Opening Remarks

by

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Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States

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Excellencies,
Colleagues and friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you Paris21 and UN-DESA for getting us all together for this important event.

I am very happy to join you all at what is now to be an annual round table meeting of small island developing States (SIDS) for the so important topic of statistics.

At a time where the words "fake news" seem to be ubiquitous, it just is so important to have timely, relevant, accurate and comparable data! How can we possibly monitor the implementation and progress of national and global development agendas without data?

I am sure we all agree that LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS continue to face immense challenges in generating quality statistics. This is all the more of concern because these are needed for the planning, implementation, follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and respective programmes of action.

Of course, the SIDS are not alone in this challenge but they face challenges that are quite unique.

While geographically, culturally and linguistically differing, SIDS in the Caribbean, Pacific and AIS regions share the challenges of remoteness, limited resources, natural disasters, trade dependence and fragile economies - challenges which impact how an inclusive and sustainable development can be achieved.

The preparatory process for the Mid Term Review of the SAMOA Pathway, which happens in September this year, has shown very clearly that these challenges have not just disappeared. Quite the contrary, they persist and SIDS remain a special case for sustainable development.

The preparatory process has also highlighted the importance of leveraging SIDS’ unique shared challenges to work together to provide development solutions that work for the SIDS and their peoples.

OHRLLS has also convened an inaugural meeting of the SIDS National Focal Points network on the margins of the Interregional Preparatory Meeting for the Mid Term Review.

It is of great concern to me to make that network work for the benefit of countries.

The network allows countries to tap into national and regional networks to share knowledge and best practices with other SIDS countries.

I wish to specifically draw your attention to a session we held on monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. That session stressed that data and statistics are at the heart of shaping and implementing policies needed to improve well-being for all.
The discussions underscored the importance of working together to strengthen the critical statistics function and scaling-up successful statistical activities, at the national, regional and global levels.

At the end of the meeting, OHRLLS was tasked with coordinating the preparation of a toolkit for harmonized monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

The task is urgent.

We are at the midway point in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

We are almost five years into the implementation of the SDGs.

And it is with this sense of urgency that OHRLLS has begun this work and we will certainly consult with you as we move forward.

SIDS cannot wait any longer for a proper monitoring and reporting framework that responds to their unique circumstances.

We have to ensure that our work supports the next phase of implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs. Our credibility at all levels is at stake and this must be a phase marked by meaningful and measurable progress for SIDS.

I certainly hope that this will be a key outcome of our Mid-Term Review process. I am aware of the challenges in this regard. I am aware of the financial and human resource constraints in many of your offices.

It is a long while ago, but these are constraints I myself worked with in a distant path serving a planning office!

The SIDS National Focal Point meeting certainly spoke to the range of these constraints. The limited supply of trained statisticians and the lack of legal and political support for a well-coordinated statistical system, to the delays in the availability in statistics due to the continued use of traditional tools for data collection and compilation - all this was brought up.

Yet, we cannot afford just to list the problems - we must find ways, often creative ways, to solve them.

One such aspect is that I certainly encourage you to take advantage of new technologies and opportunities to work with new actors in both the data and sustainable development communities.

As PARIS21’s Data Champion, I will also continue to advocate for improved national statistical systems in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
I look forward to listening to you and especially so about implementing efforts to achieve the SDGs and SAMOA Pathway.

Yes, major challenges are in front of all us but let us work as a team, be creative and find solutions.

I thank you and wish you a successful meeting.