

FINANCIAL INCLUSION INNOVATION SUMMIT

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
29-31 August 2017

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY

MEG TAYLOR, DBE
SECRETARY GENERAL, PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

Pacific Central Bank Governors

CEO of the Foundation for Development Cooperation and Senior Representatives of the UNDP Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme

Distinguished Delegates of the Pacific countries

Members of the Diplomatic CORP and Development Partners

Ladies and Gentlemen

Morning tru olgeta!

1. For those of you who have had the opportunity to visit Port Vila and its fresh produce market, you would have seen the "*mama's*" on the harbour-side of the market who cook and sell food from established kitchenettes within the market boundary.
2. The *Mama's Market* comprises 36 women from rural areas on the outskirts of Port Vila who came together to form an *association* in the food sector based at the Port Vila Market. Their story is one of personal initiative and a testament to the positive impact that financial inclusion can have on an individual and their community. Since its establishment in 2014, the *association* has established a savings scheme, and has tapped into financial literacy programmes and food standards development assistance. The *Mama's* are now in the midst of developing a recipe book in Bislama on Vanuatu cuisine.
3. In my own community outside of Goroka EHP, at the initiative of a former Central Banker from our community, and with the support of community Leaders and the guidance of BPNG, *Alekano Savings and Loans Society* was established. I am a member as are hundreds of other individuals from the community. This small initiative soon caught the eye of townfolk and a more accessible venue was required and was set up in town. Business soon grew and another branch has also been set up in Lufa. Alekano introduced Finance training courses and supports Women's business initiatives. Its focus remains on local development agriculture and entrepreneurship.
4. These examples show the practical results that can be achieved through financial inclusion, and so the discussions we will have during this summit will be so important to the people across our region.
5. Let me acknowledge the *Foundation for Development Cooperation*, and the co-conveners of this summit, as well as our hosts the *Bank of Papua New Guinea* and the *Centre for Excellence in Financial Inclusion* for bringing us together, to consider financial inclusion in a holistic way.
6. And allow me to extend my apology that I cannot be here through to the end, as I will travel to Samoa for the 48th Pacific Islands Forum, which begins early next week. But I nevertheless look forward to the outcomes that are to follow your discussions here.

Evolving Regional Initiatives for Financial Inclusion

1. Distinguished guests, effective financial inclusion is critical to drive an inclusive development that has a positive impact for people at the grassroots. As Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, it is my responsibility to look at the region from an overarching perspective, to identify the common challenges that we face as a region and propose policy solutions to these challenges. I see this

summit as an important opportunity for information exchange across the region and to develop regional solutions to our common challenges in financial inclusion.

2. To complement the many national level financial inclusion initiatives, there have been a number of regional level initiatives aimed at increasing financial inclusion. In 2009, for instance, Forum Leaders and Economic Ministers adopted the *2020 Money Pacific Goals* in recognition of the role of financial inclusion as a critical catalyst for enhancing development in the region. The *Money Goals* sought to:
 - build financial literacy;
 - expand outreach of financial services to remote and underserved regions;
 - embrace fin-tech solutions for cost effective delivery;
 - build a culture of entrepreneurship through supporting and expanding existing Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs); and
 - build an augmented platform for future varied financial services, such as, micro and crop insurance.
3. Forum Economic Ministers have also sought regular updates on the delivery of the *Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme* (PFIP). A key achievement under this *programme* has been the development of National Financial Inclusion Strategies across 5 Forum Island Countries – reflecting the importance that these economies place on access to finance across all levels of society. The *Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme* is an initiative that can be extended to other Forum Island Countries, and so I seek your guidance through this summit as to how this might best be done.

Women's Economic Empowerment

1. Distinguished Guests, let me speak a little about women's economic empowerment. I have been encouraged by our progress in Papua New Guinea to make finance readily available, especially with regard to women in rural communities, but we must always continue to do more. Women's economic empowerment – particularly for the most marginalised women in our society – is so critical to supporting the most impoverished in our societies.
2. Given this, I commend *Papua New Guinea Women in Business*, which has established itself as a voice for all women in this country, and particularly the most marginalised. This initiative has supported women in need of basic financial service, including through the establishment of the *Women's Micro Bank* in 2014 – a first for our region. The work of *Papua New Guinea Women in Business* has been carried out in the recognition of women's contribution to the economy and to our broad development efforts, and I commend Government and other key stakeholders who have enabled this venture to thrive.
3. I note the success of *women led micro-businesses* in highlighting how conventional measures to assess the creditworthiness of SMEs can be misleading. As we know, micro-business owners' success is often due to non-traditional, but nevertheless highly effective business strategies which draw on local networks and knowledge to establish successful businesses that improve the lives of their families and communities. I urge participants to look at such measures with a view to developing a more sophisticated assessment framework.
4. These are promising initiatives - but more must be done. Women's economic empowerment will drive poverty alleviation in this country and across this region, and so we must find effective ways to increase women's access to finance. We must enable the *Mama's* across this region to fully exploit their development potential.

