



OPENING ADDRESS AT THE RENEWABLE ENERGY FORUM BY THE HON PRIME MINISTER
TUILAEPA LUPESOLIAI SAILELE MALIELEGAOI – TOO A SALAMASINA HALL 30TH AUGUST

Secretary General of the Conference

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all here to our capital Apia. I am aware that many of you have travelled a long way to be here; some may have considered this an island adventure particularly if this is your first time in our part of the world that we share. It is my hope that you will have some time to enjoy our beautiful islands and feel the pulsating rhythm of our Pacific way of life and that this would entice you to come back. But your presence here today is testimony that we share a common belief, a belief that, we have in our hands effective solutions to our energy challenges and the technology that can transform the path to sustainable development.

Our energy needs have grown with every step in our development pathways. For the most part, this means an increased reliance on expensive imported fossil fuels, which puts a serious drain on limited national financial resources and further contribute to the already dire state of the climate system. Furthermore, given our geographical dispositions, the transportation of fuel is not only adding to its already high costs, but is also adversely affecting energy security and posing risks to fragile ecosystems.

I am heartened by the fact that there is a lot of potential for changing the energy paradigm and sustainable development in SIDS and we are convinced of the key role that renewable energy plays in this context. SIDS are rich in renewable energy resources and they have the political will to harness them in a sustainable manner. Most of the small islands developing states have already adopted ambitious strategies and targets, because they believe

that their energy demands indeed can be satisfied mainly or entirely from indigenous and renewable sources.

The focus on renewable energy transcends the imperative of meeting our energy needs and ensuring the security of supply. We live in an interconnected world and problems in one part of the world inevitably affect us all. Mounting trends of climate change pose existential risks for Samoa and other low-lying islands. The recent IPCC report expressed very clearly the need for the world to act quickly and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to avert the catastrophic effects of climate change. IPCC also stated that increasing the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix by 2050 is one of the key mobilizing factors to reduce emissions.

I am happy to announce that in Samoa, we are making progress in advancing this agenda. Renewable energy is at the heart of Samoa's strategy for development. Together with our development partners, we are implementing projects to help us meet the target of using 20% renewable energy sources by 2030. Only yesterday, we had launched the wind farm project, developed with support from the United Arab Emiratea-Pacific Partnership Fund, which will meet two percent of the annual electricity demand on the island of Upolu where 75 percent of our population reside. The Conference site displays the largest solar array in the Pacific and is supported by the Government of NZ. The Asian Development Bank continues to invest in our hydro schemes. The private sector with the support of our Research institute continue to look at options of appropriate biofuels.

Like many other SIDS, we want to do more and do it faster particularly as we begin to feel the encroaching impacts of climate change. That is why we wanted to have a day dedicated to renewable energy for all of us to step back and see what will take for renewables to make greater inroads in our energy balance. Clearly, each SIDS is unique in terms of potential and feasible implementation strategies.

But we know that we share a number of challenges that we are more likely to overcome if we work together. One such barrier is the lack of technical and policy-related know how within SIDS. For decades, our engineers and technicians were trained to manage fossil fuel-based

energy systems but we now need new skill sets that will enable us to transition to a renewables-based system. Similar limitations are found at the government level where there is a need for accurate, objective information and facts on renewable energy for informed decision making. As well, renewable energy development requires affordable credit financing and most SIDS do not have the necessary resources to meet the relatively high up-front costs of renewable energy projects. Additionally, attracting financing for key infrastructure projects is even more challenging because of our small size and remoteness. Importantly, to transition to a sustainable energy system cannot be done through a piece-meal approach. Maximizing the use of indigenous, clean and plentiful renewable energy requires a structured, holistic approach that takes into account medium and long-term requirements and impacts, and ensures that the requisite institutional and human capacity is in place.

These challenges are significant, but not **insurmountable**. The Renewable Energy Forum presents the opportunity to seek solutions to many of these issues. It is a unique occasion where SIDS from all over the world, together with the development partners can have a frank and pragmatic discussion on how we can tip the scales in favour of renewable energy. I am confident that there is in this room, a wealth of knowledge and good will to share experiences, ideas and innovative solutions that can accelerate the uptake of cost-effective renewable energy technologies in SIDS. Each of us holds a piece of the puzzle to securing a prosperous and sustainable future. It is my hope that today's discussions will help us focus on implementation of concrete solutions and on the partnerships vital to make these solutions come to life.

The outcome of the Forum will provide an invaluable input to the Sustainable Energy Partnership Dialogue and should provide a means of implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, the outcomes of the Conference. More importantly, it will send a powerful message to the upcoming Climate Summit that renewable energy holds the key to stabilizing the climate system and that we are ready to lead the way in the transition to a sustainable future; and why is this so? - because for many SIDS, this is not only a matter of development and prosperity, but also survival.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the lead organisers of this Forum, New Zealand, IRENA and the UN. I wish to also thank the European Union for facilitating Samoa's hosting of the pre conference events. I look forward to further discussions of the outcomes of this forum at the Sustainable Partnerships dialogue as well as the plenary and I wish you success in your deliberations.