

Statement
Minister J. Baklai Temengil
Pacific Regional Sports Forum
4 – 6 November 2019
University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji

Alii, Bula, good morning Honorable Parveen Kumar Bala, Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations & Youth and Sports, Government of Fiji, Honorable Minister Jean Pierre Nirua, Minister of Education and Training, Government of Vanuatu, Professor Pal Ahluwalia, Vice Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific, other honorable guests, colleagues, and friends, welcome to this Pacific Regional Sports Forum.

It is with great honor and pleasure that I am here on behalf of my Government, the Republic of Palau, and also the Chair for the Pacific Regional Sports Taskforce (PRST) to welcome you all to this very important meeting. The right to sport is enshrined in the International Charter on Physical Education and Sport, in the Olympic Charter and reflected in numerous international human rights instruments to which the Pacific countries are signatories.

As leaders and educators of sports in the Pacific, through the Pacific Sports Ministers meetings from 2015 to 2019 as well as the Forum Economic Ministers meetings in 2017, 2018 and 2019, and the Pacific Island Forum leaders meeting this year in August, we are called for to maximize the contribution of sports to sustainable development in the Pacific Islands Countries. The SAMOA Pathway's Article 82 calls to recognize the strong capacity of small island developing states in sport and the use of sport as a vehicle to foster development, social inclusion and peace, strengthen education, promote health and build life skills. Our leaders have recognized the value of sports and we are here today to dialogue on the best way to achieve our common goal in integrating sports in our national and regional policies.

When Sport was tabled for the first time and its potential “sport industry” recognized as a driver of economic growth a call to invest in a regional policy framework on sports development was supported at at the Joint Dialogue between Economic Ministers, Private Sector, and Civil Society Organisations in 2017.

Building on the regional policy framework on sport for development, and again, at the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) 2018 in Palau, the Ministers Endorsed the preliminary findings of the CSOs partnered research on ‘the contribution of sports to the SDGs Roadmap and return on investment for sport in Pacific island countries with preliminary Case studies of economic and social impact of sports in Fiji and Samoa’; Welcomed an expansion of regional efforts for data collection and statistical analyses to include physical education and sport for evidence-based policy making; Endorsed establishing a joint Pacific Sport Physical Education, and Physical Activity Action Plan; and a regional coordination mechanism to implement it through: (i) providing support and technical assistance to Forum Island countries and territories; and (ii) developing integrated systems for data collection, analyses, policy development and implementation partnership with University of the South Pacific (USP), Oceania National Olympic Committee (ONOC), and the governments of Fiji and Samoa;

After, the FEMM Meetings and at the 2018 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) considered the endorsement through the directive of the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) under Civil Society Organisations Dialogue Outcomes and the following actions were echoed to coordinate with partners to set up a PSPAPE Action Plan and to Invite CROP, UN agencies and regional sport partners to participate in regional consultations and establishment of a PSPAPE Action Plan and regional coordination mechanism.

Thus, with our regional government leadership support, and the partnership of Pacific Island Forum, UNESCO, ONOC and other key regional agencies, the inaugural meeting of the Pacific Regional Sports Taskforce (PRST) was held on 16th & 17th April 2019 at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. The Taskforce includes representation from Forum Member Countries (Hon Baklai Temengil, Minister for Sport – Palau; Hon Sili Epi Tuioti – Samoa; Hon Jean Pierre Nirua, Minister for Education and Training – Vanuatu; and Hon Ifereimi Waqainabete, Minister for Health and Medical Services - Fiji), CROP Agencies (USP, PIFS and SPREP), UN Agencies (UNESCO & WHO) and civil society (ONOC). I was appointed Chair of the Taskforce and UNESCO as co-Chair of the Taskforce.

The Pacific Regional Sports Taskforce formation was endorsed at the recent Ministers of Sports meeting in Samoa during the Pacific Games July 2019, and **noted** by Pacific Island Forum

leaders meeting in Tuvalu August 2019. Including membership of the Pacific Regional Sports Taskforce, the adoption of its Terms of Reference, and the appointment of the Chair, and membership.

Given the cross-cutting potential of sport to contribute to national and regional development, the Pacific Sport, Physical Activity and Physical Education (SPAPE) Action has been presented to key government agencies and key regional and international partners to endorse the five priority action areas which includes:

1. Advocacy and Communication: Ensuring commitments of all relevant stakeholders to the regional action plan for sport, physical activity and physical education and relevant national sport policies through targeted advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives.

2. Regional Consultation, Coordination and Action: Coordinating inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration in support of national initiatives and knowledge sharing in maximizing the contribution of sport to the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable development and national development strategies.

3. Policy Development and Capacity Building: Developing evidence-based and inclusive policy and action plans for sport, physical activity and physical education to maximise the contribution of sport to national development strategies and building institutional capacity at all levels to formulate, implement and monitor and evaluate policy for inclusive, equitable development through sport.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation: Ensuring development and implementation of quality, sustainable policies, programmes and initiatives through a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system which is based on the collection of indicators, comprehensive assessment tools, and insightful data analysis.

5. Research and Education: Initiating and promoting relevant research and analysis in the area of sport for sustainable development in order to build a strong evidence base for policy making and implementation of development programmes and interventions

It is evident by our presence here that we all share the same goal and seek to achieve the calling of our leaders as we to believe and support the call in maximizing and including sports in our national development programs. Sports have proven itself as a tool for development of peace, combating None Communicable Diseases, contributing to the well- being of society and we must strengthen sports in achieving the SDG's. Sport can also make significant contribution to outcomes in many sectors including health, education, youth development, culture and heritage, and

economic development. It is a low cost tool to strengthen and develop our programs, and contribute to the regional vision of building stronger and healthier people, and stronger nations and stronger Pacific. This is the forum and we are the experts in this room and I believe that we can lead our countries to the full inclusion of sports in our national development plans, in our schools, homes, communities, and in our regional and international efforts.

It is not very often that we have government leaders of sports, educators, sports experts, UN representatives, CROP agencies, in one room, and I look forward to a fruitful dialogue with you colleagues. Through our collaborative effort, being inclusive, working together with the private sector and building on that relationship in achieving our goals through sports is a key to ensuring that sports, physical activity, and physical education are adequately integrated into sustainable development agenda in the Pacific and embedded in national and regional policy.

Sports have come a long way to get to this level of recognition, and we are very fortunate to be the one to take the lead in this integration process. Given this great opportunity, it is important that we as leaders and experts in our fields positively work together to achieve our common goals so that our children and their children, may live in good health and well-being to thrive, be resilience, and to optimize positive life potential for themselves, their families, their communities and throughout the Pacific.

I trust that at the end of the week, we will accomplish our goal in this forum and I look forward to an informative and successful dialogue with you all. Again, welcome and I thank you for this opportunity to be here today.