



Pacific
Community
Communauté
du Pacifique

SPC Headquarters

95 Promenade Roger Laroque
BP D5, 98848 Noumea Cedex
New Caledonia

Email: spc@spc.int
Phone: +687 26 20 00
Fax: +687 26 38 18

Siège de la CPS

95 Promenade Roger Laroque
BP D5, 98848 Nouméa Cedex
Nouvelle-Calédonie

Email : spc@spc.int
Tel : +687 26 20 00
Fax : +687 26 38 18

Pacific Statistics Standing Committee Meeting Summary Report and Recommendations

1–2 November 2018

Tanoa International Hotel

Nadi, Fiji

Prepared by the
Statistics for Development Division (SDD) of the
Pacific Community (SPC)

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Pacific Community (SPC) Headquarters: Noumea, New Caledonia. Regional Offices: Suva, Fiji;
Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia; Port Vila, Vanuatu. Country Office: Honiara, Solomon Islands.
www.spc.int spc@spc.int

Siège de la Communauté du Pacifique (CPS) : Nouméa (Nouvelle-Calédonie). Antennes régionales : Suva (Fidji) ;
Pohnpei (États fédérés de Micronésie) ; Port-Vila (Vanuatu). Bureau de pays : Honiara (Îles Salomon).
www.spc.int spc@spc.int

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List of abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CAPI	Computer-assisted personal interviewing
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific
DDPG	Donor and Development Partners Group
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FEMM	Forum Economic Ministers Meeting
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HOPS	Heads of Planning and Statistics
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand
NSO	National Statistics Office
PFTAC	Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre
PICTs	Pacific Island countries and territories
PSMB	Pacific Statistics Methods Board
PSSC	Pacific Statistics Standing Committee
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
SDD	Statistics for Development Division
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPC	Pacific Community
TYPSS	Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VNR	Voluntary national review

The Pacific Statistics Standing Committee (PSSC) meeting was chaired by Mr Ipia Gadabu, Nauru Government Statistician, with Mr Epeli Waqavonovono, Fiji Government Statistician, as Deputy Chair.

Participants	Representatives of Pacific Island countries and territories: Ms Taggy Tangimetua, Cook Islands Mr Epeli Waqavonovono, Fiji (Deputy Chair) Mr Ipia Gadabu, Nauru (Chair) Mr Jacobus Jasperse, Tokelau Dr Viliami Fifita, Tonga Mr Rara Soro, Vanuatu <i>(An apology was received from Ms Brihmer Johnson, Federated States of Micronesia)</i> Development partners/observers Mrs Teresa Dickinson and Mrs Annette Bastaja, Australian Bureau of Statistics Mr Dylan Roux, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia Mrs Mei Lin Harley, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Mr David Kloeden and Mr Marcus Scheiblecker, Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre Mr Vince Galvin, Statistics New Zealand Mr Stanley Gwavuya, United Nations Children’s Fund Mr Chris Ryan, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Ms Sandra Paredez, United Nations Population Fund Dr Rup Singh, University of the South Pacific Ms Kristen Himelein, World Bank Secretariat Dr Ofa Ketuu, Mr David Abbott, Ms Alison Culpin and Mr Michael Sharp – Pacific Community
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Summary of proceedings

(All papers and presentations referred to in this report are available online:

<https://sdd.spc.int/en/news/latest-news/196-pacific-statistics-standing-committee-pssc-meeting>

Agenda item 1: Draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for PSSC

SDD prepared draft TOR for the PSSC, outlining its purpose, roles and responsibilities in relation to PSSC’s function as a subsidiary of Pacific Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS).

Discussion

The meeting endorsed the TOR, subject to inserting an additional bullet point on PSSC’s role in highlighting the usage of statistics. It was agreed that only significant and strategic issues will be referred to the annual Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM).

Recommendation

PSSC:

- i. endorsed the terms of reference for PSSC, subject to inserting a bullet point on its role in highlighting usage of statistics, i.e. ‘highlighting usage of statistics in policy and decision making’.

