

FORUM DISABILITY MINISTERS' MEETING

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

3 – 4 October 2012

OUTCOMES DOCUMENT



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT



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2nd FORUM DISABILITY MINISTERS' MEETING

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OUTCOMES DOCUMENT

The 2nd Forum Disability Ministers Meeting (FDMM) was held at the Grand Papua Hotel Conference Centre, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, from 3 – 4 October 2012. The meeting, themed “*Progressing Disability Inclusive Development in the Pacific*,” provided an opportunity for Ministers to:

- (i) consider progress in the implementation of the Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability (PRSD) in Forum Island countries and discuss future steps;
- (ii) discuss the status of signing, ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD);
- (iii) review the partnership between governments and Disabled Person Organisations (DPOs) and reaffirm the focus of the PRSD on the central role of persons with disabilities and their respective organisations, and agree on strategies to strengthen the partnership in promoting disability issues at the regional and national level;
- (iv) discuss emerging issues relating to disability inclusive development in the Pacific;
- (v) share good practices in the region in areas of policies, services and programme initiatives in disability development; and
- (vi) provide information on upcoming international meetings on Disability and consider a Pacific position at these meetings.

2. In attendance were Ministers from Australia, the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and Senior Officials from the Federated States of Micronesia, Tonga, and Vanuatu. Also in attendance were representatives of the Pacific Disability Forum and of national Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs). Development partners from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community/Regional Rights Resource Team (SPC/RRRT) were also in attendance. A list of participants is attached as Annex 1.

Official Opening

3. The opening devotion was conducted by the Reverend Kedeia Kopi.

4. The Deputy Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (the Secretariat), Mr Feleti Teo, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He extended warm thanks to The Right Honourable Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Hon Peter O'Neill, for hosting the event, and further thanked the Minister of Religion, Youth, and Community Development and all local staff in Papua New Guinea for their warm welcome and organisational efforts.

5. He noted that disability is a relatively new issue to be addressed at the regional level in the Pacific, and emphasised the importance of ongoing cooperation on disability issues, including through Ministerial meetings. He commended progress in implementing the PRSD, and thanked the Government of Australia for its strong commitment and substantial financial support for work on disability issues. He noted increasing awareness of disability issues across the region, and enhanced political will to ensure that policies and development plans are disability-inclusive. He also highlighted the opportunities presented by the upcoming review of the Pacific Plan and of the international indicators to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to ensure that disability inclusive development continues to be a priority for the region. In concluding, he highlighted an extract from the Leaders' vision: "the Pacific can, should, and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all – with the emphasis on all – its people can lead free and worthwhile lives". The speech is attached as Annex 2.

6. The Right Honourable Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Hon Peter O'Neill officially opened the 2nd FDMM, welcoming all participants. He noted the meeting's progressive and challenging theme, observing that the emphasis on disability inclusive development highlighted some weaknesses in past approaches. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that all people have equal access to social opportunities. He announced his Government's commitment to ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and its intentions to follow this ratification with the development and implementation of a national strategy for disability inclusive development. He identified several areas in which advances would need to be made, including in increasing access to facilities and services. The speech is attached as Annex 3.

7. Senator Jan McLucas, the Australian Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, delivered the keynote address. Senator McLucas greeted participants, and conveyed Foreign Minister, Senator Bob Carr's, apologies for being unable to attend this meeting, as he has also been at the United Nations General Assembly.

8. She observed that 15 percent of people globally live with disabilities, and that 80 percent of these were living in developing countries, including in the Pacific. She noted that this equated to approximately 1.2 million Pacific Islanders with disability, who should not be ignored in any facet of society. She further noted that the number of people with disability is set to grow as a result of population growth, ageing, lifestyle diseases, road accidents, conflict, malnutrition, and injuries.

9. She stressed that the Australian Government recognises that aid will only be effective and achieve poverty reduction targets if it reaches and benefits persons with disability, who are disproportionately represented amongst the poorest members in society. Last year, ‘enhancing the lives of persons with disabilities’ was highlighted as one of ten development objectives in Australia’s aid policy, “An Effective Aid Program”.

10. She then turned to focus on three factors critical to advancing the rights of persons with disability: (1) that Leaders are in a unique leadership position, and must use it to work with ministerial colleagues in education, health, law, and justice to make sure they are taking an inclusive approaches to their policies; (2) that the voice of persons with disability must inform Leaders’ actions, and that the Disability Inclusive Development Reference Group and Disabled Peoples Organisations have been critical in this regard; and (3) that the CRPD is key, but it is about implementation – not just ratification. She commended those countries that have ratified the CRPD, those that have signed it, and those that have national legislation specific to persons with disability.

11. In closing, the Senator noted the substantial resources that Australia has already committed to support Governments to advance the rights of persons with disability, and announced new investments by the Australian Government in support of implementation of the CRPD in the Pacific from 2012, including: a new investment of up to \$4 million towards ratification and implementation of the CRPD in Samoa; the modification of 940 classrooms under AusAID’s Papua New Guinea school infrastructure program to make them accessible for girls and boys with disability, in accordance with international best practice; up to \$2 million over four years to use sport as a vehicle to improve the quality of life for persons with disability in the Pacific; and \$250,000 to WHO to undertake research into non communicable diseases and disability that will help add to the evidence base on disability inclusive development.

12. The Minister responsible for Religion, Youth, and Community Development in Papua New Guinea, Minister Loujaya Toni, was elected as Chair. The meeting accepted the provisional agenda and working procedures.

13. The Chair extended a special invitation to the Minister of Samoa to speak, recognising that he unfortunately needed to leave the meeting early. The Minister acknowledged the commitment from the Government of Australia to progressing disability inclusive development in Samoa, and affirmed that Samoa was working towards becoming a state party to the CRPD within the next year. The speech is attached as Annex 4.

Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability: Implementation and Progress

14. The Secretariat presented to Ministers a progress report on the implementation of the PRSD, which was endorsed by Leaders in 2010 and initially funded by AusAID in 2011. The presentation focused on significant progress made against the six thematic areas, challenges, and the way forward in implementing the strategy. In particular, the need to improve data collection, develop a sustainable funding strategy, and strengthen the monitoring and evaluation strategy were highlighted.

