



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER OF SAMOA, FOR THE  
OPENING OF THE SIDS 2014 PRE-CONFERENCE T.A.L.A.V.O.U. FORUM, TUILAEPA  
LUPESOLIAI SAILELE MALIELEGAOI WEDNESDAY 27th AUGUST 2014, TUI ATUA  
TUPUA TAMASESE EFI CONVENTION CENTRE, SOGI**

Reverend Siasia Salesulu

Secretary General of the Conference Mr Wu Hongbo

Excellencies & Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have much pleasure in addressing the Opening Ceremony for the very first SIDS event leading up to the SIDS Conference in the coming week. I am encouraged and heartened by the enthusiastic and hopeful participation of our youth and young delegates – welcome to Samoa and thank you for the commitment to be part of this exciting and historical event in Samoa and the Pacific.

I am happy to announce that this Forum is aptly titled "SIDS Pre-Conference T.A.L.A.V.O.U. Forum" because Talavou in our language means young and youthful. The acronym TALAVOU stands for a message of hope which when expanded reads: **T**owards **A** Legacy of **A**chievement, **V**ersatility, **O**pportunity through Partnership and **U**nity,

The SIDS Pre-Conference T.A.L.A.V.O.U. Forum is one of a series of Pre-Conference forums organized as part of the prelude for the Third International

Conference of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) scheduled for the 1st-4th September. As the host of the SIDS Conference, Samoa attaches considerable importance to Youth issues given that about 40% of its population are youth.

To date, many of our young people in SIDS are faced with similar challenges ranging from a lack of meaningful employment, declining quality of education and the lack of opportunities to foster and promote inclusive development. Recognising these common challenges, and the importance of finding shared solutions have spurred leaders around the world to appreciate the importance of engaging young people in development by sharing their experiences of versatility, showcasing their talents, and facilitating support for the realisation of their potential as young people and as future leaders of society.

Needless to say, the world in which our young people exist today differs significantly from that which our generations grew up in. The trends of globalization and the escalation of information and communication technology (ICT) among other developments, continue to impact on the daily lives of young people today. These factors have shaped and influenced the world of our young people, how they live and more importantly their views and expectations of the world.

The express circulation of information through ICT means that access to information is easier and this has clearly resulted in a more informed young population with rising expectations to which appropriate response interventions are needed. The lack of meaningful employment remains the most significant issue for young people today. The Pacific State of Youth Report 2011 verifies this situation for the Pacific, and no doubt this is also the same

trend across SIDS. The Pacific Youth Strategy estimates a loss of output due to unemployment at US2 billion by 2015.

Violence and mental health issues are also on the rise and these require significant investment in order to address the associated developmental challenges that Governments have to deal with in the future.

Leaders the world over, have come to accept the fact it is important to consider the benefits of inclusive development and explore all opportunities for the meaningful engagement of youth in development. This could be successfully done through strategic partnerships with young people. In this regard the T.A.L.A.V.O.U Youth Forum seeks to harness and nurture opportunities and partnerships, where support for young people in SIDS could be exploited as part of the SIDS Sustainable Development Agenda. Critical to this vision is the need to identify and formulate investment through partnerships for young people in SIDS.

As well, the T.A.L.A.V.O.U Forum, provides a platform where young people can be part of discussions at the highest level through the identification of practical and effective ways to engage with the themes of the Conference. These include defining pathways through education, training and learning to help create and generate employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. As well the Forum will provide space to reflect on what has worked well for young people in terms of partnerships with governments, the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders and building on the successes to upscale such partnerships.

There is every likelihood that many of you present here today have been part of the SIDS process from the start and that we stand to learn from you on the principles of tenacity, perseverance and commitment. I for one, will support

the intention of youth to present the outcomes of this Forum to the SIDS Conference for the purpose of ensuring that the interests of our young people, are indeed reflected in the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway and subsequently implemented.

In closing, I wish to acknowledge the support of our regional and international partners, our partners in the private sector, all of whom have contributed towards making this SIDS Pre-Conference T.A.L.A.V.O.U Forum a reality. In particular I acknowledge the support of the European Union to my Government which has facilitated Samoa's hosting of the pre conference events. I wish all of you successful and meaningful discussions during the Forum and that your dreams for the future you want will soon become a reality.