Agenda item 2: Update on key developments following the recommendations of the 2017 HOPS Meeting and implementation of the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) Phase 3

In the past two years, SPC’s Statistics for Development Division (SDD) has developed a new business plan, including a strong focus on analysis and dissemination. Nevertheless, NSOs still have a high level of need for support to collection activities, including implementing CAPI. Prioritisation of work is

essential, particularly to enable SDD to respond to new statistical requirements, such as for the SDGs and climate change and environmental issues. Initiatives include:

- reviewing national core statistics in light of changing user needs;
- assessing regional capacity and gaps, noting SDD's existing support for South-South exchanges and professional attachments at SPC;
- planning smarter ways of conducting censuses and surveys with better sequencing, and more use of administrative data (where feasible) and technology.

Discussion

SDD was encouraged to track users and to find what they do with data. NSOs have a role in seeing that data is used and also in building trust in indicators by seeking peer review and expert support.

Other issues include use of administrative data, demand for more microdata, and the preference for infographics to display results. SDD's regional coordination role requires considerable resources and it is seeking the support of donor partners.

Recommendations

PSSC:

- i. noted key developments following the implementation of the TYPSS Phase 3 and the recommendations of the 2017 HOPS Meeting;
- ii. noted the resource (financial and capacity) requirements for regional statistics development in the Pacific;
- iii. agreed that a mid-term review of TYPSS Phase 3 should start at the end of 2019, taking into account some of the challenges and ways forward indicated in this meeting;
- iv. agreed that a regional strategic framework for statistics beyond 2020 should be in place before the end of 2020;
- v. agreed that donors (DFAT) be approached to fund the TYPSS Phase 3 mid-term review and a regional strategy beyond 2020, subject to the decision on (iv) above.

Agenda item 3: Report from the Chair of the Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB)

The PSMB Chair, Vince Galvin, Stats NZ, presented a report of the Board's activities since its initial meeting in May 2018. The Board's current focus is on household surveys and methodologies, and building a knowledge base for NSOs – documenting what has been done, standards, etc. To progress its work, PSMB has set up subcommittees on HIES, sampling, and poverty measurement, to provide practical guidance for NSOs based on expert input. PSMB papers are posted on the SDD website.

Discussion

NSOs raised the following issues:

- PSMB's validation of methodologies will increase trust in statistics.
- The need for knowledge and systems around accessing and using administrative data. In some cases, there are legal restrictions on access to this data.

The Chair said the PSMB cannot solve legal problems relating to access to administrative records but could look at the issues. The meeting endorsed the PSMB report.

Recommendations

PSSC:

- i. acknowledged the report of the PSMB Chair on the activities of the Board since it was established in 2017;

- ii. acknowledged the contribution to PSMB made by government statisticians and partners, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Pacific Community (SPC), Stats NZ, UN agencies, the World Bank and other partners who are co-opted as necessary;
- iii. noted the PSMB's initial focus on household surveys and methodologies, building a knowledge base that NSOs can access, and mechanisms to deal with issues of strategic significance;
- iv. noted that the PSMB has established subcommittees to develop practical guidance for NSOs on statistical methods, systems and procedures for (1) HIES, (2) sampling and (3) poverty analysis;
- v. endorsed the need for the Board to be resourced properly in two broad areas: face-to-face meetings and PSMB-commissioned work.

Agenda item 4: Report from the Chair of the Donor and Development Partners Group (DDPG) Meeting

The Chair (ABS) said the DDPG was set up to provide closer coordination of donor support for statistics, especially as demand for resources outstrips supply. She reviewed action points from the inaugural DDPG meeting, including that SDD will review the draft Five-Year National Collection Schedule. DDPG members felt it needed to be better sequenced and more realistic relative to national capacities.

Discussion

MFAT asked if other partners, e.g. users, can be included in the DDPG. ABS said the group's primary focus is coordination of donor support, but membership could be a topic for a future meeting. TOR for the DDPG could address this question.

Recommendations

PSSC:

- i. acknowledged the Chair's report of the DDPG meeting and its value as a mechanism for coordination of support;
- ii. suggested that the DDPG consider developing terms of reference that include clear principles of partnership;
- iii. also suggested that the DDPG consider meeting more frequently, either in virtual or face-to-face meetings.

Plenary discussion

Question – Is TYPSS 3 meeting the needs of NSOs and should it continue beyond 2020?

- NSOs stressed the value of planning and the role of TYPSS in forcing NSOs to look at the longer term. They acknowledged the benefits of national statistics development strategies (NSDS).
- DFAT – TYPSS Phase 3 is mature and is looking at the right areas. DFAT will continue to support Pacific statistics for the long term. The review of Phase 3 will help decide whether TYPSS continues.