15. The meeting raised concerns with the difficulties in obtaining and analysing data, and acknowledged the need for further work in this area. The Secretariat clarified that the mid-term review mechanism was built into the regional strategy, and will be completed next year by an independent consultant. Terms of Reference will soon be developed, and will be circulated to Member countries for comment. DPOs will be consulted as part of the review process.

16. DPOs in the Pacific and their regional coordinating body, the Pacific Disability Forum, reaffirmed the focus of the PRSD on the central role of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations. They voiced their hope that Pacific Islands governments would recognise the important role played by DPOs in disability inclusive development in the region and would support through the provision of financial, technical, and other resources to their national DPOs to play this important role.

17. Ministers:

- (a) **welcomed** the significant progress and new partnerships established at the regional and national level to implement the PRSD;
- (b) **called** for increased efforts to assist countries to collect and analyse relevant data to improve understanding of country progress in implementing the PRSD;
- (c) **agreed** to continue their efforts to find concrete and practical ways to support disability inclusive development and to report to Leaders the outcomes of their meeting; and
- (d) **agreed** to recommend for Leaders to recognise that a long-term approach is required to support the rights of persons with disability in the Pacific and acknowledge the good work that has been implemented under the PRSD.

The Pacific Plan

18. The Secretariat presented a paper informing Ministers of opportunities to engage with the Pacific Plan Review, and to endorse an assessment of progress against disability-related priorities set out in the Pacific Plan. The Secretariat emphasised that the Review presents an opportunity to recognise successes with the Pacific Plan, address challenges, and take advantage of future opportunities, and encouraged all Ministers and country contacts to participate in the consultations to be held in their countries in early 2013. Ministers were presented with a proposed assessment of progress on disability priorities under the Pacific Plan as being “on track”.

19. Australia further called for Ministers to use the Pacific Plan Review as an opportunity to foster partnerships with groups across the community, and to include indicators relevant to persons with disabilities into the measurement of Pacific Plan progress.

20. Ministers:

- (a) **noted** that the Pacific Plan will be reviewed in 2013;
- (b) **recognised** that there will be opportunities for Ministers, officials, and DPOs to input to the Review; and
- (c) **endorsed** the assessment of the progress for Leaders and also noted that there will be an opportunity to update the assessment prior to the 2013 PPAC meeting.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

21. The Secretariat presented on the importance of the CRPD and affirmed that ratifying the CRPD assists in combating perceived prejudices, discrimination, and inequalities encountered by persons with disabilities; sends a clear message that disability is a human rights issue; and allows governments and stakeholders to develop strategies for integration and human rights protection for persons with disabilities across political, legal, economic, social, and cultural settings.

22. Several countries noted that they have been moving towards ratification; but some are still working to understand the implications, including through a legislative compliance review and a cost benefit analysis.

23. Ministers:

- (a) **noted** the importance of the CRPD as a developmental tool as well as human rights focussed convention;
- (b) **noted** that the CRPD is the only human rights treaty that deals specifically with the rights of persons with disabilities;
- (c) **urged** Forum Island Leaders to promote and support the ratification of the CRPD; and
- (d) **agreed** that all FICs should develop and implement national disability policies and legislation premised on the CRPD.

From The Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF) to the Incheon Strategy

24. UNESCAP presented a paper explaining two key regional strategies on disability developed in the Asia- Pacific Region: the BMF and the Incheon Strategy. The BMF and its seven priority areas for action have been effectively utilised in Pacific Island Countries as the basis for their national disability policies. However, the BMF comes to an end this year, and will be replaced by the Incheon Strategy, which will be adopted at the High Level Meeting in South Korea at the end of the month. The Incheon Strategy has ten priority areas. Priorities of particular relevance to the Pacific are enhancing disability inclusive disaster risk reduction, and improving disability data reliability and comparability. The complementarity between the CRPD (a global

framework), the Incheon Strategy (an Asia-Pacific strategy aligned with the CRPD), and the PRSD (a regional strategy aligned with the CRPD), was highlighted, all of which can feed into national strategies and policies.

25. Clarification was called for on how the Pacific can input into Asia-Pacific strategies, especially given that the Pacific is often under-represented in such a broad grouping. UNESCAP suggested the meeting endorse the preparation of a brief statement on the outcomes of the 2nd FDMM, to be delivered by a Pacific Island Government representative at the Incheon meeting.

26. Ministers:

- (a) **noted** the continuing relevance of the BMF and the Incheon Strategy as tools to guide national policies and strategies and to assist in implementing the CRPD;
- (b) **agreed** to seek the technical assistance and resources for implementation from development partners in utilising these frameworks and adapting them to the national level;
- (c) **tasked** the Secretariat, in collaboration with SPC/RRRT and the UNESCAP Pacific office, to develop a brief to guide Pacific Island Ministers' participation in the High Level Meeting in South Korea; and
- (d) **agreed** for a statement from the FDMM Chair to be delivered on behalf of the Forum Disability Ministers to the High Level Meeting in South Korea.

The UN Human Rights Conventions and their links to the CRPD

27. The Ministers considered a paper presented by the SPC/RRRT, which explored the inter-relationship between the CRPD and various other United Nations Human Rights Conventions, Covenants, and Declarations. The SPC/RRRT noted that ratifying the CRPD is a critical step; however, it is also important to consider other Conventions to fully advance the rights of persons with disabilities. Together, these conventions better address the needs and rights of persons with disabilities, thus ensuring that multiple forms of discrimination and the inter-sectionality of violations of human rights can be properly addressed.

28. Clarification was requested of the support available at the regional level with respect to the ratification of various Conventions, noting the challenges of timely reporting. The Secretariat advised that it provides ongoing support to Members in this area, with financial support from the European Union. Support is also available from other development partners, including UN agencies and SPC/RRRT.

