

**79th Commission ESCAP Session,
Special Body on LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS
1530-1700, 16 May 2023**

**Talking points (3 minutes) for
H.E. Mr. Seve Paeniu, Minister of Finance, Tuvalu**

- I wish to acknowledge that the purpose of the Special Body this year is to bring forth policy messages specific to seamless and sustainable connectivity. This is important and relevant to the region's small island developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs), such as Tuvalu, as it can help us overcome some of our structural challenges, including small size, geographic isolation and high vulnerability to climate shocks.
- As you know, Tuvalu has met the criteria for graduation from the category of LDC. However, as a small island Nation, we remain extremely vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. Our economic and environmental vulnerability, as measured by the United Nations Committee for Development Policy, is the highest in the world.
- Indeed, the impacts of climate change present a considerable challenge to our connectivity. Adverse climate impacts and natural disasters are impacting our maritime connectivity and causing damage to port infrastructure in islands as cyclones put our ports at great risk. We continue to face an urgent need for financial resources to increase our resilience. However, accessing development finance remains an uphill battle.
- As the background document of this agenda item (the *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2023*) highlights, new digital technologies and geospatial data will help enhance the resilience of small economies to natural disasters. For example, low Earth orbit satellite technologies could help bridge the digital divide with more efficient and quality Internet connectivity for Tuvalu and other island States during and after natural disasters. However, we require urgent funding and technical assistance for these new digital technologies to be mainstreamed in the Pacific.

- I would therefore reiterate the importance of, and urgent need for, strengthening sustainable digital connectivity of small island States, and call for enhanced regional engagement and coordination of development partners through regional cooperation mechanisms such as the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative.
- In this regard, I call on the international community for increased international assistance both technical and financial to continue fostering the sustainable development of our small States.
- One important opportunity would be the conclusion of the SAMOA Pathway in 2024. The Pacific review meeting of the SAMOA Pathway this year would provide a great opportunity for us to prepare for the Fourth UN SIDS Conference in Antigua and Barbuda in 2024. We can learn from each other how we have overcome some of the significant challenges and for examining priorities for SIDS in the Pacific for the coming development decade. ESCAP would be well placed to provide us with technical assistance in these preparatory processes.
- Thank you.