Check against delivery!

Mr. Chairman,

Landies and Gentlemen,

Esteemed Members of the Steering Committee of PCREEE,

I would like to congratulate UNIDO, SIDS Dock and the Pacific Community for the successful establishment of the Pacific Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency and the early implementation of high-quality regional activities. I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the Kingdom of Tonga and the Pacific Community for co-hosting the Centre, and to the government of Fiji for hosting this second Steering Committee Meeting.

We can all agree that energy is at the heart of sustainable development – a development that recognizes that the resources of our Earth are limited; a development that does justice to the aspirations of developing nations for growth and prosperity; and finally a development that can support a global population of 9 billion in 2050. Sustainable Energy is also at the heart of what we call a “green economy”, an economy which is ecologically sustainable and socially just.

Access to affordable, sustainable and reliable energy services is a key enabler for economic and social development. Renewable energy and energy efficiency solutions offer opportunities to reduce the dependency on expensive fossil fuel imports and to keep global temperature rise in check – which is particularly important for Small Island Developing States. Regional cooperation in sustainable energy plays a crucial role in mitigating existing barriers for sustainable energy markets, investments and industries, and in strengthening local capacities.

For these reasons, Austria has for many years been working towards a sustainable energy system nationally and in our international and development cooperation. Innovative green technologies have become core strengths of the Austrian private sector and Austrian initiatives have long put a strong focus on regional cooperation, capacity development and knowledge exchange in sustainable energy technologies - with the aim to promote a shared global understanding of “Energy for Sustainable Development”.

In this context, the Government of Austria cooperates with UNIDO and regional organisations in the establishment of sustainable energy centers since 2010, which are part of an emerging global network of regional sustainable energy centers in Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and Indian Ocean.

Austria currently supports the following five Sustainable Energy Centers that are already operational:

* the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency ECREEE in Cabo Verde,
* the East African Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency EACREEE in Uganda,
* the South African Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency SACREEE in Namibia,
* the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE) in Barbados and
* the PCREEE.

The Austrian Development Cooperation further supports the preparatory phases of the Himalaya Hindukush Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (HCREEE) and the start-up phase of the SICA Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SICREEE) in Central America.

The PCREEE has effectively taken up its role as a Centre of excellence that aims to enhance regional cooperation and capacities in areas of highest priority to Pacific Island Countries and Territories: Addressing barriers and strengthening drivers for sustainable energy markets, industries and innovation. I would also like to highlight the strong links between the PCREEE, the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency ECREEE and the Caribbean Centre CCREEE on common sustainable energy solutions in SIDS.

It is an honour for me to participate in this second Steering Committee Meeting of the PCREEE, which will serve to further shape the institutional design and technical portfolio of the Centre. I am strongly convinced that the Centre will be a highly relevant regional institution to its Partner States and will be instrumental in improving access to modern, affordable and reliable energy services, in enhancing energy security and in mitigating negative externalities of the island ecosystems.