29. Other issues raised included the impact of climate change on the rights of persons with disabilities, and difficulties in translating international conventions into culturally-sensitive local policies. Members highlighted the value of translation into national languages and continued consultation and education.

30. Ministers:

- (a) **noted** the inter- relationship (inter-sectionality) between the CRPD and the other human rights conventions;
- (b) **noted** the need to address the implications of climate change and its impact on the rights of persons with disabilities; and
- (c) **urged** the ratification of key human rights conventions in order to better progress support to persons with disabilities.

International Labour Organisation

31. The ILO reported that International Labour Standards can assist in bringing together the key stakeholders to jointly develop policies, laws, programmes, and services, and can create obligations for stakeholders to act and comply. ILO Convention 159 and ILO Recommendation 168 on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment call for governments to act to achieve equality of opportunity and treatment for all categories of persons with disabilities; but thus far the only country in the Pacific Islands to ratify has been Fiji.

32. The meeting discussed the degree to which ILO Convention 159 was subsumed under the CRPD. The ILO clarified that the ILO Convention preceded the CRPD, and was more specific in its focus. The meeting noted that countries that are not a member of the ILO can still use Convention 159 as a guideline in developing their national legislation. The ILO noted that it is currently working, with the support of AusAID, with several governments to develop their labour laws, including laws against discrimination.

33. Ministers:

- (a) **urged** ILO member states to ratify and apply the Vocational Rehabilitation (Disabled) Convention, 1983 (No. 159) and urged non- ILO member States to implement the principles of the Convention as important, internationally recognised guidance in this area;
- (b) **noted** the need for a Pacific action plan to implement and monitor the Vocational Rehabilitation (Disabled) Convention, 1983 (No. 159) and its associated recommendations, 1983 (No. 168);
- (c) **agreed** that disability inclusive policies and programmes should be developed and implemented to create an enabling environment for women and men with disabilities to secure decent and productive work; and
- (d) **agreed** that inclusive laws and policies should be designed to encourage employers (Public and private), with the support for their representative organisations, to employ persons with disabilities and provide reasonable accommodations to enable them to carry out their positions.

Country Reports

34. The Ministers welcomed brief reports on the status of disability issues in Forum countries. Contributions included briefs on challenges and plans for future development in these countries. Their reports indicated significant progress since the first FDMM. There was general consensus across Forum countries to continue progressing disability-inclusive development. Copies of these reports are available from the Secretariat.

Australian Development for All Strategy

35. AusAID presented on the Australian “Development for All” Strategy. The presentation provided an overview of Australia’s commitment to working with Pacific countries to advance the rights and opportunities of Pacific Islanders with disability, and highlighted resources available from AusAID to support the implementation of the PRSD, including initiatives to support governments in ratifying and implementing the CRPD. Initial results from the Strategy’s mid-term review were also reported, identifying successes thus far and challenges ahead.

36. Ministers:

- (a) **noted** the progress under Australia’s “Development for All” strategy which commits Australia to working with Pacific countries to advance the rights and opportunities of Pacific Islanders with disability to access development;
- (b) **noted** the resources available to support the implementation of the Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability including through the Pacific Islands Secretariat, Pacific Disability Forum, Disability Rights Fund, UNDP, WHO, as well as the new resources and research aimed at reducing barriers experienced by persons with disability in society;
- (c) **agreed** to use their unique leadership position to advocate a whole of government approach to disability inclusive development to ensure government ministries and stakeholders across all sectors reach and benefit citizens with disability;
- (d) **agreed** to actively ensure citizens with disability are included in national and local processes so that their perspectives and experiences inform effective national development; and
- (e) **agreed** to join Australia in advocating for Pacific Islanders with disability to participate in the post- 2015 UN Development Agenda discussion while reaffirming commitment to ensuring that persons with a disability are included in efforts to achieve the current Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

The World Report on Disability

37. The World Health Organisation (WHO) presented findings from the World Report on Disability and its implications for the Pacific region. The Report was developed through

consultation and research in over 70 countries, with persons with disabilities taking a central role. It identifies the high incidence of disabilities globally (15 percent, or 1 billion people), and highlights many common barriers faced by persons with disabilities. The Report presents several recommendations for governments and communities, focussed on awareness, policies, consultation, funding, and research.

38. Ministers:

- (a) **noted** that the World Report on Disability is based upon the best available evidence and fills gaps in national and regional knowledge, and that Pacific Island Countries should agree to build understanding of the report and use it to guide Pacific efforts to advance disability rights;
- (b) **supported** WHO and relevant partners to undertake country and sectoral level workshops in priority areas and utilise the World Report on Disability findings as a guide; and
- (c) **urged** national and regional stakeholders to work together to increase the disability data, research, and knowledge and use this to better inform decision making.

Ministerial Retreat

39. The Chair presented the outcomes of the Ministers retreat. A key issue raised by Ministers was the need for increased data collection, against relevant rights-related indicators, and the need to harmonise various agency databases. Ministers also expressed a need for increasing assistance from SPC/RRRT for Universal Periodic Reporting, noting the links between broader human rights Conventions and the CRPD. They identified a need to increase support for DPOs, recognising that although some countries already have good levels of engagement, others are lagging. At the same time, Ministers acknowledged the value of community and family-based support and care.

40. Ministers further identified the value of exchanging programme staff, to tap into regional agency expertise, and of facilitating exchanges among persons with disabilities, through “Para Pacific Games” type sporting exchanges and broader cultural exchanges. In addition, Ministers noted that ICT capacity building would be important for increasing connectivity, skills, and access to services among persons with disabilities, and requested assistance from Australia in incorporating ICT development into disability inclusive plans. Assistance is also required to address the linkages between disability and climate change, particularly with respect to assisting DPOs in disseminating information on disaster risk management, including evacuation of persons with disabilities. Finally, Ministers noted the need to coordinate regional input into global meetings, including the upcoming Asia-Pacific High Level Intergovernmental Meeting to be held in South Korea and the 2013 High Level Meeting on Disability and Development at the UN General Assembly.