Question – PSMB and DDPG have reported on their first meetings. Are they on the right track for the region?

- PSMB will empower NSOs and enable them to convince users they are using best practice. The provision of manuals and templates will be useful for compilers and lift their understanding. The new groups allow greater sharing of knowledge.

Question – How can cooperation and coordination be strengthened between development partners?

- UNICEF – (1) Countries need to be clear about their needs; (2) there needs to be continuous dialogue between partners, beyond the biannual DDPG meetings; and (3) leadership must happen in countries. Agencies all have their own mandates, but these must align with country needs.

NSOs highlighted:

- the benefits of cooperation between NSOs and Strategic Planning Departments;
- the need for NSOs to also coordinate with other stakeholders such as health and education ministries, which both use and produce statistics;
- the importance of an enabling environment for NSOs within government structures;
- the need for trust in the statistics produced by NSOs, especially for areas such as employment and GDP, which have political implications.

Question – What sort of issues would you like to see discussed by PSMB and DDPG?

Issues raised by NSOs included:

- capability development
- a request to draw up a matrix of the latest country indicators, such as the latest GDP, CPI, etc., to show progress and gaps
- anonymisation of data to allow sharing of information
- an investment plan for support of statistics over the long term, including SDG requirements.

Agenda item 5: Pacific Statistics Development Partnership Program (PSDPP) and Five-Year National Statistics Collection Program

The Pacific Statistics Development Partnership Program (PSDPP) and Five-Year National Statistics Collection Plan 2019–2023 are detailed in PSSC Document 5. There are efficiencies to be gained in optimising collection schedules. Other potential efficiencies relate to integrated collections, modular approaches, use of new technology and targeted technical assistance (TA).

Discussion

The World Bank noted the difficulty of real learning occurring with a fly-in/fly-out training model. The Bank has found that a resident advisor model is much more effective in other settings. Participants agreed that the current TA model does not build lasting skills. However, NSOs have small staff numbers and require some supplementation of capacity. South-South support has been successful, but NSOs are too small to release staff for very long.

Recommendations

PSSC:

- i. recognised that the PSDPP and Five-Year National Statistics Collection Plan (presented in 2018 PSSC Document No. 5) provide a guide for donors, development partners and Pacific NSOs on all technical support programmes and resource mobilisation initiatives related to national official data collection activities (subject to (ii) and (iii));
- ii. noted that members of the DDPG support the PSDPP and Five-Year Collection Plan in principle through their technical support and funding programme, subject to further consideration of overall affordability and capacity;
- iii. noted that the Secretariat continues to work with Pacific NSOs to ensure optimal data collection plans are developed for each of their main data collection activities together with a proper investment plan;
- iv. also noted the Secretariat will continue to coordinate and update the document (PSSC Doc. 5) and disseminate it to Pacific NSOs, donors and development partners on a regular basis.

Agenda item 6: Update from SDD on the implementation of its new Business Plan (2018–2020), and key initiatives since the 2017 HOPS Meeting

Current work under SDD's Business Plan includes the microdata access project and the HIES experiment being conducted in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). The results of the experiment will be available in mid-2019. The new Data Dissemination Unit has supported population of the SDG indicators

and SDG dashboard, and publication of the Pacific SDG Booklet. The team also contributed to the First Quadrennial Regional Sustainable Development Report. The regional data hub that is being developed will be open to other CROP agencies.

Recommendations

PSSC:

- i. noted the implementation of SDD's Business Plan (2018–2020) and key achievements in the first 12 months;
- ii. noted the technical support currently provided by the Census and Survey Technical Support Team and Data Analysis and Dissemination Team to member countries;
- iii. noted some of the initiatives currently being undertaken by SDD including the HIES experiment in Marshall Islands (RMI HIES experiment); microdata access project; regional data dissemination strategy; national statistics development strategies (NSDS); SDD's own data dissemination improvement project; and Pacific SDG work;
- iv. endorsed the need for SDD to be better resourced to cope with the responsibilities generated as part of its role of statistics system leader and the increased demand from member countries for its services, while accepting that the division's priorities include services for smaller NSOs.

Plenary discussion

Question – How can partnership be strengthened between NSOs and development partners?

