members of the public to again comment on the contents of the budget. In the first instance (last year), there were many constructive comments from farmers and others in the primary industry, and this helped the PAC make recommendations to the Parliament.

Samoa recalled the One Million Dollar Initiative that was in place at a previous time. The Samoan Government used to allocate funding to different constituencies. After considering all options, the Government opted to simply allocate $1 million to each constituency and allowed them to allocate it to different uses. This worked well, because different constituencies had different priorities – some wanted water tanks, some wanted to develop land, and some wanted to pay fees for all their school students. Their ideas would then be taken back to their member of Parliament for sign-off. However, this was discontinued after some time.

Solomon Islands mentioned that its Commission on Anti-corruption was established within the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). An increasing trend was noted where citizens took to social media to lodge complaints, but the anti-corruption commission would now handle these.

Cook Islands suggested that a national funding institution (or something similar) needs to be set up to allocate funding for Parliament and for these types of independent commissions and other watchdogs.
Key messages from Session 3

- Peace is central to the implementation of the Goals and climate change was identified as a security issue.

- Fostering good governance requires political will and civil society engagement. The importance of strong and accountable leadership to strengthen institutional capacity and to improve monitoring and evaluation to deliver the Goals was recognized.

- All stakeholders were urged to promote collaborative leadership especially national consultations on budget preparations, public service delivery mechanisms and society-wide policy decisions within national institutional and governance structures.
SESSION 4

SDG 13 (CLIMATE ACTION) – ACCELERATING CLIMATE ACTION IN THE PACIFIC

This session was moderated by the Pacific Ocean Commissioner.
PIFS presented on 2023 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders’ meeting outcomes and key priority messages from the Pacific to be advocated at COP28. It was noted that Leaders committed to implementing the Paris Agreement, aspired to a just and equitable transition to a fossil fuel free Pacific, urged a transition away from coal, oil and gas, and encouraged all members to follow proceedings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). It was also noted that the Pacific Political Climate Champions for COP28 included oceans-climate nexus, global stock take, climate finance, loss and damage, just transition, mitigation, adaptation and gender and social inclusion. Emphasis was placed on ensuring emissions can peak by 2025.

PIF’s presentation appears on the PFSD website (Link).

SPC noted that approximately 65 per cent of Pacific people still lacked access to regular energy, and that 100 per cent of transport was dependent on fossil fuel, and this meant that there was still a long way to go to a fossil fuel free Pacific. As such, the Efate Outcome Statement pursues a unified, urgent, strong, and regional position to phase out fossil fuels, acknowledging that the pathway is not immediate nor one-size-fits-all. Priority areas include off-grid energy access for rural communities, decarbonization of land and maritime transport, and implementation of the Pacific Energy Gender Strategic Action Plan. The Framework for Energy Security and Resilience in the Pacific (FESRIP) was noted to be a regional framework that could strengthen partnerships and coordinate actions across the energy transition.

The FESRIP (2021–2030) was aligned to SDG 7, Goal 2 of FRDP, and linked to the 2050 Strategy.

SPC’s presentation appears on the PFSD website (Link).

ESCAP said that reducing dependency on fossil fuel is more a development issue for the Pacific, and less a climate change issue. Fossil fuel was an enormous economic burden on Pacific SIDS, with some countries footing a bill worth 20–25 per cent of their total imports. The UN Ministerial Meeting on Energy was a whole-of-UN meeting that took place every five years, and the third such meeting took place recently. Most Ministers from the Pacific attended, and a declaration was signed committing countries to fully implement SDG 7 and all other energy commitments to the Paris Agreement and provide support to countries that need assistance with transition. There were many politically sensitive issues that Ministers needed to navigate. ESCAP remained an effective platform for Pacific SIDS to develop and communicate strategies to the UN system, and for their voice and opinions to be heard on the global level.
The Fiji Business Disaster & Resilience Council of the Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation stressed that the private sector is profit-oriented, and that they engage in areas where it makes financial sense to do so. For example, the transition to renewable energies was a topical issue in Fiji for many years now, because of its considerable investment angle and risks involved. Connecting private sector ways of doing business with public sector intentions can still work. The FBDRC provided a platform for the private sector to both manage impacts and risks, and support the public sector, CSOs and development partners in building climate resilience. While a lot of pressure falls on the private sector to be the agents of change, it was noted that little was done to guard their financial results. Fiji’s predominantly hydro-energy system needs a revamp, but there are genuine issues, such as skilled migration. Also, technologies need to be proven a bit more, in terms of reliability and cost effectiveness. Examples of Fiji Airways, Coca Cola, Mark One Apparel, and Sofitel Resort were used, considering their own investment in renewable energy technologies. While the private sector is well-equipped to develop climate adaptation projects, technical and financial support is required. To this end, the Council asked why can’t countries that are part of the OPEC provide financial and technical assistance towards a transition to a fossil fuel free Pacific?

