

**OPENING REMARKS by Hon. Baron Tuita, Chair of SCW and SOPAC Council  
at the Third Meeting of the Committee, 16 July 2008**

Honorable Tavau Teu  
Deputy Prime Minister of Tuvalu  
Members of the Committee  
Representative of France and the USA, present as participants observes,  
Director General of SPC and The Director of SPREP  
Mr Garry Wiseman, Head of the UNDP Pacific Resource Centre and Facilitator of the  
Trilateral Meeting  
Ladies and Gentleman

Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, on behalf of myself and the Committee I would like to extend to you a very special welcome. The committee is looking forward to your contribution and guidance and the continuity of the work of the Committee is assumed. As the incoming Chairman of the SOPAC Governing Council to be held in Tuvalu later this year we are encouraged by your attendance and participation as it will ensure that what happens here is fully understood.

It is also my privilege and an honour to welcome all of you to the 3<sup>rd</sup> SCW Meeting. Your commitment as per your continuity participation, support, cooperation and in honestly sharing ideas and debating issues critical to the task set for us by Council has been and is, I believe, the major driving force in finding our way forward. You have taken us from environments of tension and cultures of uncertainty to a more positive platform. For these and more I on behalf of Council thank you.

I would also like, with your indulgence, to extend my deep appreciation to His Excellency Hon. Tine Leuelu for agreeing to Chair our 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting in the very last minute as I was unable to attend. From what I have studied and heard, he did an outstanding job and Your Excellency, please feel free to take the Chair at anytime – even now with my sincere thanks!

And lastly to Mr Garry Wiseman of UNDP Pacific Resource Centre who so graciously agreed to be the facilitator for the Trilateral Programme Meetings. Facilitating a non competitive absorption process “ is always rather difficult but from what we have read and studied you have with members of the Trilateral Programme Meeting provided an overview as guidance. On behalf of the Committee, I thank you.

Honorable Deputy Prime Minister and members of the Committee, the first and second SCW had given guidance on the work programme to the Director of SOPAC and her staff in cooperation with the CEO of SPC and SPREP and their staff and much of it has also been acted upon, preliminary findings has been examined and developed. For our 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, there are two major objectives:

- To discuss progress since our 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting; and
- to consider the Progress Report - since our work is still in progress – as the Committee's report to the 2008 Forum Leaders' meeting.

You will note, of course, that the Draft Progress Report covers all the areas which was of concern to us and activities approved by the Committee. Therefore if I may suggest, we

would need to spend most of this meeting on the Progress Report. I am sure that you have studied it carefully and I look forward to useful, analytical and wise contribution.

You will recall in that my opening remarks in our 1<sup>st</sup> meeting I had stated that it would be necessary for us to submit a report to the Forum Leaders. I have no doubt that it is our responsibility to do so but as our task is not yet completed and Council is yet to meet, I had to write to members of Council for approval to send the Progress Report to the Leaders.

Hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Members of the Committee ....

There is a Tongan saying – TAUMULIVALEA. In the old days when Polynesians were moving into the Pacific – into the unknown to seek new opportunities, the only thing of which they certain was their homeland or the last port-of-call. And the meaning of TAUMULIVALEA is that if you don't know from whence you came how can you know where you are going – you may be sailing round and round in circles instead of going forward towards future opportunities.

I believe that this is most appropriate here for, in my humble opinion, we now know from whence we started and have the confidence to move forward without fear of going round in circles nor of re-inventing the wheels.

I am of the opinion that our Committee has responded positively to the Leaders Communiqué and the SOPAC Governing Council decision. Indeed as Edward Gibbon's wrote: the wind and the waves are always on the side of the ablest navigators. There is no Taumulivalea now. Nonetheless the task we are undertaking is not a straight forward matter as we have learned and will require long-term and steady dedication. But it is an urgent priority and I believe we can move forward with some confidence to complete our task and responsibility to Council and our Leaders and not so much based on the logic of rationalization as such but the most effective institutional arrangements based on the logic of the most effective means of meeting needs of member states with excellence in quality, relevancy and timeliness.

Honorable Deputy Prime Minister and Members of the Committee, and Participants – Observers ... ..

May I, in closing, welcome you again and thank all of you for your commitment to the vision of our Leaders, our Council and our people.

Malo and ofa atu.

Thank you.