



**Statement by Belize on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States
at the 50th Session of the UN Statistical Commission**

5 March 2019

We congratulate the United Nations Statistical Commission on the celebration of its 50th Session.

The theme for this half century commemoration could not be more apt, “better data, better lives”. The Sustainable Development Goals Report launched in June of 2018 “show(s) that people are living better lives than they were a decade ago, even in the regions facing the greatest development obstacles. At the same time, countries are facing mounting challenges on the journey towards the achievement of the Goals, such as a fast-changing climate, an increased number of conflicts, inequality and persistent pockets of poverty and hunger. Also highlighted in the report is the pressing need for reliable, timely, open and disaggregated data to enable policymakers to take evidence-based decisions. It is stressed that political leadership, adequate resources and commitment to further expand data collection, production and dissemination are required to meet the data needs.”

Small island developing states have made great strides in modernizing and transforming our national and regional statistical systems in order for us to have a sound basis for reporting on our fulfillment of the SDGs. We have crafted our own sub-set of SDG indicators that reflect our unique vulnerabilities and national development priorities, and have due regard for international compatibility. Whilst a remarkable achievement, these upgraded systems do not go far enough in meeting our ever-present challenges and growing needs. Our national systems remain underfinanced and understaffed, resulting in significant data gaps.

The Pacific adopted its ten year strategy on a regional approach to statistics in 2010. This Strategy was developed to provide a longer term framework for improvement in production and utilisation of statistics. It seeks to make efficient use of resources across the Pacific Region to maximize the development of national statistics components. The Caribbean endorsed its *Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics* in July of last year. This Strategy envisions a

resilient system that is responsive to the national, regional and global agendas and thereby enabling a resilient community with sustained economic growth and development.

The Caribbean Strategy envisions building and strengthening strategic partnerships to optimize the use of scarce resources and to achieve efficiency gains in facilitating the production of the indicator framework that can guide, monitor and underscore the achievements of the 2030 Agenda framework and the SAMOA Pathway. It ultimately hopes to use the SDG Indicator Framework as a blueprint for the SAMOA Pathway and eventually to also develop the Vulnerability Resilience Country Profiles. We find that this is an area that the Commission can easily encourage and support.

The SAMOA Pathway visualizes a broadening and concretization of data collection and repository systems, both nationally and regionally, and seeks to enhance the support given to small island states in this regard. Even as we begin the process for the Mid-term Review of this Pathway, we are reminded of the chasm between where we are and where we ought to be in our development trajectory. The simple fact is, we just don't have the necessary, appropriate and adequate data that would allow us to make more informed decisions, even in the context of our achievements.

The Apia Outcome of the Inter-regional Meeting for the Mid-term Review of the SAMOA Pathway stressed the need to further improve the monitoring and accountability of the Pathway, including through strengthening Regional and Sub-regional Coordinating Mechanisms, which will enable data generation, statistical analysis knowledge management, education, communication and outreach activities to support the effective, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Pathway.

This makes the work of the Pacific and Caribbean Regional Statistics Commissions even more important.

In that light, we welcome the report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. We note the emphasis on support to 'developing countries, in particular African countries, least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices and data systems.'

We firmly believe that our member states and the global community have made great strides in enhancing our reporting systems. We trust that we can build on this momentum to enhance the sort of partnerships, cooperation and capacity-building that can allow SIDS to bridge the chasm we find ourselves in.