FBDRC’s presentation appears on the PFSD website [Link](http://www.pf-fiji.com).

Palau commented that engagement with the private sector at events such as COP28 was essential.

Samoa thanked the Ministers and their teams who negotiated the Pacific’s positions on our behalf. Financing and funding opportunities, perhaps, needed to be reconsidered. Samoa, because of its LDC status, managed to access funds for addressing climate change-related issues over four years. There is a need to use the Pacific SIDs’ presence on boards and committees, such as the GCF, to try and influence change. At the moment, the Chair of the SIDS component of the GCF Board is the Caribbean. In the next rotation, it will be the Pacific, and Kiribati will assume the role.

The FBDRC agreed with voicing the Pacific’s views at global forums. There was much talk of billions, and even trillions, of dollars being made available to the Pacific, but does this really come into the Pacific? And what happens if it does? The Pacific needs to be set up to be able to utilize incoming funds in meaningful ways. For example, many Pacific SIDS do not possess a power development plan, and if one does exist, then it is not funded continuously, and so the project dies a slow death.

Mr. Karunesh Rao, Chair of Business Disaster & Resilience Council, Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation
**Tonga** says that the transition to renewable energy is a global responsibility and given that the Pacific SIDS contribute so little to climate change, there needs to be more done by global partners towards innovative solutions.

**PIANGO** believes that climate finance at the global, regional, and even national level, can be more effective only if communities and CSOs can access it.
SPECIAL EVENT

LAUNCH OF UNESCAP PACIFIC FLAGSHIP PUBLICATION PACIFIC PERSPECTIVES 2023: ADVOCATING THE ASPIRATIONS OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

This session was moderated by PIFS.
ESCAP spoke on the key initiatives and concrete actions that exist in the Pacific – the 2050 Strategy, the UNSCDF, the ESCAP Resolution and Strategic Framework for Pacific Statistics, to name a few – and the efforts ESCAP was making to advance the Pacific development agenda. *Pacific Perspectives 2023* reflects these efforts and suggests initiatives that enhance regional cooperation and global solidarity. The report recommended ways forward that include concerted efforts for inclusive and equitable growth, the disaster-climate-health nexus and enduring partnerships and sustainability.

ESCAP’s publication is available here ([Link](#)).

**Cook Islands** noted that the *Pacific Perspectives 2023* advocated the aspirations of Small Island Developing States. Evidence-based policymaking remained a critical element for making strategic decisions, and using these publications to guide preparations for climate resilience over the next decade is important for Pacific SIDS. Fostering cooperation and partnership between Pacific SIDS and all development partners was essential for leveraging new opportunities in achieving the SDGs.

**New Zealand** said that strong and trusted relationships were important, and that if Pacific SIDS are given the right amount of assistance, they would grow economically strong and environmentally resilient. The importance of collaboration over competition would be key in efforts. There was no one-size-fits-all approach, and all stakeholders must remain in sync, aligned to one another as we head to a common destination.

The **PRNGO Alliance** thanked ESCAP for its efforts and said it looked forward to working together with all stakeholders.

**UNDP** believed that the voice of Pacific SIDs had become very strong in global discussions. We must collectively ensure that our voice continues to make an impact at the global level, and that the status quo shifts from where it is currently.

**Samoa** believed that the collective Pacific SID’s voice gave the Pacific a position of strength.

The **Pacific Ocean Commissioner** urged participants to continue advocating for the 1.5 degrees target, and create, or further develop, partnerships that could help the Pacific SIDs’ agenda. The endorsement of the 2050 Strategy’s implementation plan was the most recent step towards sealing a shared journey for sustainable development.
Report of the Seventh Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
SESSION 5

ACCELERATING FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA THROUGH VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS (VNR)

This session was moderated by Fiji.
The Ministry of Finance, Fiji, introduced the session, its objectives and discussion points. VNRs were a starting point for action towards developing ways and means of achieving SDGs.

UNDRR recognized the Moderator’s emphasis on the significance of VNRs for SDG achievement. Stressing that VNRs involved every sector of society, a multi-stakeholder approach was crucial, with engagement plans for each stakeholder being a critical component. Data from VNRs revealed that only 5 per cent of indicators were on track, 50 per cent were likely to be unmet, and none of the SDGs were expected to be achieved by 2030. The increasing allocation of funds to recovery efforts was straining governments’ fiscal capacity for other essential policies, while ongoing efforts by UN agencies aimed to address data availability challenges across all areas of work.

Vanuatu’s first VNR lacked stakeholder engagement. Preparation for the second VNR will relook at the lessons learnt from the first VNR process to ensure improvements were made. Data was unfortunately still an issue, as there were fragmented data sets across several agencies and stakeholders. It was working with statisticians to address this. Vanuatu will also consider working more closely with provincial Governments this time around.