- ABS – Partnership can be strengthened through information sharing, e.g. the formation of the DDPG, and by using a master document of activities that is regularly updated. The DDPG could consider drawing up TOR that include clear principles for partnership, e.g. that it is country-led. The donor group could meet more frequently virtually.

Question – The Five-Year Collection Plan is ambitious. Do donors agree who will contribute to final costs?

- The costing includes the full cost of all surveys. A large proportion of the total is for PNG (USD 150 million), and 10–15% is for Fiji. For the majority of PICTs (the remaining 20 SPC members), the individual country figures are not large. Around 1% of PICT government budgets is estimated to go to NSOs. According to Paris 21, this percentage is among the lowest of any world region.

Question – Considering the optimal collection schedule, do NSOs foresee changes to their schedules?

NSOs commented:

- more use of administrative records would save on government funding.
- NSOs should avoid overloading questionnaires, which tests household tolerance and damages the quality of the collected data.

Question – Many development partners and agencies do not coordinate with NSOs. What can be done?

NSOs agreed on the value of:

- a view towards the common good, including sustainable development of statistics and data sharing;
- stronger partnership between donors and NSOs, not least because donors have influence with governments;
- keeping NSOs informed when partners are collecting information in countries and sharing the information;
- partners respecting the Pacific environment/setting and recognising the governance structure in place for statistics.

Agenda item 7: Update from NSOs on significant developments since the 2017 HOPS Meeting

NSOs highlighted:

- focus on wider dissemination of information, including using infographics to increase public awareness
- completion of NSDS with support from an SDD consultant
- new areas of work including environmental and energy data
- development of economic statistics, including using PC-Trade
- collaboration with line ministries on SDG indicators
- efforts to develop capacity
- shortage of NSO resources (staff and budget) in the face of increased demand for data.

Recommendation

PSSC:

- i. acknowledged the diverse work that NSOs undertake, their emphasis on increasing understanding and use of statistical information and, in particular, commended the work being done on dissemination and the use of infographics to enhance users' understanding.

Agenda item 8: Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC) update

PFTAC is two years into its fifth programming phase. There is still a gap in funding to cover the whole phase but some optimism that this will be covered. Donors include Australia, New Zealand, Korea, the European Union and Asian Development Bank. In addition, member countries have agreed to contribute, with MOUs in place for most members. Due to funding shortfalls, the Government Finance Statistics (GFS) programme may have to end in 2019. PFTAC is looking at possibilities for continuing the programme.

Marcus Scheiblecker, who has just joined PFTAC, introduced himself and described his background.

Discussion

SDD put forward a request from Samoa's Government Statistician that funding for the GFS programme be reconsidered. Other NSOs supported the request. On behalf of donors, DFAT expressed appreciation of PFTAC's work.

Recommendations

PSSC:

- i. acknowledged PFTAC's support for statistics and welcomed the new statistics adviser;
- ii. noted with concern that funding for PFTAC's Government Finance Statistics programme ends in early 2019 and requested consideration of continued resourcing for the programme, which is highly valued by NSOs;
- iii. asked the Secretariat to convey this concern to PFTAC on behalf of PSSC.

Agenda item 9: Regional Data Dissemination Strategy

The strategy has four main components:

- governance around Pacific data acquisition, archiving and dissemination;
- national data dissemination strategy guideline;
- regional data dissemination platform;
- development partners' coordinated support programme for Pacific data dissemination.

It also emphasises data documentation and preservation of data sets.

Discussion

Participants expressed strong support for the strategy. They noted that:

- the transition to CAPI makes access to data more complicated;
- the incremental approach is a useful way to begin, rather than looking back;
- there is a huge amount of data available from MICS (UNICEF);
- the small populations of PICTs raise issues for confidentiality.

Recommendations

PSSC:

- i. endorsed the Draft Pacific Regional Data Dissemination Strategy (Strategy) for circulation to all Pacific NSOs and regional stakeholders and partners for their final feedback;
- ii. noted that the Secretariat will follow up as necessary with Pacific NSOs and others to ensure all comments are received and used to inform the finalisation of the Strategy;
- iii. noted the Secretariat will circulate the Strategy to PSSC for final endorsement within six weeks;
- iv. noted that additional resources will need to be made available for the successful implementation of the Strategy.

