

6th September, Apia, Samoa

Partnerships for a Blue Pacific – an exploration of the role and contribution of Civil Society

Position Paper: Resilient Pacific People for a Sustainable Future

The Pacific Tsunami of Non-Communicable Disease – The Killer of our People of the Ocean

We salute your leadership in stating that the “Pacific peoples are the custodians of the world’s largest, most peaceful and abundant ocean, its many islands and its rich diversity of cultures”¹ and acknowledge and appreciate that, as leaders you have prioritised the need for a resilient people of the ocean.

However, we would like to bring to your attention, the Tsunami’s of today’s blue economy. In the Pacific region, Non-communicable Diseases pose a major threat not only to health, but also to development.

- Premature death, disability and reduced productivity resulting from NCDs put a heavy burden on governments, communities and families. According to data from the Pacific Community (SPC), the Pacific region has some of the highest rates of NCDs and associated risk factors in the world.
- NCDs are the leading cause of death in our region, accounting for 60 to 75% of mortalities in most PICTs²;
- The Pacific now has the highest rates of diabetes in the world, where eight Pacific Island Countries are in the top ten countries and territories with the highest diabetes prevalence in the world.³

We recognise that the governments in the Pacific have acknowledged NCDs as a national priority affecting socioeconomic development and thank the Forum Leaders for explicitly recognising the link between NCDs and development, declaring the “Pacific is in an NCD crisis” as part of the 42nd Pacific Islands Forum communiqué of September 2011. **We support** our leaders’ efforts to ensure the resiliency of its people to continue to serve as the custodians of our oceans. Let us not forget that the rapid economic development across the region has had a negative impact on the health of our nations. Further, our Pacific Ocean is the constant that contributes to the health of our nations even during times of natural disasters where food, safety and security cannot be guaranteed from our agriculture.

¹ Statement by Hon. Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa at the High-Level Pacific Regional Side Event by PIFS on ‘Our values and identity as stewards of the world’s largest oceanic continent, The Blue Pacific’. UN Headquarters, New York, 5 June 2017.

² World Health Organization. Noncommunicable diseases country profiles 2011. <http://www.who.int/nmh/countries/2011/en/> excerpted from the Pacific Community (SPC) NCD Statistics (Pacific) Summary.

³ Anderson I, Sanburg A, Aru H, Tarivonda L, Ivatts S, Latu R, & Kool J. (2013). The costs and affordability of drug treatments for type 2 diabetes and hypertension in Vanuatu. *Pacific Health Dialog*, 19(2:1).

These papers were produced by civil society representatives that attended the Regional Civil Society Organisations Forum organised by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat with support from the European Union. The contents present the views of the civil society representatives and can in no way be reflected as views of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat or the European Union.

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We recognise the need for strategic partnerships as an inclusive mechanism with all stakeholders to address this dominant phenomenon and add value to our economic developments. Civil Societies of the Pacific wish to work collaboratively in a sustainable and durable manner, with the Government and the private sector to mobilise communities at the grass root level.

This is the strength we can offer to our Leaders to contribute to the joint regional efforts to build strong and resilient families, communities and nations.

We call on our leaders to:

1. **Commit** to align national health budgets to the Non – Communicable Disease profile and the epidemiological burden that Pacific Island countries face, focusing efforts on the prevention of NCDs at a primary and secondary level.
2. **Support** solutions and best practices for addressing the NCD crisis, food safety and security conditions and ensure their inclusion in the SDG implementation and other national plans.
3. **Cultivate** a resilient youth population through budget support of its National Youth Councils to lead the innovative use of ICT solutions for the promotion of SPORTS and physical activities highlighting its contribution to the reduction of premature mortality from NCDs, economic development including social and political stability.
4. **Delay** the ratification of the Pacer Plus until adequate food safety and security conditions are in place;
5. **Mobilise** the revitalisation of our grass root communities through supported partnerships with CSOs to fully utilise our natural habitat i.e. our oceans, our lands as per the SAMOA Pathway.

We also urge our Leaders to **consider** Civil Society Organisations as strategic, durable and sustainable partners through multi – sector collaboration in combating issues eroding the livelihoods of our people, our economies and societies as sources for a resilient and sustainable region, critical to the global climatic and environmental stability of our Blue Pacific.