



STATEMENT OF THE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA TO THE U. N.
AND CHAIR OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM GROUP
H.E. MR. ROBERT G. AISI
AT THE OPENING OF NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
WORKSHOP
United Nations Headquarters, New York, 04 May 2006

Excellencies, Ms DiSano and the UNDESA team, delegates, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

At the outset, I must thank UNDESA for organizing this Workshop. The importance of the workshop is manifested by the participation of Pacific Leaders, Senior Officials, National Focal Points for the UNDESA Project in the Pacific region, Ambassadors and Officers from the Pacific Missions here in New York as well as representatives of our regional organizations and development partners.

Political leadership is critical in achieving sustainable development, and, I therefore, particularly acknowledge the presence of our Pacific Leaders at this Workshop.

The Pacific Island Countries (PICs) have indicated their commitment to formulate the NSDS since the 1992 Rio Conference. It was reaffirmed in the outcomes of important international conferences and summits, Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States; the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPol) in 2002, and the Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation of the BPoA.

Through the JPol and MSI we made commitments on the development of NSDS in 2005; and emphasized the importance of SIDS to adopt a regional and collaborative approach in our national development efforts.

I note we are convening this workshop in 2006 to discuss the development of NSDS – some four years after we had made the initial commitment. We have lost a lot of time and we need to undertake this task with a sense of urgency.

Internationally, we have recognized that achieving sustainable development is a partnership effort between countries, regional organizations and international development agencies. The presence of important stakeholders here does give me a sense of optimism, that the UNDESA Project on National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) in Pacific SIDS will be a success.

Within the regional context, through the Pacific Plan, the Leaders have made a firm commitment to working in partnership with development partners and other stakeholders to help member countries achieve their national development goals, including the formulation of NSDS.

In the region, the CROP agencies have also forged a partnership, modeled on the CSD Type II Partnerships, to assist PICs with the development and implementation of NSDS through a coordinated and harmonized programming and implementation of assistance.

At the national level, sustainable development entails three broad components, often referred to as the three pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development, and environmental protection - which are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

In this regard, the development of NSDS must give equal importance to the three pillars of sustainable development and be flexible enough to meet the changing needs and aspirations of our people. No one pillar, though, must be given more prominence than the other pillars of sustainable development.

Very often, we hear people saying, we have our own national development policies, such as the Medium Term Development Strategy (for PNG) and what is this all about NSDS? They probably view it as duplication of existing national development plans (NDPs) and policies and do not want to embark on another policy formulation as exercise.

Most importantly, we get such negative reactions because our political leaders and decision makers are not made aware of the importance of NSDS and its relationship to our national development efforts.

As we all know NSDS and national development plans are similar in many respects. The difference is that national plans are often 'top down' blue print plans. On the other hand, NSDS involves a whole country, is multi stakeholder based, and is an integrated program of development efforts focused on actual outcomes of improving

the social and economic well being of our people without compromising the environmental integrity.

NSDS is an important policy framework that can guide our countries to achieve sustainable development using a stakeholder based process in setting national goals and targets that are consistent with national needs and international commitments; identifying and establishing priority development strategies to address these goals; identifying propriety programs and projects to implement those strategies, and implement priority projects - such as renewable energy projects, water supply projects, health and education services in communities and islands.

Since NSDS provides a clear link between development goals, policies and programs, it will also provide the important platform to engage with development partners and coordinate and harmonize development partner assistance.

Increasing aid effectiveness through the coordination and harmonization of development partner support has also been agreed to by our development partners, under the Paris Declaration.

This workshop is not about producing a document that makes UNDESA and the UN system happy. Rather it is about redirecting our efforts, and improving current situations that affect our performance in servicing the needs of our people in the rural communities and islands in a sustainable manner.

All Pacific SIDS have their own plans and policies: short term, medium term and long term policies. In Papua New Guinea, we have the Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS), etc. This is the main policy framework through which the government pursues its national development priorities.

While such policies outline the government's development priorities, in most cases, there are no clear linkages between sectoral policies and programmes as well as projects. In certain cases, there are ad-hoc-committees and the like but generally there is widespread fragmentation and lack of collaboration among Departments and Agencies in pursuing sustainable development.

Few Pacific SIDS - Samoa, Fiji, Tuvalu and Nauru - have already formulated their NSDS. But most are yet to fully implement their NSDS and improve their decision-making processes at all levels as required.

Strengthened NSDSs, or equivalent, is expected to play a vital role in the sustainable development of Pacific SIDS. So the UNDESA Project is certainly very critical for us at this juncture. We are committed to its successful implementation in the region.

Given the importance of the NSDS in achieving sustainable development in PICs, we are fully committed towards the success of the UNDESA Project in the Pacific Region.

Again, few PICs have already formulated their NSDS and others will complete theirs soon. Once the NSDS are formulated, we must implement them.

In this context, I would like us to give some serious thoughts on how the PICs can galvanize the support of development partners with necessary resources to strengthen/ develop and implement the NSDS.

We also realize that the UNDESA project resources are not adequate to cover all PICs. In this regard, I would to seek the continued commitment of UNDESA and other development partners to assist PICs in completing this important task.

We look forward to this workshop producing an action oriented way forward for the countries – Country Action Plans - that can be implemented immediately.

With these few words, I wish the Workshop success. Thank You.