REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS FORUM

Position Papers on Priority Areas

ICT TO ENABLE A SUSTAINABLE AND PROSPEROUS FUTURE FOR THE PACIFIC

In line with the Forum Secretariat and the SAMOA Pathway, Civil Society recognizes that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is a game changer for the Pacific.

The region must pro-actively embrace ICT and the opportunities of the digital age to navigate a sustainable and empowered future for our communities and our cultures in this globalized and increasingly complex world.

ICT supports the knowledge sharing, communications and systemic collaboration, which underpins the effectiveness and efficiency of every thematic domain including all of the priority issues facing our region and our leaders.

Regional ICT policy initiatives to date have struggled to achieve practical outcomes.

The latest plan – the Pacific Regional ICT Strategic Action Plan (PRISAP) – aims to improve the livelihood of Pacific communities through effective utilization of ICT.

Civil Society recognizes and supports these existing efforts.

1. However, we call for a more visionary strategy, which incorporates a coordinated master-planning approach to establishing interconnected regional ICT infrastructure, and the strategic development of a regional ICT Industry in the Pacific.

- Our communities cannot afford to be merely consumers of other nation's digital products and services. We must grow our own skills base and our own software and technology innovation industries in order to position our region for digital age economic and social sustainability.

- A master planning approach to ICT infrastructure will provide the wider context for national and multi-lateral network and computing infrastructure projects.

- But this is not enough. The Pacific Region also needs a master planning approach to ICT skills development and digital age systems for our social and economic future.

- The establishment of an ICT industry in our region is the best way to support this.

2. We call on leaders to ensure that our trade agreements facilitate the building of our local skills and ICT industry.

- An unstrategic approach to foreign investment, foreign ownership and the lowering of trade barriers in the ICT sector is a threat to local skills development and universal, affordable access for all our communities.

3. We call on the leaders to establish a partnership between government, civil society, industry and the research and academic sector to embrace the true value of ICT for our collective sustainable future.

- Civil Society is the conduit to local communities. The establishment of governance structures, including an ICT Advisory Committee, should include civil society representation

We urge the leaders to recognize the strategic value of ICT and include Civil Society in the ongoing efforts to plan and implement effective ICT policy in the region.