PACIFIC ICT OFFICIALS MEETING

Faónelua Conference Centre

Nukualofa, Kingdom of Tonga

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Welcome Remarks

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ITU Regional Office for Asia & the Pacific

* Your Royal Highness Crown Prince Tupoutoá Ulukalala

*Honorable Mr. Siaosi Sovaleni, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister

 Of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management,

 Environment, Climate Change and Communications

* Mr. Rajesh Chandra, Vice Chancellor, University of the South Pacific

* Ms. Areewan Haorangsi, Secretary General, APT

*Mr. Ivan Fong, President, PITA

*Rev. Dr. Ahio, President & Royal Chaplin, Free Wesleyan Church of

Tonga

Honorable Ministers and Officials of the Member Countries of the Pacific

Distinguished Excellencies

Fellow Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Malo e' Lelei and a Very Good Morning to you all !!!

It is indeed a pleasure and honour to be here and on behalf of the ITU, I would like to join Professor Prasad in welcoming you all to the 2015 Pacific ICT Ministers Meeting, organized jointly by the University of the South Pacific as Chair of the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) Working Group for ICT, and the ITU and in partnership and support from the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT).

First of all, let me express my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Tonga, specifically and in particular, His Excellency the Honorable Siaosi Sovaleni, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister for Communications and his Ministerial team (Paula Mau & the support staff) for the kind hospitality graciously extended to us since our arrival here this past week. I must say, we have been treated like royalty, and you have been exceptional hosts, and I must thank you for the hard work that you have put in to ensure that we were well looked after and made very comfortable.

I would like to also thank the Department of Communications of the Government of Australia, Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT), Tonga Communications Corporation, PITA, Tonga Cable Limited, UNPOG, NIA Korea, ISOC and ICANN for their invaluable support of this Meeting.

Your Royal Highness
Distinguished Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Pacific is experiencing extraordinary change in regards to the development of ICT Infrastructure rollout and services. This transformation which started about a decade ago has seen markets being deregulated and competition introduced in the island economies of the Pacific

In the last seven years, we have seen the reformation of the communication sectors with the introduction of appropriate legislation, regulatory frameworks, alignment of institutional governance, and the introduction of competition in a number of member states.

In addition the implementation of policies and plans to address the strategic development of ICT broadband infrastructures and services,

and these are contributing to the recent transformation of the communication landscape in the small island developing states of the Pacific which is becoming significantly noticeable.

In the last seven years submarine cable networks were implemented in seven island states. More recently in this same period we have seen a number of island states and private entities introduce and implement high speed, high capacity, satellite connectivity links. In the coming few years' service delivery in this area will become even more competitive with the offering of even more affordable options for connectivity.

Your Royal Highness

Distinguished Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

The landscape is surely changing and where we find that ICT demand is growing unpresedently. Seven years ago, the most common entry level broadband speed in the developing world was 256kbps, in 2013 this increased to 1Mbps, and today it is not even enough to meet our insatiable appetite for more data. We heard from Google this week that the minimum access speed should be 10Mbps. The Australian NBN is targeting to offer 25Mbps as nominal access speeds to its users.

Broadband is changing our world tremendously. For the Pacific Mobile Broadband is driving ICT growth, and it is enhancing the enabling environment at national levels where it is now enabling the reach to the unreached and connect the unconnected and bank the unbanked.

Two countries that were rated the most dynamic in the ITU Measuring the Information Society report of 2014, were Thailand and Fiji who improved by 10 and 12 points respectively in their ranking. The huge step change was attributed to the implementation of 3G Mobile in both countries and resultant figures showed the huge uptake in mobile broadband subscriptions.

The use of ICT is being harnessed to promote and enhance daily normal life. To contribute to the improvement of education, health, agriculture, fisheries, government services and the creation of employment, in particular youth employment, and also to address marginalization and disparity within our societies, and for economic sustainability in the small island developing states.

To ensure we have a common focus for our sustainable development goals, the commitment by stakeholders to support these efforts are key and paramount in meeting targets that are set.

Your Royal Highness

Distinguished Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

The deliberations over the last couple of days has focused on some key and very important issues.

With the increased access to the internet come the related dangers of cyber-abuse and crime. It is imperative that the requirements to have mechanisms in place that will ensure the safety and security of our citizens on-line and especially the protection our children.

The need to have the proper legislation and policies to address cyber security issues is important and needs to be addressed at national and regional levels.

Addressing the establishment of national and regional ICT platforms to facilitate information exchange and to collaboratively and cooperatively build on the newly established connectivity platforms that are now being shared.

Your Royal Highness

Distinguished Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Pacific is a region that is so prone to natural disasters. We cannot overemphasize the need to have systems and plans in place to mitigate the impacts of cyclones, floods, earthquakes and tsunamis.

Disaster Recovery Management and awareness is key and is necessary as well.

Small island developing states face some very real and severe developmental challenges to sustainable growth and development that has contributed to the seemingly evident gaps within the differing economies.

But there is opportunity to harness the benefits of new technology through the utilization of new applications addressing human and technical capacity challenges.

In closing, I would like to re-emphasise that *"It is therefore anticipated that this meeting will take the opportunity in the review of the current Framework for Action on ICT for Development in the Pacific, to identify and endorse the way forward as we continue to incubate ideas for the advancement of the proliferation of ICT in the region."* So that you may effectively influence what the next seven years' ICT landscape is going to look like.

Malo áu Pito, and Thank You Very Much !!!