Palau discussed five key elements in its 2024 VNR, these being “Mandate, Structure, Process and Tools, Product, and Timeline”. There was a need for senior government officials to take ownership of the SDGs that their portfolios addressed. If not, then the secretariat of the VNR (the organizing committee) may need to step in.

Samoa’s 2016 VNR marked a crucial initial effort to align SDGs with its national agenda. The 2020 VNR indicated that Samoa was progressing well, achieving 40 per cent of relevant SDG indicators, particularly in education, infrastructure and child mortality. However, challenges including biodiversity loss, violence against women, data availability, health threats, income inequality and economic decline exacerbated by COVID-19, highlighted the need for capacity-building in data gathering and cost-effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems.

Tonga posed a question about the inclusion of religious groups in the VNR. The representative requested guidance from any country that had previously prepared a VNR. Palau consulted religious groups as part of its wider CSO engagement. Vanuatu facilitated input from the Vanuatu Council of Churches by giving it a grant to travel to and from meetings.
Group Session:

PNG presented Group 1’s discussion, noting that the six transitions don’t adequately reflect climate-related initiatives that were highly relevant for the Pacific. Therefore, the need to explore more disaster risk reduction, climate change mitigation, traditional ways of coping with climate change and climate change-resilient infrastructure were identified.

Group 2’s discussion focused on the engagement of stakeholders throughout the VNR process as this was vital for understanding the SDGs. The strategy involved seeking input from all sectors, especially marginalized groups, and encouraging their contributions through various channels. The guiding questions addressed key aspects, such as the effectiveness of stakeholder platforms, the benefits of a whole-of-society approach, lessons for inclusive engagement, CSO report integration, community participation value, and perspectives on multi-stakeholder engagement in the VNR process.

ESCAP presented Group 3’s discussion, noting that historical territorial disputes among stakeholders posed challenges to coordination, including data collaboration. Recognizing SDGs as a unifying force, the group advocated for leveraging them to enhance data coordination. While VNRs had established strong mechanisms, the focus now was on sustainable implementation and seamless integration of M&E into national processes, with Group 3 suggesting the continuity and adoption of VNR processes and products as standard procedures, when possible.

Group 4 had aligned with the consensus of the other groups, advocating for reform in participation mechanisms to ensure genuine involvement of stakeholders, especially civil society, and local authorities. It proposed strengthening existing organizations at various levels and reforming legislation to enhance awareness and effective participation. Emphasizing the alignment of VNRs with VLRs, the group underscored the importance of practical implementation of SDGs, highlighting local governments and NGOs for community control and recommending strategic data collection, trust-building, and funding for successful collaboration and sustainable development.
Key messages from Session 5

- Recognize the need for a multi-stakeholder approach and engagement plans for each sector.
- Challenges identified for VNRs included data availability, health threats, and economic decline.
- The Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are set to submit their VNRs in 2024.
- Group sessions addressed critical issues such as climate-related initiatives, stakeholder engagement, historical challenges, and the need for reform.
- Consensus on the importance of reforming participation mechanisms for genuine stakeholder involvement.
SESSION 6

SDG 17 – FOSTERING STRONGER REGIONAL COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR REINFORCING THE 2030 AGENDA AND THE 2050 STRATEGY FOR THE BLUE PACIFIC CONTINENT

This session was moderated by Palau.
PIFS noted that more work was needed to align with the increasing number of collaborations and partnerships formed both regionally and internationally. Implementation plans and resources were crucial for maximizing the potential of initiatives in the Pacific region. Partners expressed support and financial commitment for establishing a Pacific Energy Commissioner. Ongoing efforts included finalizing the Pacific Roadmap for Economic Development (PRED) to address debt sustainability, establishment of a fisheries trust fund, and corresponding banking relationships (CBRs). Discussions among Pacific central banks, Australia, New Zealand, and the USA focused on resolving CBR-related issues.

UNDESA brought up the key issues that were discussed at the SDG Summit in New York earlier this year. Long-term financing needs were a notable discussion point, especially in areas where urgent climate action was needed. The SDG Summit Declaration urged investment in an international financing reform, emphasizing enhanced political will. It committed to building science and technological capacity in developing countries, recognizing the need to address data gaps and emphasizing concessional financing as a genuine mechanism, with DESA ready to support countries in developing VNRs.

New Zealand emphasized the 2050 Strategy in outlining collective efforts for regional development goals. Building effective partnerships while also sustaining existing relationships was a key factor for success. It was important to focus on a values-based approach, highlighting that strong and trusted relationships form the foundation for successful partnerships.

Fiji agreed that collaborative partnerships involving all stakeholders, embracing a bottom-up approach, and supporting diversity, were essential for achieving collective goals. The importance of solidarity was underscored, suggesting that working together surpasses individual country efforts. The vision of a peaceful and harmonious region relied on concerted efforts and collaboration among nations.

