

## **International conference on International Outreach and Coordination in National Accounts for Sustainable Growth and Development**

Session 2 - International commitments and frameworks

Title: Improving National Account Statistics in the Forum Island Countries (FICS)

Institution: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

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1. It is widely recognised that the limited quality and types of statistics across the Pacific inhibits effective monitoring and reporting, socio-economic analysis, informed policy making, and effective planning. There is consensus amongst regional policy makers and statisticians that there is a substantial gap between the official statistics needed and the statistics actually available in the Pacific region. Moreover there is the perception that the gap is widening between the demand for official statistics and the available supply.
2. This impediment needs to be addressed in a sustainable manner through long-term commitment by the region and its development partners. The demand for improvement has been recognised within the region, particularly at the annual meetings of the Forum Economic Ministers.
3. A recent review highlighted<sup>1</sup> the uneven progress made in statistical development and that the capacity of national information management systems to generate macroeconomic data varied considerably between countries. In general, there were problems of timeliness and quality of data. The review further noted that technical assistance was especially needed to strengthen national accounts and balance of payments data.
4. With regards to the general overview of national accounts statistics in FICs, it has been noted that the overall performance with regard to the implementation of the SNA 1993 in FICs is mixed, however FICs have progressively attempted to comply with its relevant provisions.
5. Common challenges (amongst others) faced in improving national account statistics in FICs often relates to the weakness or even absence of coordination and cooperation between agencies engaged in the collection and/or production of official statistics, lack of resources and capacity constraints.
6. A number of policy options to improve statistical processes and output in the FICs have been highlighted in the previous meetings of the regional economic ministers. These amongst others, include establishing data priorities, improving working conditions, adhering to legal stipulations with regards to independence of statistics offices, strengthening coordination between national statistical agencies, creating demand for information, and strengthening appropriate regional approaches to supplement national efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC) report titled “*The Challenge of Statistical Capacity Building in the Pacific: Progress within a GDDS framework in seven Pacific Island countries*” November 2002

7. In addition, developments through a Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and Secretariat of the Pacific Community managed benchmark study, based on the Forum Leaders mandated Pacific Plan, will outline actionable options for the pooling of resources and supplementing capacities to help alleviate underlying structural problems hampering the delivery of effective statistical services in FICs.

8. The assistance of the international community towards the development of the benchmark study, as well as helping to implement its findings could be the basis for more coordinated and effective development partner interventions, for sustainable efforts to improve statistics' needs and outputs in FICs.