41. Ministers highlighted the need for a mechanism for regional cooperation to be developed in the area of disability inclusive development, to facilitate multi-lateral and bilateral relationships between countries with possible assistance from donors and development partners.

The United Nations High Level Meeting on Disability and Development 2013

42. The WHO presented a paper informing Ministers of the upcoming United Nations High Level Meeting on Disability and Development (HLMD) —themed “The way forward: a disability inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond”—to be held in September 2013, and the opportunities that this meeting affords to advance disability issues globally. In the presentation, updates to the HLMD arising from the recent 5th Conference of State Parties were also highlighted, including information about the two informal consultations and that member states are still awaiting details about the process for the HLMD and how they can feed into the development of the outcomes document. Accordingly, there is an opportunity for Pacific Island countries to influence and provide leadership on key aspects of the HLMD process. WHO noted that Ministers could consider communicating with the co-facilitators to request action in further developing the HLMD, including; articulating a clear process for the HLMD, specifying features important to the Pacific; articulating the type of Outcomes Document Pacific Leaders would find useful; providing specific and practical views on priority areas for action in the Outcomes Document; reinforcing the importance of the World Report on Disability as the key resource informing the HLMD process; and encouraging take-up of offers of support and technical resources to assist with the process.

43. The WHO advised that the Outcomes Document for the HLMD would need to be finalised by July-August 2013, and that the consultation process is expected to be decided on by the co-facilitators by December 2012. Accordingly, it was suggested that the Outcomes Document from this FDMM be used as a basis for an urgent brief to be communicated to the HLMD co-facilitators.

44. Ministers:

- (a) **noted** the important opportunity afforded by the HLMD to scale up global efforts on priority issues towards the inclusion and participation of persons with disability;
- (b) **agreed** to the need for and importance of the Pacific actively participating in regional and plenary HLMD events including negotiations of the text for the outcomes document;
- (c) **tasked** the Secretariat to coordinate, in collaboration with other regional and international agencies, the development of a regional position paper on disability issues, including emphasis on the link between NCDs and disability, to guide the Pacific contribution to the HLMD process;

- (d) **considered** and recommended priority themes for attention such as disability data and statistics, adequate and sustainable funding , NCD-related disability and improving availability and affordability of assistive devices and related services;
- (e) **committed** to ensuring that Pacific persons with disabilities are well represented and supported to participate in the HLMD consultation and plenary processes;
- (f) **noted** the resolution of the UNGA on the HLMD, and **agreed** for the FDMM Chair to write to the co-facilitators of the HLMD process conveying the relevant FDMM outcomes and requesting a comprehensive regional consultation process prior to the HLMD; and
- (g) **recommended** that Leaders note the importance of the HLMD and the need for Pacific countries to coordinate their participation at the HLMD.

Second Keynote address

45. Mr Graeme Innes, the Disability Discrimination Commissioner from the Australian Human Rights Commission, was not able to attend the meeting, but had prepared a brief video message for participants. He wished Ministers well in their deliberations, noting that there would be many opportunities for Pacific Island countries to learn from the Australian experience, and for Australia to learn from the Pacific.

The Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) and DPO development in the Pacific

46. The Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) reported to Ministers on the role and contribution of the PDF and DPOs in advancing disability issues in the Pacific, and how such organisations can work in partnership with Pacific Island governments in promoting this important area of development. The PDF acknowledged the opportunity to participate at the FDMM. A brief video was presented to showcase the strengths-based approach to developing the capacity of DPOs in the Pacific.

47. The meeting commended the work of the PDF. Australia registered its strong endorsement of the PDF's involvement, and the broader involvement of DPOs, in policy development, and committed to enhance its own engagement with these organisations in the future.

48. Ministers:

- (a) **applauded and commended** the contributions made by the PDF and national DPOs in Pacific Island Countries to address and advance disability issues at local, national, and regional levels with the support of national governments, international non- governmental organisations and development partners; and
- (b) **agreed** to engage and ensure the full and effective participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations at local, national,

and regional decision-making levels in Pacific Island countries for good disability inclusive development practice in our region.

NCD and Disability

49. The WHO briefed Ministers on recent data on NCDs—in particular, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancers, and chronic respiratory diseases—in the Pacific, and identified harmful alcohol consumption, poor diet, physical inactivity, and tobacco use as key risk factors. Ministers were informed that NCDs cause approximately 75 percent of deaths in the Pacific. Although there is currently limited data on NCD-related disability, persons with disabilities are known to be at higher risk of NCDs, and persons with NCDs frequently develop subsequent disabilities. The WHO expressed concern that health information systems are not systematically collecting disability data or data on the onset of new NCD-originated disability, which will be important for policy development and service design.

50. The Meeting acknowledged the importance of the issues raised, and highlighted positive efforts to combat NCD risk factors around the region, including plain cigarette packaging in Australia, the promotion of traditional foods and encouragement of healthy eating in Solomon Islands and Palau, and taxation of sugary carbonated drinks in the Cook Islands. The need for improved data on NCDs and disabilities, and for increased understanding of the inter-linkages between risk factors, was affirmed.

51. Ministers:

- (a) **noted** that the Pacific Island countries have the highest rates of NCDs in the world and face increases in NCD-related disability, and **noted** the need for countries to raise awareness and initiate action to address the needs of people living with NCD-related disability;
- (b) **agreed** that health, disability and other relevant stakeholders must increase efforts to improve NCD-related disability data, evidence and surveillance;
- (c) **noted** that Pacific Island countries should strengthen the coordination and strategic development of rehabilitation services, including community-based rehabilitation and provision of assistive devices, to respond to increases in NCD-related disability and to ensure greater access for all persons with disabilities; and
- (d) **agreed** that NCD prevention and control remain a priority, and that all stakeholders should lend commitment to whole-of-government and multi-sectoral approaches and ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities in prevention strategies and programmes.

