Welcome Remarks

Mr. Chae Gun Chung
Head of United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG)/D PIDG/UNDESA

Practitioner-to-Practitioner Forum on Strengthening Capacities of Public Administration in Island States
Equipping Public Institutions, Strengthening Resilience and Building Effective Partnerships for Implementing the 2030 Agenda from an Island States Perspective

Colombo, Sri Lanka
21August 2018

Hon. Sandith Samarasinghe, Monitoring Member of Parliament and Minister Delegate of the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Wildlife and Regional Development,

Mr. Terence Jones, UN Resident Coordinator,

Mr. Animesh Kumar, Deputy Head, Regional Office for Asia-Pacific, UNISDR,

Distinguished Representatives and Colleagues,

On behalf of the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), it is my great honor and pleasure to welcome you to this “Forum on Strengthening Capacities of Public Administration in Island States: Equipping Public Institutions, Strengthening Resilience and Building Effective Partnerships for Implementing the 2030 Agenda from an Island States Perspective”. This Forum is co-organized with the Government of Sri Lanka’s Ministry of Sustainable Development, Wildlife and Regional Development, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, and United Nations in Sri Lanka. I hope you have all had a good flight to the beautiful Island of Sri Lanka!
So, first of all, please allow me to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to our co-organizers, who have made great efforts to prepare for this Forum as a good venue for knowledge sharing and exchange of good practices and partnership-building among Island States.

I especially thank Dr. Yalegama and his Ministerial team as well as the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office for their excellent support in making this Forum a reality.

I am very happy to see this event is attended by 45 participants, including 25 distinguished representatives who have traveled from 14 Island States, spanning the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

I am also very pleased to witness that our SDG focal points, tasked with planning, implementing and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are sitting together with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) focal points. Achieving the resilience and the 2030 Agenda requires us break silos and work in close collaboration due to the crosscutting nature of DRR. We all recognize that the SDGs are interlinked and indivisible in nature, which requires concerted efforts from across government.

The climate change has been increasing the intensity and frequency of natural disasters, which jeopardizes the economic achievements and social progress of many developing countries, especially Island States.

Capacity development in government, particularly the capacity building of human resources, is critical to address complex challenges of natural disasters, build resilience and achieve the 2030 Agenda. I fully believe that you could benefit from this Forum, as it aims to strengthen your knowledge and skills in building resilience and effective South-South cooperation for SDG implementation, which is in full alignment with the overarching theme of 2018 HLPF on *Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies*.

Now, let me briefly introduce the general structure of this Forum, with primary focus on disaster risk reduction and resilience in the context of the SDGs.

The development of the programme of this Forum is also based on the demands for capacity support as raised by those countries participating in *capacity needs*
assessment of government institutions to implement the 2030 Agenda and identification of priority areas for capacity development. The capacity needs assessment was conducted by our office from mid-2017 to March 2018 on three groups of countries – SIDS, middle- and low-income countries, and LDCs and LLDCs. I sincerely thank those countries that have supported this meaningful exercise. In this exercise, Island States identified Climate change and disaster risk reduction as the priority topic for future training.

Our forum is thus structured around these priority topics and capacity gaps expressed by countries, including strategic planning and institutional arrangements, stakeholder engagement and partnership-building, monitoring and review, and the means of implementation to achieve the SDGs.

Since Member States identified technology and finance as priority areas in strengthening the means of implementation, we have arranged site visits and thematic sessions in these areas as well.

I wish to emphasize that we always learn a lot from you and it is also mutually beneficial to discuss among yourselves. The programme has set aside ample time for discussions. The value of peer to peer learning and exchange of good practices can only be achieved through active participation by each of you, so I strongly encourage you to be fully engaged and participatory in these interactive sessions.

This peer-to-peer learning and exchange of good practices will help you be better prepared for greater resilience in the face of climate change, while developing a good understanding of common challenges of Island States, notably the remote geographic locations and limited resources.

Now, I would like to briefly introduce my office and how we can better support Island States in your efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda in the following this Forum.

The primary mission of the UN Project Office on Governance, under the general supervision of the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government of UN DESA, is to assist Member States in improving their public administration capacity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Since its inception in 2006, UNPOG has been working on promoting effective,
accountable and inclusive public governance.

Since 2014, the International Year of SIDS, it has been one of priority areas for UNPOG to support the sustainable development in SIDS. On 14 November 2014, we organized a Special Event of the Second Committee of the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly. The Special Event was entitled as *ICT and E-Government in SIDS: Responding to the SAMOA Pathway Call for Action*, and during which we launched a thematic research report on E-Government for Promoting Sustainable Development in SIDS. In February and November of 2015 and April 2018, UNPOG organized three capacity development workshops for SIDS in Seoul, Suva of Fiji, and Singapore respectively while continuing research on challenges of sustainable development in SIDS and how to better address such challenges through leveraging ICT and digital government.

UNPOG is committed to further supporting Island States in their efforts to pursue sustainable development in coming years. In particular, as the 2019 HLPF will review the progress of SDG 16, we will focus on capacity support for SIDS in strengthening public governance for building resilient, inclusive and sustainable societies in Island States.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that this Forum does not end here.

I wish to strongly encourage you to share the knowledge gained during this Forum with many more government officials in your countries when you return home.

Thank you.