



PLENARY SPEECH

Delivered by

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Excellency, Tuilaepa Sa'ilele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is with utmost pleasure that I address you at this historic Third International Conference on SIDS. This meeting comes at a time when ITU is busy evaluating the progress made by countries, with the support of the international community, in creating the Information Society. We all know that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are central in facilitating ongoing efforts towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). No doubt, ICTs will also play a catalytic role in the post 2015 development agenda for SIDS and LDCs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me at this point thank the Heads of State and Government here present, who thanks to their unwavering commitment to the subject at hand have taken the time to grace this event. It is out of a visionary, and committed leadership that genuine, durable and sustainable development is born.



Our host deserves some accolades. As in the past, they have again surpassed our expectations with the facilities put at our disposal and their hospitality. We thank you and your people, Your Excellency, the Prime Minister.

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

YES, I am smiling. Small Island Developing States have made great progress socially and economically over the years. Of all the countries that graduated from the least developed country category, only one is not a Small Island Developing State. The rest, in the name of Cape Verde, Maldives, Samoa, and those on the verge of graduation like Tuvalu, are all small island developing states. Indeed, there is a correlation between economic progress in these countries and the rapid growth of ICTs. Two decades ago, SIDS were not as connected as they are today. In 1994, there were only 0.9% mobile-cellular subscriptions across the small island developing states. **But, wait!** Today, the penetration level is more than 80% and still counting. **THAT IS NOT ALL!** Internet usage penetration has increased from 0.1% in 1994 to 35% in 2014.



Today, my message to you is that of **hope**. Hope, because future communication technologies are going to be cheaper and more affordable thus making it easier for SIDS to get even more connected. With each connected individual comes a positive impact on the social and economic ecosystem: saving lives before, during, and after disasters strike; help monitor the environment to mitigate the impact of climate change, facilitate instant business transactions at low cost, and secure online government service delivery and financial remittances. The list goes on. But not to forget that as humans, we all want to “**Keep in Touch.**”

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

A suggestion from me **though**: even with this success in connectivity by SIDS, let us not be complacent. We should now take advantage of the arrival of a new transformative communication technology. I am talking about **Broadband**. Why broadband, one may ask? Broadband, because it **will** improve the lives of **everyone, everywhere**. It will help deliver radical improvements in healthcare, education, transportation, utility suppliers and government services – in fact everything, all the time and everywhere! This is why, during our side event on Tuesday, ITU



concluded a Connectivity Agreement with all the eleven Pacific Islands and with industry partners to make broadband not only accessible but affordable to all the citizens in the Pacific Islands. This grand project is ripe for implementation and will commence before end of this year.

SIDS, have great potential and provide great investment opportunities. I say this based on the fact that mobile-broadband penetration in SIDS stands as low as 24% compared to 84% in developed countries, while the world average stands at 32%. **This is no cause for concerns though.** We know, essential parameters are in place for us to experience the same giant leap that we have witnessed with the mobile-cellular growth. To my friends from the private sector, “You can see for yourselves that there are insurmountable opportunities in Small Island Developing States for you to invest.”

As SIDS embark on this journey to get broadband become the technology of choice and deliver it to each community, each home, and each citizen, we should **not fail** to act because of **our fear** to fail. My message is: Mistakes will be made with some projects not hitting their targets. Expect it, anticipate it, and accept it, because it will happen. But the ultimate satisfaction comes from our boldness to take action, innovate, make corrections and still have the stamina and enthusiasm to march on. As we often say, “Success isn’t final, and failure isn’t fatal!



Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

As I said earlier, for SIDS, future prospects are very good. Appropriate, cheaper, and affordable ICTs are now readily available. But technology alone is **not the answer**. A multi-stakeholder and **people-first** approach is a winning formula. Stakeholders and Partners will achieve more where there is a shared vision, cooperation and coordination that will optimize the use of scarce resources. This is essential in order to achieve the requisite synergies, complementarities, mutual reinforcement and efficiencies of scale and scope. Speaking for the ITU, I assure you here today that we are determined to do our part not only to fulfill the needs, aspirations, expectations and demands of the people of the world in the 21st century, but also to work with industry to produce even smarter, and low-cost technologies that will fast-track SIDS into the Knowledge Society.

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I greatly feel empowered, encouraged and assured by the commitment of the Leadership and the citizens in SIDS. Jointly and singularly, SIDS have demonstrated the ability and desire to deliver digital dividends to



all their citizens. For those SIDS that are also LDCs, let me assure you, even when your countries graduate, we commit to continue by the same measure to accompany you on your development journey with unwavering support. For SIDS could never cease to be SIDS. Let me say, here and now: We won't penalize success. We **reward it**. Today, ITU congratulates, salutes and wish all SIDS overwhelming success over the next decade!

I thank you.