PCRIC recognized that resilience operated at the national level, contributing to the regional level, emphasized through the promotion of parametric insurance in various regional platforms. Pacific SIDS could enhance their adaptability and recovery by continuing to build resilience, requiring both regional and international collaboration. PCRIC engaged with Pacific SIDS to advocate for financial resilience, aligning its work with the 2050 Strategy’s thematic area on Climate Change and Disasters to ensure Pacific people remained resilient to climate impacts and disasters.
Group Sessions:

Fiji presented Group 1’s discussion, noting that further efforts were required to achieve the SDGs, with the VNR process recognized as crucial. Challenges, including the impact of COVID-19, concerns about data integrity due to cyberattacks, and the alignment of National Development Plans with SDGs were highlighted, as exemplified by Fiji’s recent initiation of a revised strategic plan.

New Zealand presented the discussion for Group 2, recognizing that connectivity challenges and development were present in remote communities. Establishing comprehensive data systems capable of handling disaggregated data was emphasized and the discussion highlighted the importance of addressing privacy and confidentiality issues to create accessible common data repositories.

New Caledonia started its presentation of the discussion for Group 3 by highlighting the 2050 Strategy for its direct alignment with the 2030 Agenda, considering it a reflection of the region’s priorities and a sign of maturity. Group 3 stressed the importance of ongoing engagement with partners and donor agencies to address challenges such as cybersecurity, connectivity, gender equity, and localized impacts of climate change.

Group 4’s discussion presented by CLGF emphasized the need to streamline existing mechanisms in the regional architecture, highlighting trust, cultural understanding, and reciprocal comprehension as unique Pacific advantages. Additionally, there was a need for focus on making Pacific communities aware of development efforts and improving voluntary local reviews to better capture community and CSO perspectives.
Key messages from Session 6

- A need for building effective partnerships, sustaining existing relationships, and promoting flexibility for inclusive, locally led development.

- Support for diversity in stakeholders was emphasized, contrary to the traditional state-led approach, for achieving solidarity in the region.

- Concerns and recommendations were raised in each group session, including the alignment of National Development Plans with SDGs, connectivity challenges, and the need for comprehensive data systems.

- The forum recalled that the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit Political Declaration calls for an investment package across six transition areas: food systems; energy access and affordability; digital connectivity; education; jobs and social protection and climate change; and biodiversity loss and pollution. Reforming the international financing architecture is a key driver to benefit from this transformation together with strengthening regional partnerships and solidarity for transformational change around the means of implementation.
SESSION 7

STRENGTHENING GLOBAL SOLIDARITY FOR THE SIDS DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

This session was moderated by Samoa.
UNDESA stated that the Nuku’alofa SIDS meeting’s declaration document would serve as the foundational outcome for the upcoming 4th International SIDS Conference next year. The host, Antigua, has requested a less elaborate outcome document than the SAMOA Pathway. Logistical preparations were in progress. It was emphasized that it was important to consult the 2050 Strategy during Conference preparations.

Tonga discussed the seven sections of the Nuku’alofa Outcome Document with a focus on air, land, and sea transport, plastic pollution, IUU, water scarcity, soil erosion, sanitation and hygiene, and loss of skilled and semi-skilled workers. Discussions revolved around expediting climate mitigation, sustainable ocean use, productive sector investment for employment generation, inward remittances, strengthening ICT regulation, traditional knowledge, food security, nutrition, water access, gender equality, quality education, and the potential role of South-South Cooperation, with emphasis to align with the 2050 Strategy.

Through integrating SDGs into development goals, PNG faced various challenges, such as improper coordination between stakeholders, lack of reliable data, and lack of finances to fund development activities internally.

The Pacific Disability Forum highlighted that there were approximately 2 million people with disabilities in the Pacific region. Inclusivity and equity were important, noting historical challenges in global efforts such as the SDGs and stressing the need to move beyond inclusion to ensure a better platform for persons with disabilities.

SkyEye noted that financial inclusion, digital literacy and e-commerce were identified as key components for a path forward. However, the unavailability of reliable data caused difficulties. AI could become a useful tool in the not-so-distant future but this would require significant investment that could only occur if the funding options were available to the private sector.
ESCAP reminded participants that the discussions at the PFSD would contribute to the APFSD and subsequently be presented at the HLPF, while discussions from the Nuku’alofa SIDS Conference will feed into the Global SIDS Conference. Recommendations included increasing interventions in roundtable discussions and plenary sessions, with a suggestion for Pacific SIDS to engage with the ESCAP Pacific Office for coordination and emphasizing the importance of keeping political leaders informed on regional positions at the ESCAP Commission Conference in April next year.

UNOHRLLS noted that it was necessary to work on policy coherence by engaging with regional agencies in the Pacific, including PIFS and other CROP agencies, to enhance the articulation of priorities and positions. Establishing an inter-agency coordination team to ensure complementarities, synergies, and coherence in implementing the 2050 Strategy was needed when aiming to leverage the strengths of various agencies for the benefit of Pacific SIDS.

