

**STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF SAMOA  
DELEGATION,**

**MR HENRY AH CHING**

**AT THE**

**6<sup>th</sup> ASIA AND PACIFIC POPULATION CONFERENCE**

**BANGKOK, THAILAND, 16-20 SEPTEMBER 2013**

Mr/Madam Chair, Mr. President, Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honor and privilege for me to deliver the country statement on behalf of my country, Samoa. We would like to thank the Government of Thailand for hosting this event and for the hospitality extended to us during this visit. I would also like to express my appreciation to the organisers of this meeting, the Joint Secretariat of the ESCAP and UNFPA. The significance and bearing of the 6<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Population Conference (APPC) to Samoa cannot be overemphasized.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Samoa, with a population of 187,000, is the first country in the Pacific region to become independent. As an independent and sovereign nation, the Samoa Government endorsed commitment to implementation of the ICPD Goals in 1994 and has since reconfirmed its commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action through its national policies and programmes. We have again most recently reaffirmed our commitment for a forward looking and progressive agenda for the ICPD Beyond 2014, through our affirmation of the Moana Declaration at the August Pacific Parliamentary Meeting on ICPD Beyond 2014.

As Samoa is graduating from an LDC to a Middle Income Country (MIC) status in 2014, we are prepared to ensure that we will meet the needs of our people from a strengthened position for a sustainable economy.

Our broad goals in relation to population include ensuring a healthy population with sustained efforts for improvements in standards of living to equip our population and to upscale capacities to levels that would meet the demands of a slow growing but diversified economy, for sustainable development.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Samoa's most recent census confirms a young population base with a significant youth bulge, which can be viewed both as an opportunity and a challenge. Samoa has National Policies in place to respond to the needs of young people. Young people remain a priority of government with policies and programmes that focus on the empowerment, education and employment of young people. Given the size of Samoa's young population, we continue to focus efforts to better respond to adolescent reproductive health needs while ensuring an educated, satisfied and economically productive youth population. Samoa is working to further strengthen its existing Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Services, in collaboration with NGOs and civil society, and expand its Comprehensive Sexuality Education Programmes in all schools throughout the country.

Samoa has experienced declining contraceptive prevalence rates in most recent years, and high unmet need for family planning and unintended teenage pregnancies represent a population and health challenge. Samoa is currently investigating the factors contributing to the recent decline in contraceptive prevalence. Teenage fertility is significant higher in rural as compared to urban areas which confirms the need for improved rural youth health services.

For reproductive health, the Government recognizes the advantages of integrated sexual and reproductive health, family planning and HIV/STI programmes within the Primary Health Care context and is partnering with

NGOs that also provide service delivery. Samoa is working to address its high prevalence of STIs through an integrated reproductive health service delivery and is strengthening clinics for counseling, family planning services and STIs, including for young people, in-school and out-of school.

Samoa is strengthening its peer education networks and training programmes in schools and educational and vocational training institutes, in collaboration with NGOs, including through innovative approaches to IEC(info, education, communication) and advocacy at the village and community level.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

ICPD identifies the empowerment of women and their autonomy as critical factors to achieving gender equality and sustainable development. Samoa again was the first Pacific country to ratify CEDAW. Considerable progress has been made in the review of legislation, which has resulted in the drafting of the Family Violence Bill now in its final reading through parliament, passage of legislation which promotes greater representation of women in parliament and the establishment of a family court presided over by one of the 3 female judge appointments ever made in the history of the judiciary.

Samoa has community –based programmes that are encouraged through the advocacy of men’s groups to eliminate violence against women and girls. To maintain the progress and success Samoa has achieved in attaining its MDG targets, around gender and maternal and child health(our infant mortality rate is 15.6, under five mortality rate is 22 and skilled birth attendant rate is over 80 percent), Samoa will maintain its sustained efforts to ensure that there is no regression, and will further strengthen its efforts for attaining MDG 5b universal access to reproductive health.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The implementation of the national development strategy (2012-2016) is concentrated on identifying vulnerable groups, designing targeted programs as well as choosing appropriate pro-poor strategies that hopefully would see a reversal of the situation.

Samoa will be hosting the 3rd Global Conference for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in September 2014. Hosting it in the Pacific provides a special opportunity for the region to demonstrate its development aspirations. The conference will be in recognition of the importance of coordinated, balanced and integrated actions to address the sustainable development challenges facing Small Island Developing States. The health of women and children are given emphasis as well as meeting the demands of the NCD crisis including gender implications

In conclusion Mr/Madam Chair, Samoa assures its commitments to the goals and objectives of the ICPD.

The ICPD review has clearly identified for us areas that we need to prioritise in the next 5-10 years, and we will strive to address these gaps with continued partnerships with our people and development partners in the Pacific region. Our partnerships with the international community will continue to be critical.

Thank you

