



**STATEMENT BY THE HON PRIME MINISTER TUILAEPA SAILELE MALIELEGAOI AT
THE ESCAP SPECIAL SIDE EVENT**

Madam Facilitator,
Distinguished Members of the Panel
Ladies and gentlemen

I am happy to add to the discourse in charting the way forward for Asia Pacific LDCs. The Dhaka Outcomes Document provides part of the regional inputs into the global review of the Brussels Program of Action, the focus of discussions at this Fourth LDC conference. The Brussels Program of Action, as we are all aware remains an unfinished agenda for the Asia-Pacific least developed countries. On this basis, I would like to reflect on issues that merit targeted support beyond 2011 in the light of country experiences of Samoa.

Accelerated achievement of Millennium Development Goals.

Additional support measures are needed to ensure the accelerated achievement of the MDGs. Overall Samoa is on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015. However it is making slow progress in the achievement of a number of targets under each of the relevant Goals

There is an increasing proportion of the population living below basic needs poverty line despite modest economic growth (from 15% in 1997 to 27% in 2008). The FY 2008/09 registered the lowest growth rate as a result of the combined impacts of the food, fuel and financial crises as well as the 2009 tsunami.

Women's participation in parliament is decreasing as of our recent elections this year.

There is low immunization coverage of children under five particularly for measles.

Samoa following the submission of its 2010 MDG Report has already embarked on a program for the accelerated achievement of the MDGs. With the support of the UN family and multilateral financial institutions, we are focused on a comprehensive review of our policy framework in the following sectors; agriculture, trade, tourism and finance to determine the best possible options to address the needs of our population that are living in conditions of hardship as well as capture opportunities to increase productive capacity.

Substantial new investments are being made into the agriculture and tourism sectors as potential areas to generate livelihood opportunities and can provide a cushion for soaring food prices through import substitution and enhanced food security.

Achieving the target for women's participation in parliament is an issue that needs active promotion now and outcomes to be realistically expected beyond 2015.

Trade:

Additional support measures are needed to create an enabling environment for the effective use of trade benefits through the completion of the Diagnostic Trade Integration Strategy for Samoa in 2010. This provides a pathway for mainstreaming trade into the national development agenda. Furthermore, efforts now concentrate on the strengthening of links between aid for trade and the implementation of trade facilitation measures with priority actions outlined in the Action Matrix of the Diagnostics strategy. We are indeed appreciative of the opportunities in this direction made available through the Integrated Framework and Enhanced Integrated framework for LDCs.

Similarly efforts must utilize the opportunities generated by the technological revolution in ICT which has brought in new dimensions of knowledge in development. Samoa as a result is committed to investing in enhanced broadband connectivity and the roll out of a national Schoolnet program.

Enhanced aid effectiveness

ODA plays a key role in supporting economic development and social progress of LDCs to build socioeconomic infrastructure in particular, investments in basic needs utilities such as water, sanitation, energy, health and education. As well ODA resources can improve productive capacities, ensure food security and reduce poverty. It is important therefore that the quality of aid is improved so as to increase its development impact through the application of the fundamental principles of aid effectiveness namely; Ownership, harmonization, alignment, management for results, and mutual accountability.

Samoa has undertaken the Paris Declaration Evaluation and Monitoring Survey to assess aid effectiveness. Relatedly, it is on track to achieve all targets and outcomes of its public finance management reforms. It has achieved strengthened partnerships with its development partners and is making gradual progress to achieve the key objectives of its Aid Policy to receive funds through budget support and integrating capacity development as part of all development cooperation. Every effort is made to ensure adherence to its Debt Management strategy and maintaining a satisfactory Debt to GDP ratio even during crises.

Climate change/disaster risk reduction

It is important that climate change and disaster risk reduction are mainstreamed in national plans, strategies and budgetary processes.

Aid should be left flexible enough to leave fiscal space to offset impacts of external shocks; therefore **the** need to establish a crisis mitigation and resilience helping fund to enable the weathering of shocks and increase resilience must be made a priority. The multilateral financial institutions have provided such grant assistance for Samoa through the Pacific Program for Climate Resilience. As well donors are urged to ensure the early release of climate change financing pledged at the Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen and Cancun and the processes for accessing such resources to be simplified.

Effective policies in light of emerging challenges.

Even in times of crisis and natural disasters Samoa strives to maintain macroeconomic stability. Other policy measures already in train include fiscal and tax reforms, improved budgetary processes, public finance management reforms and enhanced transparency.

Social protection measures

There is renewed focus on **strengthening social protection measures** that also include livelihoods promotion particularly for vulnerable groups. Examples of such measures include financial inclusion programs spearheaded by the Central Bank and the private sector, and a review of sociocultural practices through government led initiatives in order to reduce the burden of meeting cultural obligations.

Furthermore, the Government continues to place education and health as highest priorities accompanied by further investments in economic infrastructure. A school fee scheme enabling free education at primary level is in its second year of operations. The Expanded Immunization program has been reviewed and additional resources dedicated to expand coverage and improve on delivery and management of the program. There is guaranteed income security through a pension scheme for the elderly.

Infrastructural requirements

Closing infrastructure gaps is a necessary condition for a balanced and inclusive growth in LDCs. Resource requirements are significant, hence appropriate financial mechanisms are needed. In this regard, Samoa has developed and finalized its Infrastructure sector plan with prioritized investments to the value of US\$400 million. Funding for 50% of the investments has been secured. It has also considered appropriate financing mechanisms with the support of its development partners as well as identifies financing arrangements that can be met by good-performing state owned enterprises. Despite budgetary constraints Samoa has made commitments to maintenance and operations. Additionally, it has begun a program of climate proofing existing infrastructure making good use of the influx of climate change financing. Samoa is putting in place capacity development programs for the lead ministry of the sector to ensure that it could make priority projections from time to time based on market demand for the use of infrastructure including the development of an asset management policy.

Green development

With the support of our development partners, efforts are concentrated on expanding green industries through investments in energy efficient technologies and the use of research to determine viable renewable energy options for Samoa. Japans' Pacific Environment Community Facility is financing a solar power project

to feed into the grid for Samoa. There is every intent to achieve a carbon neutral target by 2020 – this is supported by an expansive tree planting scheme with a goal of 1 million trees to be planted as well as a gasification program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There will be expansion of its urban sewerage system for waste water treatment to cover the central business district as well as improved solid waste infrastructure to support clean water.

The fourth program of action must make provisions to support transition arrangements for countries graduating out of LDC status

The Istanbul Program of Action should give more emphasis to support for countries that are graduating out of LDC status if its goal for the next decade is to graduate 50% of the countries out of LDC status.

The 3 countries proposed for graduation over the next few years are all small islands states of the Pacific that face additional challenges of their vulnerabilities. Donors are encouraged to address the needs of these countries through strengthened partnerships and enhanced commitments.

Thank you.