

HONIARA COMMUNIQUÉ ON THE PACIFIC NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASE CRISIS

9th Meeting of Ministers of Health for the Pacific Island Countries

30 June 2011

Ministers of Health for the Pacific island countries are gravely concerned that the rapid increase in the incidence and prevalence of noncommunicable disease (NCD) in the Pacific island countries and areas over the past decade is responsible for up to 75% of all deaths and a similar percentage of long-term illness and disability, and declared at their 9th Meeting in Honiara, Solomon Islands, on 28–30 June 2011 that the Pacific island countries and areas are in an NCD crisis requiring urgent attention.

Pacific island countries and areas are in crisis due to an epidemic of noncommunicable disease (NCD) such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes. The burden of NCD in the region is already extremely high, causing up to 75% of deaths and much long-term illness and disability. Our prevalence of NCD risk factors are among the highest in the world—up to three of every four adults are obese and up to four of every five adults smoke—meaning that without real action things will only get worse.

The Pacific NCD crisis is not just a concern for the health of our people. It drains limited national budgets, reduces worker productivity, separates families, and robs communities of leadership and wisdom, as adults suffer long-term illness and die early. While adult NCD rates continue to rise, the next generation—more overweight and less active than any other Pacific generation in history—is the tsunami of the future. High childhood obesity rates in the Pacific, if left unchecked, suggest that a true health catastrophe is just a generation away.

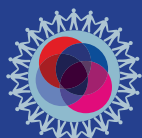
There is hope, however. There has been some early progress in the fight against NCD, and effective actions are available across a spectrum ranging from prevention to early detection and treatment. But what is missing is a sense of urgency in the region, and the recognition among Pacific island countries and areas that a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach is needed to tackle this health and development crisis.

There is a great opportunity this year with the United Nations General Assembly holding a High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases from

19–20 September 2011 in New York. In the lead-up to this meeting, there have already been a number of key regional and global meetings that have considered the NCD crisis. The resulting Nadi Statement and Moscow Declaration made important recommendations on ways forward and this communiqué builds on those important initiatives. We have an opportunity to address this crisis if we act now.

Recognizing the fundamental importance of the upcoming United Nations High-level Meeting in tackling this crisis at the global level, and the need for the outcomes of this meeting to reflect Pacific realities, we call on the outcome document of the High-level Meeting to include the following:

- recognize NCD as a crisis in the Pacific to be addressed with the utmost urgency;
- address the need for better information and guidance on cost-effective interventions in resource-limited settings;
- initiate and sustain effective action across the life-course;



PREVENT NCD
Promote Health and Development



- ensure sustainable resourcing for NCD prevention, treatment and control;
- adopt a small number of global and publicly reported targets for NCD that can be adapted to national context; and
- initiate multisectoral action at the international level to complement national level action, and make an explicit expectation that international organizations will work together in a coordinated way to tackle NCD.

And in support of these recommendations, consistent with the Pacific Plan endorsed by the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum at their October 2005 meeting and in support of our goal of Healthy Islands, we, the Ministers of Health for the Pacific island countries and areas, declare our commitment to the following critical actions:

1. provide strong and sustained leadership and support for NCD prevention and control;
2. lead the advocacy for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response and a coordinating mechanism to mainstream the response to NCD;
3. ensure implementation of evidence-based initiatives to reduce the common modifiable NCD risk factors across the life-course, and address the social determinants of health, including leveraging the power of local government and civil society, with a focus on interventions across the life-course;
4. strengthen health systems, based on primary health care, to ensure that effective NCD prevention and control is funded and part of a coherent, balanced, realistic and comprehensive programme of health services as reflected in a costed national health plan;
5. ensure monitoring and accountability systems are in place, along with a small number of quantified and timed national targets, with progress to be reported publicly; and
6. fully implement the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control as a critical step in reducing the impact of tobacco use on the prevalence of NCD.

Recognizing that many of the factors underlying this pandemic are outside the control of the health sector, and that as a result a whole-of-government, whole-of-society and whole-of-region response is needed, we also call on the Pacific Forum Leaders to give the highest priority to NCD, and to lead and champion tackling the crisis in the Pacific by:

1. declaring NCD as a health and development crisis;
2. driving a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response involving all sectors;
3. integrating NCD prevention and control into national development agendas;
4. mobilizing additional resources locally and internationally to support the fight against NCD;
5. setting national targets for NCD and regularly and publicly reporting results;
6. calling on all Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies and regional health agencies to play an active part in a coordinated regional response to the crisis, and to report back every two years to Pacific Islands Forum Leaders on actions and progress;
7. considering setting an ambitious regional tobacco elimination target, inspired by New Zealand's smoke-free by 2025 goal; and
8. championing the cause of prevention and control of this NCD epidemic.