Agenda item 10: Update on Pacific SDG indicators and reporting

SDD is providing considerable support for regional reporting against the SDG indicators, including VNR support to countries and the development of graphics to show progress in the form of 'progress wheels' that will be regularly updated. SDD is working in partnership with both regional and international agencies across the SDGs.

Recommendations

PSSC:

- i. acknowledged the work that has been done and the support available to countries in reporting progress towards the SDGs, including through the Pacific Data Hub;
- ii. noted the support for countries undertaking voluntary national reviews (VNRs);
- iii. commended the work on developing infographics to highlight SDG progress;
- iv. noted that further work will be done on localising the regional indicators.

Agenda item 11: Future investment priorities in regional statistics development (MFAT, DFAT)

DFAT – Constructive and mutually beneficial engagement in the Pacific is a priority for Australia. DFAT recognises SPC as the lead organisation for statistics in the region and the regional governance structure for statistics established by the 2017 HOPS meeting.

DFAT priorities focus on increased dissemination of data, and better use of data to positively influence policy decisions in the region. In relation to funding, DFAT is committed to better prioritising the limited resources available for statistics in the Pacific. There is a massive pipeline of work (censuses and surveys) planned over the next five years, but funding is unlikely to increase significantly over that period.

MFAT – New Zealand's recently announced the Pacific Reset policy which will include more funding for the region's priority issues. New Zealand is committed to strengthening the availability and use of good quality data to inform policy making and assess progress. It supports Pacific statistics through both regional and bilateral engagements and also provides funding for multilateral agencies.

MFAT encourages coordination between partners in the region and supports SPC's role as system leader and coordinator of Pacific statistics. It is important to communicate the key messages/advice from the PSSC meeting to NSOs not present, e.g. ensuring collection schedules are properly sequenced, and

surveys are fit for purpose; and getting whole-of-government support for the NSDS and statistical collection plan, so central agencies can help with funding or mobilising resources.

Recommendations:

PSSC:

- i. acknowledged the generous support provided by Australia and New Zealand for Pacific statistics, in terms of both funding and advocacy;
- ii. recognised the need for prioritisation to ensure best use of the resources available.

Plenary discussion

Question – Are we heading in the right direction?

ABS noted positive signs including improving coordination, and engagement in HOPS and PSSC and support for the governance structure for regional statistics.

Prioritisation of SDD's work is necessary, especially in considering existing programmes and surveys vs new areas of work. SDD has a leadership role in creating a more holistic approach. Sharing of information is also important, including sharing thinking and planning, not just activities.

In terms of funding, there is no 'magic pudding'. There is no more funding, so there must be more analysis of the collection plan in relation to budgets.

Agenda item 12: ESCAP – Key findings from the 2017 capacity screening results report

ESCAP presented the findings of a report on capacity in economic statistics. The results show the Pacific region is doing well in producing core items such as GDP and CPI, but much less well in areas such as natural resources and environment, and labour costs/wage index. The capacity screening results are available for development partners and donors to assist in developing future support.

Recommendations

PSSC:

- i. noted the results of the capacity screening on economic statistics in the Asia-Pacific region and the gaps identified in economic statistics capacity in PICTs;
- ii. noted the work being done to assist countries to develop national development indicator sets that would cover national policy needs, the SDGs and commitments to report at regional and global levels.

Agenda item 13: Current standard regional HIES methods and rationale for the HIES methods experiment in RMI

(This presentation was first made at the PSMB meeting, which made the recommendations below.)

A HIES experiment is currently being conducted in Marshall Islands (RMI HIES experiment). Field work in RMI will end in November and results and conclusions will be presented to the PSMB in mid-2019 (SDD plans to release preliminary results early in 2019).

PSSC acknowledged that at its meeting, the PSMB:

- i. noted the history of HIES in the Pacific region;
- ii. noted the advantages of the current regionally standardised HIES methodology, which is tried and tested and provides data that meets user needs, and stressed the importance of all PICTs having comparable data based on harmonised questionnaires and collection procedures that follow recommended best practice;
- iii. noted the key challenges in conducting HIES under the regionally standardised methodology in the Pacific region;

- iv. noted the HIES methodological experiment that is currently being conducted in the RMI HIES experiment;
- v. agreed that PSMB will review the results of the RMI HIES experiment at its next meeting scheduled for April 2019 to enable an informed recommendation to be made to PICTs on the optimal methodology for conducting HIES;
- vi. noted that preliminary results from the RMI HIES experiment will be released at an interim meeting earlier in 2019 (the Secretariat will advise details in due course).