Key messages from Session 7

- The Nuku’alofa SIDS meeting produced a skeleton outcome document for the upcoming 4th International SIDS Conference, emphasizing the importance of consulting the 2050 Strategy.

- Six key priorities were recognized: (i) Transformative Actions to Enhance Environmental Resilience; (ii) Revitalizing Our Economies; (iii) Forging a Path to Empowerment, Equity, Inclusion, Peaceful Societies and Safe Communities; (iv) Strengthening Institutional and Statistical Capacities; (v) From Vulnerability to a More Resilient Future/Resilient Prosperity; and (vi) Means of Implementation, with a focus on digital transformation.
SESSION 8

THE WAY FORWARD AND CLOSING REMARKS
To wrap up, PIFS acknowledged the delegates present at the PFSD. A summary of the key messages and actions from each session of the Forum were presented, reiterating key points highlighted by session moderators.

The UN Multi-Country Office of Fiji said that if the Pacific is to achieve the SDGs by 2030, partnerships and innovation, then these discussions must happen. Improved effort in localizing SDG implementation will go a long way in addressing critical development issues. The climate crisis can only be addressed with the right mix of national, regional and international mechanisms. The transformational change that the Pacific seeks, collectively, depends on the conversation not stopping here. The key messages will channel into the APFSD and eventually into the 4th SIDS Conference. Partner agencies and governments must reinforce ambitions with actions.

ESCAP expressed appreciation to the participants for their active participation, as well as the presenters, speakers, and the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat for the organization of the 7th PFSD. PIFS and ESCAP looked forward to more partnership opportunities to deliver SDGs and achieve the 2030 Agenda.
Report of the Seventh Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

**Goverance Fit for the Future**

- Executing course corrections
- Adapting to changing conditions
- Agility: Monitoring and acting with speed and efficiency

**Governance for the Future**

- Political will
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Clear engagement
ANNEX 1

PROGRAMME OF THE PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2023
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:30 – 09:00</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:00 – 10:00</td>
<td>Opening Session</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Master of Ceremony - <strong>Ms. Tracey Robin Choko</strong>, University of the South Pacific</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Opening Prayer:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Mr. Henry Cocker, Engagement Adviser, PIFS</td>
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<td>Welcome Remarks:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Mr. Lesikimacuata Korovavala, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Fiji</td>
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<td>Special Remarks:</td>
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<td>- <strong>Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana</strong>, Under-Secretary-General of the UN and Executive Secretary of ESCAP</td>
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<td>- <strong>Ms. Miliana Iga</strong>, Coordinator, Pacific Youth Council</td>
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<td>Introductory Remarks:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Mr. Dirk Wagener, Resident Coordinator, UN Multi-Country Office, Fiji</td>
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<td>Official Opening:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Mr. Henry Puna, Secretary General, PIFS</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 – 10:30</td>
<td>Tea/Coffee Break [ Group Photo ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30 – 11:00</td>
<td>Session 1: Stocktaking SDGs in the Pacific</td>
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<td>This session will set the scene for the two-day forum, providing an overview of efforts and progress made on the SDGs since the Sixth PFSD. It will discuss how the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration can support the Pacific’s priorities at COP28 and upcoming 11th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) and High-Level Political Forum in 2024. This session will also discuss how efforts to achieve the SDGs complement the implementation of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.</td>
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<td>Moderator: <strong>Mr. Tingika Elikana</strong>, Associate Minister, Cook Islands</td>
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<td>Introductory presentations:</td>
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<td>- Mr. Sudip Ranjan Basu, Deputy Head, ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- <strong>Ms. Manaini Rokovunisei</strong>, Policy Adviser, PIFS</td>
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Plenary Discussion:

The session will discuss, among other things:

- Subregional progress in the Pacific to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Progress made since the 2022 PFSD based on the key recommendations while showcasing regional and national initiatives to accelerate the SDGs; and
- Highlight the 2050 Strategy Implementation Plan in synergy with the key Goals of the 2030 Agenda that require accelerated Pacific-wide policy actions and strategic interventions.

Wrap up session:

References:
1. SDG Summit 2023, 18-19 September. Political Declaration | United Nations

Session 2: SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger) - Impact of Polycrisis on Poverty and Food Security

While extreme and absolute poverty is relatively low in the Pacific, an estimated one in four Pacific Islanders are likely to be living below their respective national poverty line. The war in Ukraine has exacerbated hardship, particularly for the most vulnerable, as food and fuel prices rise making basic needs increasingly unaffordable. Increasing adverse climate events across the Pacific are further threatening food security. This session will review SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero hunger) in the context of their impact on hardship and food security challenges and solutions in the Pacific.

11:00 – 12:00
(60 mins)

Session 2a. SDG 1 (No poverty)

The first part of the session focuses on poverty issues in the Pacific context such as specific aspects of hardship and deprivation in the Pacific, for example, lack of employment opportunities for youth and thus to their livelihood; highlighting how climate change and food and price increases impact on Pacific people; and exploring initiatives and potential solutions to address the challenges. (Nutrition issue will be highlighted in session 2b).

