



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**
New York

Statement of H.E. Ms. Amatlain E. Kabua
72nd meeting of the Commission
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific
Bangkok, Thailand
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Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I bring you the warm greetings of Yokwe from the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

It is important that the Pacific SIDS – and together with the wider Asia Pacific region, have gathered at the Commission to consider our initial steps in implementation – in turning the important and grand words into local realities.

In advance of this meeting, the ESCAP Secretariat prepared an important and useful report on support for SDG implementation in the Pacific SIDS. This report demonstrated an important understanding

of the unique challenges and structures within the Pacific islands region, and the importance of effective integration of multiple strategies at the global, regional and national levels. The MDGs were never well-linked with either regional or national strategies, so it is perhaps no wonder that in many cases only limited progress was achieved. Now is truly our time to do better.

The report rightly placed strong emphasis on the role of sustainable offshore fishing. If distant fishing nations, many from the wider Asia-Pacific region, work with us as partners and not just for their immediate commercial interest, we might thrive and develop our own national revenue streams with longer-term sustainable fish stocks in place – and have a much stronger foothold to meet the SDGs with true national ownership. Finally, the report recognized the importance of island-tailored strategies to address the SDGs – the SDGs are both a transformative opportunity but also a unique challenge where so many goals easily overwhelm us, including our limited data capacity.

In summary – this report and its analysis places the appropriate

emphasis on the “P” of ESCAP by directing us to “island tailored” strategies.

However, we are still left with perhaps an unsatisfied appetite at the end of this important report – we do see important actions and initiatives from ESCAP and the UN system, working with our regional agencies, to connect the dots between the global and regional levels. Yet more is needed to be done at the national level to truly align ourselves with the SDGs – to more closely integrate fiscal and national planning – which in many instances doesn't exist in the long term with the SDGs, and to take this to detailed levels, including potentially to performance-based budgeting. We also suggest the development of practical mid-term targets – between now and 2030 – is key. Finally, more assistance is needed to closely integrate the SDGs with existing bilateral pathways. The Pacific islands are often heavily dependent on foreign assistance, and in particular the Marshall Islands. While much effort is needed from national governments and our bilateral partners, closer cooperation, in the middle of our national efforts, is also needed from the UN system. This is

ultimately a challenge when there is limited in-country presence, or it's delivery is not closely attuned with the large bureaucratic food-chain from New York, to Bangkok, and sometimes to Suva, but more rarely to our local communities. We would suggest that a more systematic approach, with stronger emphasis on in-country assistance, is ultimately needed. While welcome, regional workshops and model policies will not in and of themselves get the job done.

Our primary focus is on improving national follow-up – but wider UN processes are also important. In addition to the ECOSOC High-level Political Forum, further discussions at the UN are underway on follow-up structures to the SDGs. How do ESCAP's activities and follow-up dialogue with those within the wider UN? For small countries, how can we reduce potential redundancies and ensure our most effective presence?

In closing, we are cautiously optimistic on a path forward for Pacific Islands towards the SDGs. The early recognition of island-specific strategies is important, and the bulk of the work needed is within our

own capitals. We cannot leave it to chance that international processes alone will forge the important links to be made.

Thank you and kommol tata