Agenda item 14: Other business

Acknowledgement

The meeting acknowledged with respect and gratitude the contribution made to PSSC and Pacific statistics development by Epeli Waqavonovono, the retiring Fiji Government Statistician, noting that, in future, his valuable knowledge and experience may be called on as necessary.

PSSC meeting in 2019

PSSC agreed that the 2019 PSSC meeting will be held in Noumea on 30 and 31 October 2019.

Annex 1: Summary of Recommendations

The Pacific Statistics Standing Committee (PSSC):

Agenda Item 1: Draft Terms of Reference for PSSC

- i. endorsed the terms of reference for PSSC, subject to inserting a bullet point on PSSC's role in highlighting usage of statistics, i.e. 'highlighting usage of statistics in policy and decision making'.

Agenda Item 2: Update on key developments following the recommendations of the 2017 Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS) Meeting and implementation of the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) Phase 3

- i. noted key developments following the implementation of TYPSS Phase 3 and the recommendations of the 2017 HOPS Meeting;
- ii. noted the resource (financial and capacity) requirements for regional statistics development in the Pacific;
- iii. noted that given the resources constraints, SDD would give priority to supporting requests for assistance from smaller PICTs;
- iv. agreed that a mid-term review of TYPSS Phase 3 should start at the end of 2019, taking into account some of the challenges and ways forward indicated in this meeting;
- v. agreed that a regional strategic framework for statistics beyond 2020 should be in place before the end of 2020;
- vi. agreed that donors (DFAT) be approached to fund the TYPSS Phase 3 mid-term review and a regional strategy beyond 2020, subject to the decision on (iv) above.

Agenda Item 3: Report from the Chair of the Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB)

- i. acknowledged the report of the PSMB Chair on the activities of the Board since it was established in 2017;
- ii. acknowledged the contribution to PSMB made by government statisticians and partners, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Pacific Community (SPC), Stats NZ, UN agencies, the World Bank and other partners who are co-opted as necessary;
- iii. noted the PSMB's initial focus on household surveys and methodologies, building a knowledge base that NSOs can access, and mechanisms to deal with issues of strategic significance;
- iv. noted that the PSMB has established subcommittees to develop practical guidance for NSOs on statistical methods, systems and procedures for (1) HIES, (2) sampling and (3) poverty analysis;
- v. endorsed the need for the Board to be resourced properly in two broad areas: face-to-face meetings and PSMB-commissioned work.

Agenda Item 4: Report from the Chair of the Donor and Development Partners Group (DDPG) Meeting

- i. acknowledged the Chair's report of the DDPG meeting and its value as a mechanism for coordination of support;
- ii. suggested that the DDPG consider developing terms of reference that include clear principles of partnership;
- iii. also suggested that the DDPG consider meeting more frequently, either in virtual or face-to-face meetings.

Agenda Item 5: Pacific Statistics Development Partnership Program (PSDPP) and Five-Year National Statistics Collection Program

- i. recognised that the PSDPP and Five-Year National Statistics Collection Plan (presented in 2018 PSSC

- Document No. 5) provide a guide for donors, development partners and Pacific NSOs on all technical support programmes and resource mobilisation initiatives related to national official data collection activities (subject to (ii) and (iii));
- ii. noted that members of the Donor-Development Partner Group support the PSDPP and Five-Year Collection Plan in principle through their technical support and funding programme, subject to further consideration of overall affordability and capacity;
 - iii. noted that the Secretariat continues to work with Pacific NSOs to ensure an optimal data collection plan is developed for each of their main data collection activities together with a proper investment plan;
 - iv. noted the Secretariat will continue to coordinate and update the document (PSSC Doc. 5) and disseminate it to Pacific NSOs, donors and development partners on a regular basis.

