



Apia Communiqué on Healthy Islands, NCDs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Tenth Pacific Health Ministers Meeting
4 July 2013

Pacific island countries ministers of health reaffirmed their support for the vision of Healthy Islands¹ (Yanuca Island Declaration) adopted in 1995 as the unifying statement for health development in the region. Ministers supported the need to refocus the vision from healthy settings to people-centred actions. There was agreement on the need to take effective actions at the national level to give effect to the Healthy Islands vision.

The noncommunicable disease (NCD) crisis in the Pacific was recognized in the Honiara Communiqué from the Ninth Meeting of Ministers of Health for the Pacific Island Countries in June 2011 and declared shortly thereafter by the Pacific Islands Forum leaders.

Ministers expressed continuing concern about the negative impact of NCDs on individuals, their families, communities and nations. They noted the progress in some Pacific island countries. Most countries have advanced implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and have used increased tobacco taxes to increase funding for health promotion and disease prevention, among other priorities.

Ministers agreed on the importance of effective multisectoral actions to prevent and control NCDs and adopted the goal: Healthy Islands free from avoidable NCDs. The Healthy Islands vision provides an appropriate vehicle for advancing multisectoral actions at the national level.

Lessons learnt in dealing with NCDs suggest that we should focus on a small number of prioritized, evidence-based, culturally appropriate, and cost-effective interventions. Greater attention is required to improve information systems to improve reporting and data on health trends and causes of death. This development would enable countries and areas to monitor progress towards the global mortality reduction goals and targets, as part of a strengthened health accountability system.

Ministers noted the importance and opportunity provided by the release of the *Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*². The goals in the report cover a wide range of issues, and include targets focusing on an ongoing commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), specifically reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health (RMNCH), HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria and new targets on NCDs, neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), and strengthened access to infrastructure such as

¹The Healthy Islands vision aspires to a place where (1) children are nurtured in body and mind (2) environments invite learning and leisure (3) people work and age with dignity (4) ecological balance is a source of pride (5) the oceans that sustain us are protected.

² Full report name: *A new global partnership: Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development. The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*

transportation and communication technology. Ministers also noted the importance of linking MDGs 4, 5 and 6 with the new NCD target.

Ministers noted with concern the lack of recognition of NCDs and mental health as separate goals and urged that they be given due recognition in their own right as opposed to being added to a list of diseases as targets. Ministers agreed on the need to include NCDs and mental health as specific goals in the post-2015 development agenda.

Pacific island health ministers recognize a shift in the Healthy Islands vision from healthy settings to healthy people and underscore the need to tackle NCDs to achieve the Healthy Islands vision. In light of ongoing consultations to develop the post-2015 development agenda, the ministers affirm the need for the following:

- While sustaining efforts and gains to achieve the MDGs — particularly MDGs 4, 5 and 6 — accelerated action is needed by building on successes and focusing on scaling up interventions in RMNCH, especially for vulnerable people.
- Working with appropriate ministries (e.g., foreign affairs), ensure the health goal and targets, in particular the NTD, RMNCH and MDG-6, are retained in the post-2015 development agenda. Additional goals related to NCDs and mental health are given proper emphasis in the post-2015 development agenda for it to have relevance in the Pacific context.
- Strengthened coordination of health and development work in the Pacific to ensure the best use of funds and expertise. This includes strengthening the links between Pacific Ministers of Health and the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders with the support from WHO/SPC in collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat as needed.

Related specifically to NCDs:

- The growing high-level political commitment to tackle the root causes of NCDs must be translated into multisectoral action, capacity-building and investment in NCD prevention and control at the country level.
- Adoption of the Tobacco-Free Pacific Goal by 2025 with an adult tobacco use prevalence of less than 5% in each country.
- Development of targets for recommended levels of fat, sugar and salt in food and beverages for the Pacific region. This would enable Pacific countries to institute fiscal and regulatory measures for local and imported processed foods and beverages. The development of legislation to protect children from marketing of products high in salt, fat and sugar is also required.
- A phased implementation of the Package of Essential NCD Interventions (PEN) or other similar interventions focusing on health promotion and primary health care.
- Development of regional and national NCD accountability mechanisms to monitor, review and propose remedial action to ensure progress towards the NCD goals and targets. Accountability mechanisms will build on existing monitoring and surveillance input, including the proposed platform for coordinated support.