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Welcome Remarks

To be delivered at the opening of the Regional Seminar “Developing Programmes for Implementing the 2008 SNA, the 2012 SEEA and Supporting Statistics in the Pacific Region” hosted by Samoa Bureau of Statistics in Apia, Samoa, 19 August 2013.

Excellency
Government Statistician
Distinguished country representatives,
Dear colleagues

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Seminar “Developing Programmes for Implementing the 2008 SNA, the 2012 SEEA and Supporting Statistics in the Pacific Region”. I would like to express my appreciation to the Government of Samoa and Samoa Bureau of Statistics for hosting this seminar and to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP), the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) for co-organizing this event.

In this context I would like to recall that only a few months ago Mr. Wu, Undersecretary General of UNDESA had the pleasure of enjoying the hospitality of the Samoan people during his first planning mission for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held here in Samoa in September of 2014 and for which he acts as Secretary General. I would like to reiterate his gratitude for the warm reception.

This regional seminar is yet another milestone in our ongoing cooperation towards our goal of sustainable development. The outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference reconfirmed that “integrated social, economic, and environmental data and information ... is important to decision-making processes”. It is, therefore, an opportune moment to work on the implementation of these important statistical tools of national and environmental accounting, which will be useful in monitoring and evaluating international sustainable development goals (SDGs) which are being developed at the United Nations in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

The High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in its report also called for a data revolution to support evidence-based policy making and the transparency and accountability for of policy choices and actions for sustainable development, with a new international initiative and partnership for statistics to improve the quality of statistics and information available to citizens.

I believe that the implementation of the 2008 SNA and 2012 SEEA will allow the national statistical systems of the Pacific countries to not only report on their progress towards meeting development goals but also guide policymakers in their decision making on policies to address its vulnerabilities and strengthen its resilience related to sustainable development.

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It is clear that the implementation process of the SNA and SEEA has to take a bottom-up approach with countries taking ownership for the process. The statistical agenda and priorities

should be policy relevant and remain policy relevant over time. As such the engagement of different stakeholders from the national and regional policy community is important and bringing together country representatives from national statistical offices, environment ministries, central banks, finance ministries and representatives from regional agencies and development partners to work together in implementing and strengthening national accounts and environmental-economic accounts is key to fostering regular data collection programs.

The sustained production of national accounts based on the SNA and environmental-economic accounts based on the SEEA would improve the ability of policy makers to make balanced policy choices for sustainable development. Not only will better information improve national decision making but it is also useful in monitoring and evaluating international sustainable development initiatives, such as the sustainable development goals (SDGs) which are being developed in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the importance of close collaboration within national institutions with a strong coordinating role for independent national statistical offices and among regional and international agencies in forwarding the implementation of the SNA and SEEA. Such collaboration will help ensure timely and coherent statistics that provide relevant information to policy makers and the public at large.

I wish you a successful seminar.