Agenda Item 6: Update from SPC's Statistics for Development Division (SDD) on the implementation of its new Business Plan (2018–2020), and key initiatives since the 2017 HOPS Meeting

- i. noted the implementation of SDD's Business Plan (2018–2020) and key achievements in the first 12 months;
- ii. noted the technical support currently provided by the Census and Survey Technical Support Team and Data Analysis and Dissemination Team to member countries;
- iii. noted some of the initiatives currently undertaken by SDD including the HIES experiment in Marshall Islands (RMI HIES experiment); microdata access project; regional data dissemination strategy; national statistics development strategies (NSDS); SDD's own data dissemination improvement project; and Pacific SDG work;
- iv. endorsed the need for SDD to be better resourced to cope with the responsibilities generated as part of its role of statistics system leader and the increased demand from member countries for its services, while accepting that the division's priorities include services for smaller NSOs.

Agenda Item 7: Update from NSOs on significant developments since 2017 HOPS Meeting

- i. acknowledged the diverse work that NSOs undertake, their emphasis on increasing understanding and use of statistical information and, in particular, commended the work being done on dissemination and the use of infographics to enhance users' understanding.

Agenda Item 8: Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC) update

- i. acknowledged PFTAC's support for statistics and welcomed the new statistics adviser;
- ii. noted with concern that funding for PFTAC's Government Finance Statistics programme ends in early 2019 and requested consideration of continued resourcing for the programme, which is highly valued by NSOs;
- iii. asked the Secretariat to convey this concern to PFTAC on behalf of PSSC.

Agenda Item 9: Pacific Regional Data Dissemination Strategy

- i. endorsed the Draft Pacific Regional Data Dissemination Strategy (Dissemination Strategy) for circulation to all Pacific NSOs and regional stakeholders and partners for their final feedback;
- ii. noted that the Secretariat will follow up as necessary with Pacific NSOs and others to ensure all comments are received and used to inform the finalisation of the Strategy;
- iii. noted the Secretariat will circulate the Strategy to PSSC for final endorsement within six weeks;
- iv. noted that additional resources will need to be made available for the successful implementation of the Strategy.

Agenda Item 10: Update on Pacific SDG indicators and reporting

- i. acknowledged the work that has been done and the support available to countries in reporting

- progress towards the SDGs, including through the Pacific Data Hub;
- ii. noted the support for countries undertaking voluntary national reviews (VNRs);
- iii. commended the work on developing infographics to highlight SDG progress;
- iv. noted that further work will be done on localising the regional indicators.

Agenda item 11: Future investment priorities in regional statistics development (MFAT, DFAT)

- i. acknowledged the generous support provided by Australia and New Zealand for Pacific statistics, in terms of both funding and advocacy;
- ii. recognised the need for prioritisation to ensure best use of the resources available.

Agenda item 12: ESCAP – Key findings from the 2017 capacity screening results report

- i. noted the results of the capacity screening on economic statistics in the Asia-Pacific region and the gaps identified in economic statistics capacity in PICTs;
- ii. noted the work being done to assist countries to develop national development indicator sets that would cover national policy needs, the SDGs and commitments to report at regional and global levels.

Agenda item 13: Current standard regional HIES methods and rationale for the HIES methods experiment in RMI

PSSC acknowledged that at its meeting, the PSMB:

- i. noted the history of household income and expenditure surveys (HIES) in the Pacific region;
- ii. noted the advantages of the current regionally standardised HIES methodology, which is tried and tested and provides data that meets user needs, and stressed the importance of all Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) having comparable data based on harmonised questionnaires and collection procedures that follow recommended best practice;
- iii. noted the key challenges in conducting HIES under the regionally standardised methodology in the Pacific region;
- iv. noted the HIES methodological experiment that is currently being conducted in the Republic of the Marshall Islands ('RMI HIES experiment');
- v. agreed that PSMB will review the results of the RMI HIES experiment at its next meeting scheduled for April 2019 to enable an informed recommendation to be made to PICTs on the optimal methodology for conducting HIES;
- vi. noted that preliminary results from the RMI HIES experiment will be released at an interim meeting earlier in 2019 (the Secretariat will advise details in due course).

Agenda Item 14: Other business

Acknowledgement

- i. acknowledged with respect and gratitude the contribution made to PSSC and Pacific statistics development by Epeli Waqavonovono, the retiring Fiji Government Statistician, noting that, in future, his valuable knowledge and experience may be called on as necessary.

PSSC meeting in 2019

- i. agreed that the 2019 PSSC meeting will be held in Noumea, 30 – 31 October 2019.