

*The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources Mr Paula Cirikiyasawa, Heads of Department, Distinguished Delegates, Esteemed Experts, Ladies and Gentlemen and Colleagues.*

It is with great honour that I welcome you all to this important gathering focused on Enhancing Geospatial Information Management Arrangements and Accelerating the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, particularly for the Pacific Island Countries and Territories. I would like to extend a special thank you to the organizers, UN-GGIM and each one of you for your commitment to addressing some of the most pressing issues facing our Pacific region and the world today.

As we stand at the intersection of rapidly evolving technologies and urgent global challenges, the role of geospatial information in addressing sustainable development cannot be overstated. The Pacific Islands with their unique geography, small island states and vulnerabilities to climate change, have a particular need for robust, accessible, and accurate geospatial data to support decision-making, resilience-building, and the achievement of the SDGs.

The theme this week, *“Identifying Problems, Finding Solutions,”* speaks to the dual purpose of this meeting. It is not just about acknowledging the challenges that we face, but more importantly, about identifying innovative solutions that can be translated into concrete actions and outcomes.

We are gathered here to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs, with a focus on how geospatial information management can play a pivotal role in this process. From addressing climate-related risks to food security, improving health outcomes, from managing natural resources to enhancing governance and infrastructure, geospatial data offers a powerful tool for understanding our world, making informed decisions, and achieving long-term sustainability.

But, to unlock the full potential of geospatial data, we must work collectively and strategically. This is where the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework comes into play. The IGIF in short, offers a comprehensive roadmap to strengthen national and regional geospatial information systems, ensuring that they are not only integrated but also scalable and interoperable across different sectors and governance levels.

We also recognize that capacity building is a cornerstone of this framework. Enhancing national capacities, skills development, and institutional frameworks in Pacific Island Countries and Territories, is essential if we are to effectively leverage geospatial technologies for sustainable development. Together, we must address barriers to data access, improve data sharing mechanisms, and promote open standards to foster regional collaboration and innovation.

At this crucial juncture, we have an opportunity to tackle several pressing issues, such as:

- Data gaps and accessibility in the Pacific, particularly for our small island states.
- The urgent need for climate resilience and the use of geospatial tools in monitoring environmental change, including sea-level rise and extreme weather events.
- The integration of geospatial data into national development plans and disaster risk reduction strategies.
- The development of regional partnerships that promote the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and technological solutions.

SPC's initiatives such as the Pacific Data Hub (PDH), Digital Earth Pacific (DEP), the Earth and Oceans Observation (EOO) unit, and the Pacific Geospatial and Surveying Council (PGSC) Partnership Desk embody examples of a collective vision for advancing geospatial information management in the Pacific. DEP, a regional digital public infrastructure empowers island nations with accessible, near-real-time decades of satellite and geospatial data for climate resilience, disaster response, and sustainable development, directly supporting SDG implementation. The PDH serves as a regional data infrastructure, facilitating open access to a wealth of data vital for evidence-based decision-making across sectors. Complementing these platforms, the EOO unit spearheads critical geospatial projects in environmental monitoring and risk management, while the PGSC partnership desk fosters collaboration, knowledge exchange, and capacity building among PICTs.

Through these combined efforts, SPC is addressing data gaps, enhancing resilience, and contributing to the UN's Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, ensuring that Pacific communities are equipped to navigate and thrive amidst environmental and socio-economic challenges. As we proceed with our discussions over the coming days, let us remember that the challenges we face are not insurmountable. They are, in fact, opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and shared progress. We have the expertise, the tools, and the vision to make a difference, and by coming together, we can turn this vision into action. Similarly, efforts by Geoscience Australia in the advancing technology of satellite observations such as GNSS and SBAS, positioning in real time and navigation in air space for the Pacific, are an opportunity we must consider.

I look forward to the productive discussions, insightful presentations, and shared experiences that will emerge from this consultation. Together, let us find solutions that are not only effective and innovative but also inclusive, ensuring that the benefits of geospatial information reach all people across the Pacific, today and in the future.

Thank you once again for your participation, and I wish you all a successful and fruitful meeting.

*Vinaka Vaka Levu, Fakafetai, Thank you.*