Moderator: H.E. Mr. Junior Aini, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to Fiji

Introductory presentation:
- Mr. Travis Klaus Mitchell, Team Leader-Economist, UN Multi-Country Office, Samoa
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talanoa session:</th>
<th>12:00 – 13:00 (60 mins)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Ms. Eseta L. Cama, Head of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, Republic of the Marshall Islands</td>
<td>Session 2b: SDG 2 (Zero hunger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Mr. John Tuilau, Vakatawa Noke Project Coordinator, Fiji</td>
<td>The second part of the session focuses on measures and initiatives to address <strong>food security and nutrition</strong> issues, drawing on experiences in the Pacific and exploring the enabling environment to support those measures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guiding questions:  
- What are examples of hardship in your country?  
- How have the food and fuel price increases affected the hardship and poverty situation in your country?  
- How has climate change impacted hardship and the poverty situation in your country?  

**Wrap-up session:**

**References:**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12:00 – 13:00 (60 mins)</th>
<th>12:00 – 13:00 (60 mins)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session 2b: SDG 2 (Zero hunger)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The second part of the session focuses on measures and initiatives to address <strong>food security and nutrition</strong> issues, drawing on experiences in the Pacific and exploring the enabling environment to support those measures.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Moderator:</strong> Ms. Vani Catanasiga, Executive Director, FC OSS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Introductory presentation:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>● Mr. Joseph Nyemah Nyemah, Food and Nutrition Officer, FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Issue presentations:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>● Ms. Temarama Anguna–Kamana, Head of Ministry of Agriculture, Cook Islands</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Mr. Moses J. Amos, Director General, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity, Vanuatu</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Plenary Discussion:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guiding questions:</td>
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<tr>
<td>● What are the actions (policies, measures, etc) taken/required by governments to provide an enabling environment?</td>
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<tr>
<td>● What are the resources (administrative and technical capacity, finance, etc) required to upscale/effectively implement solutions and initiatives?</td>
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<tr>
<td>● What are the lessons from the (innovative) solutions and initiatives in the country and for the Pacific?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wrap-up session:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>References:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. SPC / FAO data on food security, e.g., <a href="https://sdd.spc.int/food-systems">https://sdd.spc.int/food-systems</a>, <a href="https://pacificdata.org/pacific-food-and-beverage-trade">https://pacificdata.org/pacific-food-and-beverage-trade</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:00 – 14:00</td>
<td>Lunch Break</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Session 3: SDG 16 (Peace, justice, strong institutions) – Tackling the Challenges through Good Governance and Partnerships</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice for all, effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels and strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights is key to sustainable development. This session will discuss the need to improve institutional readiness to strengthen governance in building resilience against future shocks and uncertainties. The discussion will also focus on leadership in delivering public policies through inclusive, participatory and accountable approaches at all levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:00 – 15:30</td>
<td><strong>Moderator:</strong> Ms. Ma'u Leha, Director, National Planning Department, Prime Ministers' Office, Tonga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 14:00 – 15:30 | **Introductory presentations:**  
|           | ● Mr. Richard Howard, UN Resident Coordinator, Papua New Guinea  
|           | ● Mr. Henry Cocker, Engagement Adviser, PIFS  
| 14:00 – 15:30 | **Issue presentations:**  
|           | ● Ms. Melaia Kubuabola, Programme Officer(M&E), Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO)  
|           | ● Ms. Tuya Altangerel, Resident Representative, UNDP Pacific  
| 14:00 – 15:30 | **Plenary discussion:** The session will discuss, among other things:  
|           | ● Key policies and frameworks to improve institutional readiness in building resilience against future shocks in the Pacific;  
|           | ● Promoting governance and leadership through inclusive, participatory and accountable approaches to accelerate SDGs in the Pacific.  
| 14:00 – 15:30 | **Wrap-up session:**  
|           | **References:**  
|           | 1. A New Agenda for Peace. A New Agenda for Peace | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (un.org)  

**Session 4: SDG 13 (Climate Action) – Accelerating Climate Action in the Pacific**

This session will take stock of the outcomes from the 2023 Forum Leaders’ Meeting and hear key priorities of the Pacific which will be advocated at COP28. In addition, the session will focus on a targeted climate challenge which the Pacific countries are facing, that is, collective action and advocacy needed for transition from fossil fuel for keeping global warming to 1.5°C.

