

**Talking Points for the Honorable Jean Pierre Nirua, Minister of Education and Training,  
Republic of Vanuatu**

Pacific Regional Sports Forum

4<sup>th</sup> November 2019,

The University of the South Pacific

Suva, Fiji

Opening keynote session: “The Contribution of Sport, Physical Activity and Physical Education to National and Regional Development in the Pacific”

**Statement by Minister Jean Pierre Nirua:**

Professor Pal Ahluwalia

Honorable Parveen Kumar Bala

Honorable Minister Baklai Temengil, [session chair]

Representatives from Governments of the Pacific region

Officials, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor to address you in my capacity as Minister for Education and Training of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Speaking today at the Pacific Regional Sports Forum is a wonderful opportunity to share with you the progress we have made in harnessing sport, physical activity and physical education to contribute to national and regional development.

I seize this opportunity to thank the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Pal Ahluwalia, for hosting this important forum and for enabling the conversation on sports for development to continue.

I extend also a warm greeting to our partners and friends of sport – including my fellow Ministers and senior officials – ONOC partners and all the colleagues from civil society who are engaged in sports action.

It is my pleasure to be talking on sports here at USP given that I completed my studies here and at the age of 21 started playing soccer and went on to represent USP, for Suva, Nasinu, and even selected in the Fiji national team – but could not play because I was not a citizen of Fiji!

I participated in volleyball in the first Pacific Games hosted here in Fiji in 1979, and at school I learned my fundamental movement skills in PE classes under the French colonial system and it enabled me to play and partake in athletics, team sports like football, volleyball and handball and represent my country.

This is my wish for the children of Vanuatu and our brothers and sisters in the Pacific and this is a message that we need to embrace to further develop PE curriculum, to train PE teacher to ensure that quality physical education reaches our children and youth – right to the outer islands!

Vanuatu strongly believes in the power of sport, physical activity and physical education in contributing to national development. We stood alongside our fellow Pacific neighbors, ministers and senior officials from Fiji, Palau, Samoa and Tuvalu, at the MINEPS VI meeting in Russia in 2017.

The key achievement of the MINEPS VI meeting was the successful adoption of the Kazan Action Plan – a global roadmap and sport policy framework for Governments to adopt and utilise sport for development.

Vanuatu was pleased to host the 5<sup>th</sup> Pacific Sport Ministers Meeting in December 2017 where the Pacific sports ministers endorsed the Kazan Action Plan. It was during the opening of that meeting which I officiated on behalf of Vanuatu Minister of Finance and Economic Management that I urged the Ministers of Sport and officials and members of Regional and National Olympic Committees to treat sports in a holistic manner, as Sports is everyone's business'!

The first Pacific Sport and Physical Activity Roundtable was convened in Vanuatu ahead of the 5<sup>th</sup> Pacific Sports Minister' Meeting under the theme of 'Using sport as a tool to achieve national development outcomes' for the first time creating space for dialogue between Ministers, Officials, civil society and sporting stakeholders.

Just a few short months ago, I had the pleasure of attending the Samoa 2019 Pacific Games and witnessing once again the power of sport to connect the people of the Pacific, to celebrate our culture and our sporting excellence. The opening ceremony was a particular showcase of the strength of our youth, and their power to tell the story of the Blue Ocean through their movement, dance and celebration of Samoan culture. Congratulations to the Government of Samoa and the people of Samoa for delivering a phenomenal Pacific Games!

The second Pacific Sport Policy Roundtable was hosted in Samoa ahead of the 2019 Pacific Sport Ministers Meeting and I had the great honour of joining my Sports Minister from the Republic of Vanuatu and It is further reflection of my belief that sport is more than sport and we need to work closely together across Ministries, across sectors and across nations to truly harness the power of sport.

In all of these international and regional dialogues, Vanuatu has been a key stakeholder. And we are firmly invested in the power of sport as a vehicle to drive development, promote peace, harmony and friendship; and foster human empowerment and inclusive participation.

At a national level, Vanuatu has harnessed sport as a tool for educating the young and less young generations.

A Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Development was formally established at the Early Childhood Development Forum in Nadi two fresh weeks ago in Nadi, last October. As a potential member of the PRC4ECD, Vanuatu will ensure that sport is encouraged at very young age, not only as a tool for child physical development; but also as an effective way of stimulating brain and body coordination and build-up of children.

The Council will provide advice on strategic direction, guidance and policy support on early childhood development for the 15 Pacific Island Forum countries. As Minister of Education and Training, I am pleased to take the lead on the government's work to implement the council's vision for a better future for children in the region.

The pillars for a healthy and productive life begins when we are children. The role of sport and physical education as a tool to promote the life skills for a resilient, productive and healthy adulthood is immeasurable.

The outcomes of the Pacific SPAPE Action Plan are intertwined with outcomes for education, childhood development and vocational and tertiary training through the convening power of sport.

I affirm today the Republic of Vanuatu's pledge to work side-by-side with our Pacific partners to further enhance the contribution of sport, physical activity and of course – physical education towards the achievement of the SDGs and life-long health and well-being of our Pacific people.

Through the continuing efforts of friends and partners present today I hope that regional cooperation in the area of sports and physical education will be strengthened in a holistic way to the benefit of all children and youth of the Pacific.

I welcome dialogue over the next three days towards a Pacific SPAPE Action Plan.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share with you Vanuatu's commitment for a regional sport policy mechanism for the healthy, peaceful and inclusive development of the Pacific.

It is a privilege to be able to engage with you all.

Thank you for your kind attention. Thank you tumas. Merci and Vinaka vaka levu.