Development Finance, SDGs and Financial Inclusion in the Pacific

1. Let me turn to the links between development finance, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and financial inclusion in the Pacific. Global experience shows that financial inclusion has a significant impact on lifting the ultra-poor and poor out of poverty in a number of countries, and the Pacific is no exception. Financial inclusion plays a critical role across a range of sectors vital to sustainable development.
2. The Pacific SDGs Roadmap, which is to be considered by Forum Leaders next week, seeks to ensure that member countries and development partners are able to deliver on the SDGs. Central to the success of the Roadmap is country ownership and a specific focus on SDG 17, which looks at the means of implementation – including partnerships and secure development finance for the attainment of

the SDGs as a whole.

3. The key tenets of financial inclusion overlap significantly with the current regional agenda on financing for development. Development financing, which includes climate and disaster finance, combined with financial literacy and financial empowerment is crucial to mobilise finance for development and adaptation initiatives across the region.
4. Pacific Island Countries require additional finance for long-term development, on top of the required resources to address sudden economic shocks and extreme weather events. Distinguished guests will note for instance that recent cyclones in the region in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu have on average wiped out around 30-60 percent of the national economy. A devastating impact by anyone's measure.
5. In recent years, Economic Ministers have decided to look at innovative financing solutions for regional and national initiatives - including the use of resources within the region, such as our superannuation funds and excess liquidity in the banking sector. Of course, such proposals are still under development.
6. Furthermore, in collaboration with the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific, the UN, and Multilateral Development Banks, the Secretariat is looking into options for increased accessibility to climate and disaster finance, including policy advice on contextualised financial instruments for Forum Island countries.
7. So, while we continue to develop innovative development financing options at the regional level, attention is also required to address the concerns of those at community level and small and micro business owners.
8. Financial inclusion initiatives which are being considered across our region to mobilise microfinance and insurance, ensure better use of remittances, credit and savings through financial literacy, as well as embrace fin-tech solutions to reduce the transaction costs of access to finance will help build a stronger microeconomic foundation for a more holistic, resilient and sustainable development for our countries.
9. In addition, global initiatives such as micro-insurance for healthcare, life, crop and livestock are being piloted or are planned for roll out in the Pacific. I hope that these initiatives can eventually be offered to Smaller Island States where the capacity is limited and such services are desperately needed to improve livelihoods.
10. I look forward to the discussions that you will have on financial inclusion initiatives such as these.

The Future of Financial Inclusion in the Pacific

1. This Financial Inclusion Innovative Summit marks its **10th Anniversary** as the major multi-stakeholder gathering for financial inclusion in the Pacific. I congratulate you for this milestone and acknowledge your commitment to this cause. Throughout this Summit you will look to develop innovative mechanisms to ensure greater financial inclusion for our people. I would like to leave you with three proposals.
2. **First**, I urge you to consider extending regional financial inclusion programmes and coverage to other parts of the region and beyond those Pacific countries with central banks in the next 5 to 10 years.
3. **Second**, I urge you to explore how Pacific Islands Countries can improve digital financial inclusion. Forum Leaders have identified Information and Communications Technology (ICT) as a priority for collective action and it is critical that we harness ICT to support greater financial inclusion. Almost all countries in the region have experienced an increased penetration of smart mobile phones over the last 10 years, yet the use of mobile phones for digital financial inclusion remains negligible in this region compared to similar trends across Africa and Asia. We must do more to make use of this potentially game changing technology.
4. **Third**, I encourage investment in reliable, consistent data on financial inclusion. We lack data for many aspects of national development, including financial inclusion, which restricts our ability to fully gauge the extent of our efforts regarding financial exclusion. It is therefore imperative that we invest in building reliable databases for all financial inclusion initiatives, to support evidence-based policymaking.

Conclusion

1. Distinguished Delegates, in closing let me to thank the *Foundation for Development Cooperation*, *Microfinance Pasifika*, *Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme* and the various development partners for your continued support in promoting financial inclusion. I also thank the *Bank of Papua New Guinea* and *Centre for Excellence in Financial Inclusion* for hosting the summit here in Port Moresby.
2. Your discussions are to focus on issues that are at the very heart of sustainable development and poverty reduction. These are not trivial matters, but are issues upon which the lives of many depend. I wish you well in your deliberations, and urge you to take on your tasks with energy, knowing that you contribute to the welfare and benefit of our people – particularly those who are in most need of support.

Tenk yu tumas.