



**STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY**

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**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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Mr. President of General Assembly

Mr Secretary General of the United Nations

Honourable Heads of State and Governments

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen

This is a momentous occasion for the Pacific Community. It's the first time our organisation is present here in its own right and I am honoured as the Director General to make this inaugural statement to such and auspicious audience.

For those of you not familiar with the Pacific Community, just very briefly it is an organisation based on science, knowledge and innovation that supports sustainable development in the Pacific, since 1947, when it was known as the South Pacific Commission. The Pacific Community recognises that this support must consider the changing development landscape at the national, Pacific region and global levels. As a key institution in the regional architecture supporting the Pacific, our programmes reflect the strategic direction set out in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, and the regional priorities identified in the **SAMOA Pathway**.

***2015 is the Time for Global Action***

2015 has presented an unprecedented opportunity to bring the countries and citizens of the world together to decide and embark on new paths to improve the lives of people everywhere. These decisions will determine the global course of action to end poverty, promote prosperity and well-being for all, protect the environment and address climate

everywhere. These decisions will determine the global course of action to end poverty, promote prosperity and well-being for all, protect the environment and address climate change.

In 2015 the global community will adopt a new sustainable development agenda and a new global agreement on climate change.

Our region's future prosperity and ability to effectively tackle major challenges like climate change, poverty and non-communicable diseases, depends on the drive, determination and quality of learning outcomes for tomorrow's decision makers.

Eradicating poverty requires a change of practice to refocus investments across sectors towards youth, and to engage and target vulnerable youth. This ensures that we "leave no-one behind".

At the risk of sounding repetitive, allow me to put some context to our challenges

The starting point for the Pacific is very simple. The Pacific Small Island Developing States are spread over an area of ocean approximately 36 million square kilometres in size (including the high seas in between EEZs) – almost four times the size of China and almost 20% larger than the African continent. It covers approximately 11% of the world's water surface and 7% of the total surface area of the earth. Only 1.5 % of this total area is land (551,483 square kilometres), with 98.5 % covered by water - a fact recognised by Pacific leaders adopting a theme of Large Ocean Island States.

It is this vast ocean that joins Pacific SIDS, it is the only resource that many of our island nations have access to, and therefore **SDG 14 is critically important to our region.**

*Healthy oceans are fundamental to resilience and sustainable development.* It is critical to advancing all 3 pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental.

It is the only source of livelihoods for many of our people - it provides for food security, health security and economic security. Therefore the critical importance of conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources is paramount. Achieving the targets enshrined in SDG 14 is essential.

**Equally important, is the SDG 13, Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.** Our Pacific-island region contributes less than 0.03 percent of the world's greenhouse-gas emissions, yet we are amongst the first to feel the impacts of climate

change. Failure to reach a legally binding agreement in Paris will only exacerbate the lives of our Pacific people.

As previously mentioned, investing in our youth requires firm commitment to *SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*. Education is a fundamental building block for sustainable development. While universal education has been achieved for many of our Pacific children, numeracy and literacy rates remain low thus the necessity to improve quality of education.

As a medical doctor, it would be remiss of me to not speak a little to *SDG 3 – ensure healthy lives and promote the well-being for all at all ages*. While it is all encompassing, I would like to make a pitch for specific attention to NCDs. Globally NCD accounts for 35 million deaths (60% of all global deaths). A high proportion of these deaths in the low (gross national income <US\$825) and middle income (GNI US\$825-US\$10066) countries are below the age of 60 years - deaths which are preventable at such a premature age.

Around 75 per cent of all adult deaths in the Pacific SIDS are due to NCDs; the majority of such adults would be in the economically active age bracket and for many others, their capacity to contribute further to economic development is significantly reduced. Most countries in the Pacific now have much higher rates of premature (below age 60) deaths than the comparable global average. The top 10 countries with the highest overweight and obesity rates in the world are Pacific SIDS. Recognizing the huge economic costs of NCDs in the Pacific particularly, the rapidly rising expenditure on NCDs, comprises well over 50 percent of the total health budget of many island countries.

This Summit is expected to result in the 2030 Development Agenda with new sustainable development goals that build on the eight Millennium Development Goals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you will recall, the MDGs had 8 Goals, 18 targets and 60 indicators. The SDG Agenda, as it stands, has 17 Goals (more than double), 169 targets (10 nearly ten-fold) and, at present some 320 plus indicators (which are still to be finalized). While this may seem a huge increase, it is imperative that these should be narrowed down to a more manageable set of **GLOBAL headline indicators**, **all countries**, **world-wide**, **can commit to regularly monitor and report on**.

In this context, I am proud to say, our region has **made a start**, which was communicated

recently to the United Nations. Our sectoral experts, colleagues from all relevant Pacific regional technical intergovernmental organizations, (FFA, PIFS, SPREP and SPC), have come up with a draft list of **62 regional headline indicators** we believe would do justice to an effective monitoring of the SDGs for **our regional purposes**, and which we communicated to UNSD(United Nations Statistics Division) last month. Matching these draft Pacific SDG indicators against the current draft list of **82 TIER-1 indicators** proposed by the United Nations (UNSD) for consideration by the SDG Interagency Expert Group in Bangkok next month, **shows an overlap of nearly 50%**. In other words, for us to commit to our own regional priority requirements, **plus** all currently proposed Global TIER-1 indicators, we would be looking at a set of 116 indicators. This is still nearly double of the current MDG total, but only around ONE THIRD of the currently proposed total of 320+.

Ladies and gentlemen,

whatever the final outcome of the SDG Interagency expert group deliberations, it should go without saying, that **the volume of additional data collection will be substantial for SIDS and most developing nations**, and would require a massive global investment in this area, as stressed by many countries and organizations at the Third International Conference on Development Finance in Addis Ababa in July.

Without due consideration of this reality, I am afraid, most of us will be doomed to fail in our responsibilities to regularly monitor, and report on progress of implementing the comprehensive SDG agenda, **we are all fully committed to implement.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to share the Pacific Community's perspective with you at this Summit.

Our longevity and standing as the Pacific region's principal scientific and technical development organisation is only possible through the unity of our members, the support of Pacific people **and our principal development partners**, and the strength, commitment, and warmth of our **durable and genuine partnerships.**

I thank you for your attention and continued support in the years ahead.

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