Ageing and Disability: An Emerging Issue

52. The UNESCAP presented a paper highlighting population ageing as an emerging issue. Ministers noted that population ageing is occurring across Pacific Island countries as life

expectancy increases—especially for women—and will accelerate in the coming decades, although the pace of ageing varies across the region. Ministers also noted the proven linkages between ageing and disability.

53. Ministers:

- (a) **noted** that ageing is an emerging issue in the Pacific and that it has a close relationship with disability;
- (b) **agreed** that all Pacific Island countries should consider the inclusion of the needs of older persons in future disability policies and strategies; and
- (c) **noted** that the inclusion of older persons in national planning strategies will foster inclusive societies.

Post 2015 Development Agenda/Sustainable Development Goals

54. The Secretariat presented a paper highlighting the importance of the global discussions on the Post-2015 Development Agenda/Sustainable Development Goals and opportunities for including disability issues from the Pacific in these global discussions. The meeting was informed that the Secretariat plans to coordinate and consolidate an emerging Pacific position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda/Sustainable Development Goals by November 2012. This position will stress the importance of adopting a human rights-based approach to empowerment, participation, equality, and non-discrimination. The Secretariat assured Ministers that representatives from their countries would have an opportunity to input into the development of the regional position, including through a UN-led regional meeting on the Post-2015 Development Agenda/Sustainable Development Goals in Fiji in October 2012, and through future consultation stages outlined in the background paper and to be further developed at the October meeting.

55. The Meeting proposed that the regional position should emphasise the need for a focus on disability inclusive development, and the need for a clear strategy for monitoring and evaluation, including relevant indicators. Ministers also emphasised the importance of including the PDF in the consultation process.

56. Ministers:

- (a) **agreed** that it is necessary to include disability issues in the global discussions on Post-2015 Development Agenda/Sustainable Development Goals; and
- (b) **called for** disability inclusive development targets and indicators to be included in the Post-2015 Development Agenda/Sustainable Development Goals.

Outcomes Document

57. Ministers considered the outcomes document presented by the Secretariat and adopted it as their official record of the 2nd Forum Disability Ministers' Meeting (2FDMM).

Venue of Next Meeting

58. Ministers agreed that their next meeting would be in the Federated States of Micronesia.

59. Words of acknowledgement were received from the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF)

60. The meeting ended with devotion and a closing prayer from Mr Samusafu Vilsoni from the PDF.

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**OPENING REMARKS BY MR FELETI P. TEO, DEPUTY SECRETARY
GENERAL OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT
AT THE FORUM DISABILITY MINISTERS' MEETING
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
3 – 4 October 2012**

Your Excellencies,

[Hon Prime Minister Hon Peter O'Neil]

Our gracious Host the Minister for Community Development; Hon Loujaya Toni

Honorable Ministers of PIF countries, responsible for disability

Our Keynote Speaker Senator Jan McLucas; Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and

Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers of the Government of Australia

Senior Government Officials

Representatives of Disabled Persons Organisations

Representative of regional and international organizations

Representatives of Development Partners

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me firstly extend to you all, warm and sincere welcome to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea and to the second Forum Disability Ministers Meeting.

2. Prime Minister Sir, allow me on behalf of the Disability Ministers of the Pacific Islands Forum and their Senior Officials and all the delegates and observers in attendance convey to you and register with you, our collective sincere and heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to your Excellency for gracing us with your presence at this opening ceremony.

3. [We are indeed humbled and touched by your very presence. Your very presence is testimony to your Government's strong and unwavering commitment and the importance you subscribe to the promotion and safeguard of the rights of people with disability. We understand that your government is about to complete if not already done so the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability.]

4. As you know this is the second occasion that ministers from around the region responsible for disability have come together after their inaugural meeting in the Cook Islands in 2009.

5. That inaugural meeting was a direct response to the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' call in 2009 for the convening of such a ministerial meeting.

6. It was at the Cook Islands meeting that the then Minister for Community Development Dame Carol Kidu offered for PNG to host the second ministerial meeting this year.

7. It will be obvious from the number of ministerial meetings on this subject matter, that disability is a relatively new issue to be addressed collectively at the regional level in the Pacific. But of course, the issue of disability is not a new issue it is an issue that has been around for time immemorial.

8. As the convener of the meeting and on behalf of the Forum Secretary General; HE Tuiloma Neroni Slade, I wish to thank you Ministers for your attendance and participation at this regional ministerial meeting. The Secretary General, unfortunately, is unable to be here, and he asked me and I do so now, convey to you Ministers and Heads of Delegation his sincere apologies for his absence due to his commitments at the UNGA meeting in New York this week and he sends his best wishes for a successful and productive meeting.

9. In his absence, the privilege and honour are all mine to stand in for him and to assist you in the facilitation of your meeting. I am personally excited of this role and the privilege to continue my personal engagement in this series of ministerial meetings having discharged the same role at your inaugural meeting in 2009.

10. To our gracious host, Madam Minister, since the time of our arrival here in Port Moresby, we have been received and welcomed very warmly by your people. And I wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of all of us attending this ministerial meeting, to convey to you [and through you to the Prime Minister] and the government and people of Papua New Guinea, our enormous gratitude and appreciation for the warmth and sincerity of your welcome and the generosity of your hospitality. On behalf of all of us visiting, to you our Host tangiu tru.

11. A big thank you is also due to your staff at your Ministry of Community Development for the assistance and support extended to the Forum Secretariat in the coordination and facilitation of logistical arrangements for the meeting.

12. At the inaugural meeting in 2009, Ministers adopted the Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability. That strategy is now the centerpiece for the region's coordinated efforts to support member countries addressing the issues and challenges of people with disability at the national level.

13. At the core of the strategy is the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability. It is this Convention that lays the foundation for the strategy and all the activities and initiatives and work programmes under the strategy.

14. Ministers will receive an update report on the progress of the implementation of the regional strategy on disability. I am please to inform you in advance of the update report that the region has made some remarkable progress in the implementation of the regional strategy on disability.

15. We have, with the assistance and support of development partners and partner agencies, developed and finalized an implementation action plan for the regional strategy. And with the support of the Government of Australia (AusAID) we have secured generous funding support to progress the implementation of the regional strategy.

