



# AUSTRALIA



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## **UNITED NATIONS ECOSOC OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES SEGMENT: MULTI-COUNTRY OFFICE SESSION**

**Wednesday 19 May 2021 4.00-5.00PM**

### **Intervention by Dr. Fiona Webster, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations**

**Check against delivery**

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Thank you Chair, and to all the speakers and presenters at this afternoon's very interesting panel. I am pleased to provide some comments and questions on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and my own country, Australia.

CANZ welcomed the findings of the multi-country office review that acknowledged current gaps in UN coordination and delivery for Small Island Developing States in the Pacific and Caribbean. We were particularly pleased that the review provided an opportunity to hear voices and perspectives from my own region, the Pacific. Australia joins others in underscoring that the Pacific remains one of the most dispersed, diverse and disaster-prone regions in the world. On this basis, efforts to strengthen the UN's Pacific architecture presents a real opportunity to ensure that SIDS receive tailored, effective and well-coordinated UN support.

We are pleased to see that recommendations from the MCO review continue to be implemented, despite the severe challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, we are looking forward to the North Pacific MCO becoming fully staffed and operational.

We also think it's imperative that given the unique mandates and structures of multi-country offices that the right people, with the right skills, are placed in Resident Coordinator roles and in their offices, giving due consideration to gender parity in the recruitment efforts.

We note that despite good progress, there have been challenges with recruitment to fill important positions, including in the North Pacific MCO and for country coordination officers.

I would be interested to hear from the panellists on what more can be done to find the right people to fill these important roles? What can Member States do to help?

We are also pleased that extra resources have been allocated to enable deeper engagement with intergovernmental regional and sub-regional organisations, such as through the appointment of specific Regional Coordination Officer roles in Fiji and Barbados. We would appreciate some reflections from the pannelists on how these offerings are helping SIDS. Do any barriers remain?

Lastly, we are looking forward to seeing the results of the SG's Resident Coordinator review, which Australia is feeding into. For today's pannelists - what advice would you provide to the review team to ensure its recommendations take into consideration the unique nature of MCO operations and program delivery, under the leadership of Resident Coordinators?

Thank you