



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Achieving Sustainable Development in the Pacific

**Monday 25 July, Apia, Samoa** – The Prime Minister of Samoa, Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, in opening the Joint Ministerial Meeting on Thursday 21 July at the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum, issued a challenge to the Pacific Island Governments to “be aware of our responsibilities to provide for our people’s needs within the confines of our meager resources;...and to strike a delicate balance between environment conservation and sustainable economic growth and development, in order to meet our obligations for the Pacific’s current and future generations.”

The meeting provided an opportunity for the ministers to be informed on the objectives of and preparations for Rio+20, jointly consider issues that are relevant to the Pacific and generated the Pacific’s inputs in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20 (UNCSD) in June 2012. Participants discussed creating a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, the need for a blue economy addressing oceans and related issues, the institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD), and emerging issues and partnerships.

The delegates recognized that there was much work to be done in the lead-up to UNCSD and little time to do it. They identified the value and benefits in engaging in the process and the opportunities that it represents, particularly in regard to the green economy.

The need to recognize the importance of “*blue economy*” in the green economy theme, was stressed to highlight the uniqueness of the region based on the Pacific’s oceanic character. Cook Islands provided an insight into the Government efforts towards greening the economy through the establishment of a large marine park for conservation using half of their 2.2 million square kilometers of EEZ. According to the Prime Minister of Cook Islands, Honourable Henry Puna; “This is a significant proportion of our sea and ocean. But we feel that this is an action that is necessary....our seas are our resources to utilize to our advantage. But we need to do so balancing what we take and what we leave behind so that we will always have this resource for generations to come.”

Solidarity and unity between the Pacific Island Countries in voicing Pacific issues and needs to the regional and global arenas was reiterated throughout the day. New Caledonia’s introduction of “The One Tree, One Life, One Day” project was strongly supported by the Ministers to be a regional initiative, as an example of unity within the



Pacific on environment. The project aims to trigger change and identify areas for the achievement of sustainable development.

In the Pacific, climate financing and access to financial support are crucial in order to ensure investment by the Governments and stakeholders into the green economy approach. Strict donor conditions and reporting processes and limited national capacities were considered to be factors hindering the islands from applying for funds, thus the need for more support and less stringent procedures from the donors.

As noted by most of the delegates, the green economy approach is not a “one size fits all” approach and each island nation have to decide on the most suitable approach for sustainable development. The underlying message was that development must not be undertaken at any cost to the islands. “We should focus on maximizing social and economic development without sacrificing our environment,” said the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Finance for Nauru, Honourable Dr Kieren Keke.

According to Taholo Kami of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), “Green economy is not an option, it is imperative for our survival.” The delegates agreed that the Pacific should take note of the progresses from the past; successes, gaps and challenges that should be addressed and implement practical ways for achieving sustainable development and eradicating poverty in the region. As the Minister of Finance for Samoa, Honourable Faumuina Tiatia Liuga stated, “It is time to walk the talk.”

Mr Kosi Latu, Acting Director of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) noted the special request by the Pacific Small Islands Developing States (PSIDS) for technical support during the continued negotiations leading up to Rio+20 and will play its role in coordinating this through the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific Sustainable Development and Marine Sector Working Groups. SPREP will also assist Samoa’s Minister for Natural Resources and Environment as Chair of the Pacific Preparatory Meeting when he takes the Pacific’s views to the Asia Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting and the Small Islands Developing States Inter-regional Meeting later this year.

Over 70 participants including Government representatives, UN bodies, regional organisations, non government and inter government organisations attended the Rio+20 Pacific meeting which preceded with a two day Open Forum and concluded with the Joint Ministerial meeting on Friday.

The meeting concluded with the drafting of an Outcome Document that will assist in facilitating national, sub-regional and regional preparations for and engagement in the Rio+20 process. According to the Head of the UNESCAP Pacific Office, Iosefa Maiava,

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the final document “will be a call to the international community to take the Pacific’s issues seriously in achieving sustainable development through green/blue economy.”

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*The Rio+20 Pacific Preparatory Meeting was jointly organized by the Government of Samoa with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the United Nations System (UN).*

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