16. I take this opportunity on behalf of the region and in particular the Forum island countries to register and express our sincere and heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to the government of Australia for their continued and unwavering commitment in support of the region's collective efforts in support of the rights and interests of people with disabilities.

17. Minister will be provided in greater detail the work undertaken under the auspices of the regional strategy on disability and achievements to-date.

18. There is clear evidence from the work undertaken under the regional strategy that there is a strong momentum moving forward in support of the rights and interests of people with disability. The region's leadership is more aware and cognizant now of the situation of people with disability. There is also strong political will to provide for an enabling environment that will allow people with disability to enjoy life to the full and to also contribute effectively to their community.

19. But the challenge as we all know is our limited capacity to translate sound leadership and political will to practical and tangible benefits that would allow people with disability to live full and meaningful lives.

20. The regional strategy on disability has identified areas where countries can collaborate and pool their resources together and assist each other in addressing their national challenges in relation to disability inclusive development. Strong partnerships is encouraged and acknowledged as necessary to support national efforts. Partnership not only amongst government agencies but more broadly with other stakeholders including development partners, NGO, civil society and more importantly the engagement of disabled persons organizations.

21. Opportunities presented through such gatherings like this, allow ministers to share and learn from each other's experience and to forge and strengthen those partnerships. It is our hope as your Secretariat that ministers will be able to achieve that objective in the course of your meeting over the next two days.

22. Hon Ministers, there are some major regional and global processes that ministers will be informed of during your meeting that ministers may need to take advantage of and discussed best ways to ensure that the agenda of disability inclusive development is adequately captured and reflected as a regional and global priority.

23. At the regional level we are about to embark on an independent review of the Pacific Plan, a process sanctioned by the Forum Leaders at their recent meeting in the Cook Islands. The review will be led by a former Prime Minister of PNG Sir Mekere Morauta. Although the issue of disability is already a priority under the Pacific Plan, it will be incumbent for ministers to ensure that disability remains and continues to be reflected as a regional priority in the Refreshed Pacific Plan.

24. At the global level we have the ongoing discussions on what will replace the Millennium Development Goals after 2015. Negotiations for sustainable development goals to replace the MDGs will intensify in the next year or so, and it is incumbent that the Pacific region is well prepared and coordinated to contribute to those global discussions. From the disability ministers' perspective, it is incumbent on Ministers to ensure that the regional contribution to those global discussions, include disability inclusive development as a development priority that adequately reflects the special needs of the Pacific region.

25. Hon Ministers, I don't intend to take up much more of your meeting time and will conclude my remarks. In doing so, I wish to leave you with an extract from the Leaders Vision for the Pacific region adopted as part of the Pacific Plan and that is " the Pacific can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all its people can lead free and worthwhile lives". I hope the work you undertake in the next two days will make a meaningful contribution to attainment of that vision.

26. I wish you well in your deliberation and looking forward to supporting your meeting.

Thank you.

**OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF
PAPUA NEW GUINEA - HON PETER O'NEILL, CMG MP
AT THE FORUM DISABILITY MINISTERS' MEETING
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
3 October 2012**

Moale Dabai Namona, Ibou mui ai

**Honourable Ministers of Pacific Islands Forum Governments,
PIF Secretariat Officials,
Other Visitors and Development Partners,
Host Minister, Officials and Participants**

On behalf of the Government of Papua New Guinea, I extend to you all, a warm and friendly welcome to our country and to our nation's capital.

We are happy to host you during your time here to attend this very important regional meeting.

I note that this is the second time for Ministers with Disability responsibilities from Pacific Islands Forum nations to such a meeting.

Dame Carol Kidu, who was our Community Development Minister until the change of government in August last year attended the first meeting in Cook Islands in October 2010.

On that occasion Dame Carol extended the invitation to host this meeting, and we are happy to do so.

This two-day meeting addresses a very important and challenging theme, that of "Progressing Disability Inclusive Development in the Pacific."

The theme exposes an important concern about the way Pacific Island Forum nations care for our people living with disabilities and impairments among us.

The theme further brings into focus the challenge for Pacific nations to develop inclusive national strategies to give disabled members of our societies equal access to opportunities in daily living.

Our challenge is to make our societies not just inclusive, but also dignified and simplified to enable persons living with disabilities and other physical impairments to have the confidence and self-esteem to speak their mind freely and have access to opportunities that everyone has.

Persons living with disabilities, their families, friends and carers, experience a great deal of hardship and disadvantage in their daily lives.

We must ease these hardships. Papua New Guinea has a policy that addresses issues related to our citizens living with disability and other physical impairments. We have not moved too far forward in creating and providing opportunities for persons with disabilities to be fully absorbed and embraced meaningfully by society. People who live with disabilities are also our citizens.

They desire to have the same opportunities as everyone else to living fulfilling and productive lives.

Our PNG government is a government of inclusiveness and for equal opportunity.

We are not ignorant to their daily struggle to live the kind of life that the rest of our citizens consider as ordinary life.

I think time has come for Pacific nations to make the political, social and economic changes necessary to progressing disability inclusive development in the region.

We must not delay our efforts to respond positively to issues and constraints that limit and restrict disability services and opportunities.

We were one of the first countries to ratify the Papua New Guinea is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities but our Parliament has yet to ratify the protocols of that convention.

Our government is now ready to ratify that convention when our Parliament goes into session later this month.

We are committed to doing this as part of our long term commitment to improving the lives of people with disabilities, their families, friends and carers.

Following ratification of the UN Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities our government will move immediately to develop a National Disability Strategy to create work programs to address our disability management and inclusive problems.

In my view, the holding of this meeting is a clear by recognition by nations of our region of our desire to positively change the way we look after our disabled citizens.

We must get away from the mentality of placing our disabled citizens into care centres and institutions. Similarly, we must not deny them access to buildings, homes, schools, businesses, sports and community groups.