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<tr>
<th>15:30 – 17:00</th>
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<td>(90 mins.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderator: Dr. Filimon Manoni, Pacific Ocean Commissioner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Introductory presentation:**
- Mr. Henry Cocker, Engagement Adviser, PIFS

**Panel discussion:**
- Mr. Sergey Tulinov, UNESCAP and Ms. Florence Ventura, SPC
- Mr. Karunesh Rao, Chair of Business Disaster & Resilience Council, Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation

**Plenary discussion:**

Guiding questions
- How can the decisions of the Forum Leaders and Pacific priorities be advocated at regional and global fora, including at the upcoming COP28 and the APFSD and what is the role of governments, regional and international organizations and the private sector?
- What are the challenges and opportunities for the Pacific in transitioning from fossil fuel?

**Wrap-up session:**

**References:**
- Fifth Pacific Regional Energy and Transport Ministers’ Meeting: EFATE outcome statement, 12 May 2023. [Fifth Pacific Regional Energy and Transport Ministers’ Meeting: EFATE outcome statement | The Pacific Community (spc.int)]
**17: 15-18:00 (45 mins)**

**Special event: Launch of UNESCAP Pacific Flagship Publication**

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

**Moderator:** Ms. Teea Tira, PACRES Coordinator, PIFS

**Key findings of the publication:**
- Mr. Sudip Ranjan Basu, Deputy Head, ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific

**Special remarks:**
- Mr. Tingika Elikana, Associate Minister, Cook Islands
- Ms. Virginia Dawson, Counsellor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade, New Zealand
- Ms. Adi Davila Talemaimaleya, PRNGO Alliance
- Mr. Dirk Wagener, Resident Coordinator, UN Multi-Country Office, Fiji

**Closing remarks:**
- Dr. Filimon Manoni, Pacific Ocean Commissioner

**18:00-19:30**

*Networking Reception @ The Fale*

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**Day 2 Wednesday, 22 November 2023**

**09:00 – 10:50**

**Session 5: Accelerating Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda through Voluntary National Reviews (VNR)**

This session will focus on SDG implementation progress through VNRs and allow for sharing of experiences and the lessons learned from stakeholder engagement, particularly on follow-up of national commitments. This session will also deep dive into the SDG progress tracking and indicators guidelines, against the backdrop of multiple reporting obligations of governments under the global, regional and national frameworks.

**9:00 – 9:45 (45 mins)**

**Moderator:** Mr. Shiri Krishna Gounder, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Fiji

**Introductory Presentation:**
- Ms. Gabrielle Emery, Head of Pacific Subregional Office, UNDRR

**Panel discussion:**
- Mr. John Ezra, Director, Department of Strategic Policy, Planning & Aid Coordination, Vanuatu
- Ms. Charlene Mersai, Bureau of Budget & Planning, Ministry of Finance, Palau
- H.E. Mr. Aliioaiga Feturi Elisaia, High Commissioner of Samoa to Fiji
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session Title</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:45 – 10:25</td>
<td><strong>Group Discussion (Break out room) for Session 5</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>Group 1: Post SDG-Summit Follow-up</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Group lead:</strong> Ms. Nicole N. Masta, Acting Assistant Secretary – Regional Aid Effectiveness and UN Branch, Department of National Planning and Monitoring, Papua New Guinea&lt;br&gt;• <strong>Group 2: SDG Policy Assessment</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Group lead:</strong> Ms. Alice Iwebu Kale, Director – Program Quality Ministry of National Planning and Development, Solomon Islands Coordination (MNPDC)&lt;br&gt;• <strong>Group 3: SDG Progress Monitoring</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Group lead:</strong> Mr. Arman Bidarbakhtnia, Head – Statistical Data Management Unit, ESCAP&lt;br&gt;• <strong>Group 4: All three topics (virtual)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Group lead:</strong> Ms. Fiona Fandim Marat, SPC&lt;br&gt;Mr. Henry Cocker, Engagement Adviser, PIFS&lt;br&gt;Mr. Sanjesh Naidu, ESCAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:25 – 10:50</td>
<td><strong>Plenary Session for Group Discussion for Session 5</strong></td>
<td>Report back by each Working Group&lt;br&gt;Wrap-up session</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:50 – 11:10</td>
<td><strong>Tea/Coffee Break</strong></td>
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<td>11:10 – 11:55</td>
<td><strong>Session 6: SDG 17- Fostering Stronger Regional Cooperation and Partnerships for Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Moderator:</strong> Ms. Charlene Mersai, Coordinator, Ministry of Finance, Palau&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Introductory presentations:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Mr. Sai Navoti, Chief, SIDS Unit, UNDESA&lt;br&gt;• Mr. Denton Rarawa, Senior Economic Adviser, PIFS&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Panel discussion:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Ms. Sarah Nisbet, First Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs &amp; Trade, New Zealand&lt;br&gt;• Mr. Neelesh Gounder, Chief Policy Advisor, Ministry of Finance, Fiji and Senior Lecturer in Economics, University of the South Pacific&lt;br&gt;• Ms. Akosita Drova, Regional Coordinator, The Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance Company (PCRIC)</td>
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### Reference:

