



Side Event on Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs), Health and Development

**Opening Address by the Hon. Prime Minister of Samoa
Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi
Monday 1 September 2014 1.00pm Partnerships Hall**

Excellencies

Distinguished participants

Ladies and gentlemen

I wish to extend a very warm welcome to all of you to this Side event on Non Communicable Diseases, Health and Development. Your presence here today reflects a common concern and responsibility for effective decision making on ways to address some of the most urgent health problems we face today. The world expects clear guidance, founded on informed lifestyle choices for maintaining health and wellbeing. As leaders, we have an obligation to our future generations, to assure and ensure sustainable development. So what do we need to do now?

- We need to set definitive targets to reduce NCDs if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.
- We need to recognize the cross cutting nature of NCDs and that we need to persist at it beyond the post 2015 agenda.
- We need to strengthen our national partnerships in our journey towards improved health and wellbeing, and build on this foundation to launch our regional and global development platforms.

The Health related global conferences of the 1990s highlighted the close relationship between health promotion and protection, the environment, and sustainable development. New policies then, centred on health promotion and protection and specifically emphasized wellness, positive health and participation. In 1995, Western Pacific Regional Office of WHO published its health policy framework, 'New Horizons in Health', a life cycle-oriented model

that centres on the concepts of health promotion and health protection, and again underscores wellness, positive health and participation. These policy shifts were due to changing health needs and environmental conditions. The fact that we continue to reflect on past decision making means that we are unsure of our choices of the time, and indecisiveness means we cannot provide timely solutions to a growing urgent situation.

The Tenth Pacific Ministers of Health meeting in July 2013 in Apia, issued the *Apia Communiqué* which reiterated political commitment to address the NCD crisis, through the promotion of multi-sectoral action *inter alia*; adopting challenging goals such as a Tobacco Free Pacific by 2025; developing targets for recommended levels of fat, sugar and salt in food and beverages; supporting the implementation of interventions that promote health promotion in primary health care, and developing accountability mechanisms for NCD surveillance.

The Inter-Regional preparatory meeting later in Barbados in 2013, recognized that NCDs posed a real risk to development and that sustainable development can only be possible with a healthy population.

Samoa currently faces two important public policy challenges in the health sector. One is to stem, and then reverse, the rapid rise of non communicable diseases (NCDs) and the other is to put the country on a health-financing path that is effective, efficient, financially affordable and sustainable. The health sector and its partners continue to accelerate efforts in NCD advocacy, promotion and prevention.

I want to share with you that Samoa takes the Tobacco Free Pacific 2025 goal as a key priority and has translated it into national commitments through the Tobacco Act and Regulation. Our NCDs STEPS Report 2013 has shown a reduction in tobacco consumption by more than 10% over the last ten years. This example of tobacco control has been due largely to the active inclusion of communities and non-health sectors in NCD prevention and control. For instance our fiscal policy interventions through targeted tax increases to tobacco products coupled with increased expenditure on multimedia health promotion messages on

the dangers of tobacco use, are strategies fit for the purpose of influencing the reduction of tobacco consumption.

We welcome this new priority of food security and Nutrition in the Samoa Pathway as the right to safe, sufficient, and nutritious food and security. All member states should look to exchange the industrial agro-export food system for one that is based on food sovereignty, one that returns the land to its social function as producer of food and sustainer of life, one that puts local production of food at the centre, and gives priority to the local markets and processing.

We recognise the need for trade policies and laws that assure safe and healthy foods and beverages on our shop shelves and onto our dining tables. Multi-sectoral collaboration in Samoa in realizing the development and adoption of health policies and laws, such as the Tobacco Control Act & Regulations as well as the Food Bill and the Health Promotion Foundation Bill is the best approach to ensure cohesion and inclusion. In this connection I wish to take this opportunity to urge SIDS to work together in reducing trade in unhealthy products which are risk factors to NCDs. In this vein, we also call on our developed countries to encourage production of healthy foods and drinks for trade.

Sustainable development, improved health outcomes, economic growth are concepts that we all aspire towards and we firmly believe that the way to achieve this is through committed partnerships both new and existing, between and among all stakeholders.

I now officially open this side event.