We must make our communities tolerant, comfortable and supportive of persons living with disability. We must cease to believe disability is someone else's problem. We may be small island states in a huge Pacific ocean but we can show the rest of the world that we are a caring group of nations.

I believe that in our unique Pacific way, we are people with traditional values that recognise sharing, caring and loving each other, families, friends, the elderly and those members of our society that are deprived, disabled and denied.

There is nothing wrong with progressing disability inclusive development in the Pacific.

Papua New Guinea supports this conference and we hope you have a successful exchange of ideas that will improve the lives of our very special citizens of our respective countries.

Enjoy your stay in Papua New Guinea. Thank you.

**Keynote Address from Senator Ms Jan McLucas,
Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister's & Disabilities
& Carers at the Forum Disability Ministers' Meeting
3 October 2012**

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- Honourable Ministers and Officials from Forum Island countries
- Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Disability Forum, Mr Setareki Macanawai (said 'Mathanawai') and representatives of Disabled Persons Organisations
- Representatives of regional and multilateral organisations
- Development partners
- Country delegates

Introduction

I am very honoured to be here this morning to deliver this address on behalf of our Foreign Minister, Senator Bob Carr.

Senator Carr was very sorry not to be able to attend. He is currently travelling back from attending the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

I know how strongly Senator Carr shares with me, and with the whole Australian Government, the commitment to the rights of people with disability, and a belief in the obligation we all have to ensure people with disability have a voice in and participate in the life of their communities on an equal basis with others.

I acknowledge and thank the Government of Papua New Guinea for hosting this important event as well as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat for their support and organisation.

Your tireless efforts in support of the Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability, the centrepiece of this meeting, provides us all with the opportunity to come together to take stock of progress and discuss the steps we need to take together towards the Pacific vision for an "inclusive, barrier-free, and rights based society for people with disabilities that embraces the diversity of all Pacific people."

The Australian Government is very pleased to be both supporting and participating in this, the Second Forum Disability Ministers' Meeting.

I am personally honoured, in my role as Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, to be with you this week as we discuss issues of great importance to us all and particularly people with disability, their families and communities.

Setting the scene

With the release of the first ever World Report on Disability in 2011 we came to know that 15% of the global population has disability, 80% of whom live in developing countries. This is 1 Billion people or 1 in 7 citizens world-wide.¹

In the Pacific this equates to nearly 1.2 million Pacific islanders with disability, a sizeable population we cannot ignore and who in most part live in poverty and haven't had the chance to go to school, to work, to attend church or cultural activities, to be involved in decision making about policies and services or even to have the chance to vote in national elections.

We also know that the number of people with disability is set to grow as a result of population growth, ageing, lifestyle diseases, road accidents, conflict, malnutrition, and injuries. The reality of this situation demands our collective action now more than ever.

Australian Government Commitment

At the First Forum Disability Ministers Meeting - Mr Bob McMullan, the former Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance in his key note address expressed the Australian Government's commitment to supporting your regional and national efforts to address this situation so that development includes and benefits people with disability across the Pacific.

Three years on, at this Second Disability Ministers' Meeting it now brings me great pleasure to stand before you to reaffirm this 2009 commitment and reassure you of an even stronger Australian Government focus on the rights and inclusion of people with disability, particularly in the Pacific.

The Australian Government recognises that aid will only be effective and achieve poverty reduction if it reaches and benefits people with disability, who are disproportionately represented amongst the poorest members in society.

In June of last year, 'enhancing the lives of people with disabilities' was highlighted as one of ten development objectives in Australia's aid policy An Effective Aid Program.

Our work in disability-inclusive development is guided by the strategy: *Development for All: Towards a disability inclusive Australian aid program 2009-2014* - a strategy familiar to your countries and which was shaped by extensive consultation in this region, importantly by Pacific Islanders with disability themselves.

¹ 2011 World Bank/ WHO *World Report on Disability*, http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/index.html

I thank you for your ongoing contributions to this strategy – your efforts are ensuring our aid program is supporting real change in people’s lives. A member of my delegation will be highlighting these achievements later this afternoon.

We are very proud of the *Development for All* strategy which underpins Australia’s leadership in disability-inclusive development, supports our implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the ‘Convention’) and is highlighted as a good-practice model of inclusive international cooperation in the 2011 World Bank/ World Health Organisation World Report on Disability to be launched this evening.

Today however I wanted to focus on three factors critical to advance the rights of people with disability:

Firstly – we as leaders are in a unique leadership position and we must use it.

Secondly – the voice of people with disability has to inform our actions

Thirdly – The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is key, but it is about implementation – not just ratification.

We as leaders are in a unique leadership position and we must use it

When I was in opposition, I set up a Senate inquiry into the funding and operation of the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement.

As part of consultations during that inquiry it became clear that not only was disability sector not working as it should but that and the whole government sector wasn’t working well, either.

One of the recommendations of that inquiry’s report was to develop a National Disability Strategy “which would function as a high level strategic policy document, designed to address the complexity of needs of people with disability and their carers in all aspects of their lives”.

Upon coming to government in 2007, we set about holding a further round of consultation including the commissioning of the report, *Shut Out: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia* by the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council.

There are decisions that only you can make and influence only you can have as parliamentarians. There are many people with disability and Disabled Peoples Organisations advocating for inclusion, but they cannot do it alone.

It can be as simple as asking a question in parliament when legislation is being passed as to *whether it discriminates against people with disability or whether they were consulted.*

Or dialoguing with whole of government agencies to ensure all government ministries and stakeholders across all sectors work with and fulfil their responsibilities to citizens with disability. You should work with your ministerial colleagues whether in education, health, law and justice to make sure they are taking an inclusive approach to their policies.

You don't have to know the answer, it's all about using your leverage to ask the question!

Regionally, Pacific Leaders in 2010 endorsed the Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability providing us all with a framework for action. Progress has been made and we need to ensure this progress not just continues but advances in the interests of an accessible and inclusive Pacific community.

The Pacific also has much to share with the international community and I would urge you to take your rightful place in upcoming discussions on how disability fits within the Post 2015 UN Development Agenda and next year's High Level Meeting on Disability to be held in New York in 2013. I'm pleased to see discussions on these issues as part of the agenda for the coming days.