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tr>
<td>11:55 – 12:35</td>
<td><strong>Group Discussion (Break out room) for Session 6</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Group 1: SDG Summit-National initiatives</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Group lead:</strong> <a href="https://example.com">Mr. Neelesh Gounder</a>, Chief Policy Advisor, Ministry of Finance, Fiji and Senior Lecturer in Economics, University of the South Pacific</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Mr. Riccardo Mesiano</strong>, Sustainable Development Officer, ESCAP</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Group 2: SDG Transitions</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Group lead:</strong> <a href="https://example.com">Ms. Sarah Nisbet</a>, First Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs &amp; Trade, New Zealand</td>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="https://example.com">Ms. Dhanushki Sahabandu</a>, Programme Management Officer, UNCTAD</td>
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<td><strong>Group 3: 2050 Strategy and Partnership for Prosperity</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Group lead:</strong> <a href="https://example.com">Mr. Gaston Wadrawane</a>, Official Representative of New Caledonia to Fiji</td>
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<td>Ms. Bethany Frances Anne Sargent, Regional Coordination Specialist, UN-MCO Fiji</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Group 4: All three topics (virtual)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Group lead:</strong> <a href="https://example.com">Ms. Karibaiti Toaba</a>, Pacific Regional Director, Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="https://example.com">Mr. Henry Cocker</a>, Engagement Adviser, PIFS</td>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="https://example.com">Ms. Telesia Kobiti</a>, Programme Officer, Pacific Disability Forum (PDF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:35 – 13:00</td>
<td><strong>Plenary Session for Group Discussion for Session 6</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Report back by each Working Group</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wrap-up session</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:00 – 14:00</td>
<td><strong>Lunch Break</strong></td>
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**Session 7: Strengthening global solidarity for the SIDS Development Agenda**

This session will highlight key messages from the “Nuku’alofa Outcome Document” of the Pacific Preparatory Meeting of the 4th International Conference on SIDS, 16-18 August 2023, Tonga. This session will also focus on how the SIDS’ development agenda can accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. This session will be an opportunity to highlight regional actions in shaping and advancing long-term Pacific SIDS’ priorities that will feed into the 4th International Conference on SIDS to be held from 30 May – 1 June 2024 in Antigua and Barbuda.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Moderator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14:00 – 15:30</td>
<td><a href="https://example.com">H.E. Mr. Alioiga Feturi Elisaia</a>, High Commissioner of Samoa to Fiji</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Introductory presentations:**
- [Mr. Sai Navoti](https://example.com), Chief, SIDS Unit, UN DESA  
- [Ms. Ma’u Leha](https://example.com), Director, National Planning Department, Prime Ministers’ Office, Tonga
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue presentations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Nicole Napihin Masta, Senior Aid Coordinator, Department of National Planning, Papua New Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Setareki Macanawai, Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Disability Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Faaso’otauloa Sam Saili, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman, SkyEye</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plenary discussion:

The session will discuss, among other things:

- Mainstreaming key Pacific SIDS’ priorities in view of the upcoming 2024 4th SIDS Conference
- Highlighting key development partnership initiatives in the Pacific to accelerate SDGs implementation.

Insight-regional to global:

- Mr. Riccardo Mesiano, Sustainable Development Officer, ESCAP
- Ms. Tishka Francis, Head, SIDS Unit, UNOHRLLS

Wrap-up session:

References:

1. Nuk’alofa Outcomes Document, Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Pacific region | Department of Economic and Social Affairs (un.org).
2. Praia (Cabo Verde) Declaration, Interregional Preparatory Meeting for all Small Island Developing States | Department of Economic and Social Affairs (un.org).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16:00 – 16:30</td>
<td>Tea/Coffee Break</td>
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<td>16:00 – 16:30</td>
<td>8: The Way Forward and Closing Remarks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This session will identify the key messages from the 2023 PFSD sessions, identify priority actions and the way forward.

Moderator: Mr. Sudip Ranjan Basu, Deputy Head, ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific

Key messages of the 7th PFSD:

- Mr. Tingika Elikana, Associate Minister, Cook Islands

Closing remarks:

- Mr. Esala Nayasi, Deputy Secretary General, PIFS
- Mr. Dirk Wagener, Resident Coordinator, UN Multi-Country Office, Fiji
- Ms. Andie Fong Toy, Head, ESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific

Conclusion of the 7th PFSD
ANNEX 2

PARTICIPANTS AT THE PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2023
Seventh Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (PFSD-7)  
21-22 November 2023  
PIFS Conference Hall, Suva, Fiji  
Hybrid (In-person & Virtual)

List of participants

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Dr Kalinga Seneviratne
Consultant – Journalism

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Ms Tracey Choko
Student – USP

Mr Joape Toganivalu
Student – USP

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Student – USP

Mr Rajneel Narayan
Student – USP

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Civil Society Forum of Tonga
(Board Member – PIANGO)
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Mr Jonetani Stanley Uluirarawa
Coordinator – FCOSS/Rewa DCOSS
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