Furthering progress requires our leadership. It also requires partnership with people with disability which brings me to my next point.

The voice of people with disability has to inform our actions

AusAID receives high level guidance on disability inclusive development from the Disability Inclusive Development Reference Group, which has been critical to Australia's success.

Members of that group include Pacific Leaders Mr Setareki Macanawai, Chief Executive Officer of the Pacific Disability Forum and Mr Frederick Miller from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, as well as prominent international and Australian leaders, and other donors (Giz).

The Reference Group met in the Pacific in August 2012 to further strengthen our efforts and raise the profile of disability in the region. The group not only provided guidance to AusAID staff on how to ensure greater inclusion of people with disability in our aid programs in the Pacific, but they also influenced greater collaboration and commitment from important Pacific based organisations such as UN agencies and the University of the South Pacific to do more.

A recent review of the *Development for All* strategy highlighted that Australia's achievements have been possible because of our commitment to talking to people with a disability all the time. Talking with people with disability will help you use your leadership position effectively. For example, ask them - what are key pieces of legislation or policy you should ask questions on in parliament? Include people with disability on governance bodies and consultations on national policies and plans.

Australia has committed to supporting Disabled Peoples Organisations to ensure their voice, and ultimately the voice of people with disability, are heard.

Recently our Foreign Minister announced support to the Pacific Disability Forum (\$4.5 million, 2012-16), the regional peak body of disabled people's organisations to implement their Strategic Plan 2011-2016.

The new multi-year partnership recognises the Pacific Disability Forum's leadership in strengthening the capacity and voice of Pacific Islanders with disability at national, regional and international levels.

The partnership builds on Australia's support for capacity development of Disabled Peoples Organisations to date (\$1.346m, 2009-12), bringing the total support through the Pacific Disability Forum to near \$6 million since 2009.

To date Australia's support to the Pacific Disability Forum has enabled 13 Disabled Peoples Organisations across 9 countries to establish and strengthen their organisations and nearly 100 Pacific Islanders with disability have received training to promote disability rights and lead efforts in the region.

DPOs across the Pacific are well positioned to assist national efforts. Let us work in partnership with them to drive equitable and sustainable development.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is key, but it is about implementation – not just ratification.

Ultimately success will be judged by the real differences we make in the lives of people with disabilities.

The Convention is a helpful tool for governments to guide practical actions and help determine priorities, based on what is feasible for each individual country.

Australia ratified the Convention on 17 July 2008, affirming our longstanding commitment to upholding and safeguarding the rights of people with disability.

As Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, amongst my other duties as Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, I have a very important responsibility and one that I am honoured to carry and one that has driven important developments for and with Australian citizens with disability.

In 2011 the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the National Disability Strategy, a 10-year national policy framework which brings together a number of disability reforms fundamentally changing public policy, programs and services for people with disability, their families and carers in Australia.

In 2010-11, Australia committed \$11 million to increase the participation of those with disability in our communities as part of the National Disability Strategy.

Building on this, the Australian Government committed \$1billion over four years in the 2012-13 Budget to support the first stage of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I will talk further about this scheme later today in Australia's report on progress. Ultimately this scheme aims to provide people with a long-term plan of support is flexible and adjust as new needs arise, or, as transitions are successfully implemented over their lifetime.

And of course Australia, through AusAID, is providing over \$140 million between 2008-15 through our *Development for All* strategy, to ensure that our commitments are supported by action and resources.

Importantly – the convention is the first international convention to have an article on international cooperation which is why Australia's *Development for All strategy* is an important tool guiding a more inclusive Australian aid program.

The Pacific is indeed taking action to ensure that Pacific Islanders with disabilities are supported to improve their quality of life:

- Three (3) countries have ratified the Convention. (Cook Islands, Vanuatu and Nauru)
- Seven (7) Forum countries have signed the Convention. (Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Palau, Solomon Islands and Tonga)
- Seven (7) countries have national legislation specific to people with disability (Cook Islands, FSM, Republic of Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tonga).

I congratulate these achievements and ask you – what more can be done to implement the Convention and see its objectives come to life in the lives of our citizens. How can we strengthen our commitment, and ensure shared responsibility and planning across government, including making resources available through national budget allocations?

The Convention is more than just ratification – it is about implementation.

Our existing support to the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat of \$2.1 million over 3 years, to PNG of \$3million over three years, our contribution to the Disability Rights Fund of \$6.2m between 2009 to 2014) to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community/Regional Rights Resource Team of \$7.3M over 3 years, to the World Health Organisation of \$3.9m over 4 years and our \$2million contribution to the UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are resources available to your Governments to advance the rights of people with disability. It also brings me great honour to announce today new investments by the Australian Government in support of implementation of the Convention in the Pacific from 2012 including:

- a new investment of up to \$4 million towards ratification and implementation of the Convention in Samoa;
- under AusAID's PNG school infrastructure program 940 classrooms will be made accessible for girls and boys with disability, in accordance with international best practice;
- up to \$2 million over 4 years to use sport as a vehicle to improve the quality of life for people with disability in the Pacific; and
- \$250,000 to WHO to undertake research into non communicable diseases and disability that will help add to the evidence base on disability inclusive development.

We look forward to hearing of the results of these programs in due course.

Conclusion

Our Leaders have made a commitment! They agreed to the Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability designed to inform the way Pacific Island Countries work with and for citizens with disabilities.

We as leaders have a responsibility to ensure the objectives of this strategy are achieved. We have a responsibility to lead meaningful change in people's lives so that all children are educated, all people have access to health services, all people can gain access to work and all family members attend religious, cultural and social activities that provide a sense of belonging. But we cannot do this alone.

The next two days are important ones for the region. Let us work together towards the Pacific's vision and ensure that Pacific Islanders with disability can live the life they choose to lead. Australia stands ready to support.

Thank you again to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the PNG Government. This is our time to advance our efforts.

Lets use it!