



PACIFIC PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (PPAPD)



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Member Countries

Australia



Cook Islands



Fiji



FSM



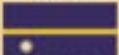
Kiribati



Marshall Islands



Nauru



New Zealand



Niue



Palau



Papua New Guinea



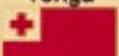
Samoa



Solomon Islands



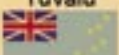
Tonga



Tokelau



Tuvalu



Vanuatu



The Suva Declaration on HIV/AIDS by Pacific Parliamentarians



The 1st Conference for Pacific Parliamentarians on: “The Role of Pacific Parliamentarians in the Fight against HIV/AIDS”

Suva, Fiji: 11-13th October, 2004

The inaugural meeting of Pacific Parliamentarians on the ‘Role of Pacific Parliamentarians in the fight against HIV/AIDS’ is the first of its kind in this region. The 3-day meeting, held at the Tradewinds Convention Centre during 11-13th October 2004, provided a forum for informing parliamentarians about basic facts on HIV/AIDS – what it is, how it is spread, its effect on the infected person, and its wider psycho-social, cultural, and economic impact on individuals, families and nations. The meeting, attended by more than 70 Pacific Parliamentarians and a further 70 HIV/AIDS advocates, encouraged parliamentarians to become champions and icons in leading the fight against HIV/AIDS in our communities.

In close collaboration with UNFPA and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the meeting was conceptualized and initiated by the Pacific Parliamentary Assembly for Population and Development (PPAPD), a regional parliamentary body established in 1997 with membership from all independent island nations. The Speaker of the House of Representatives of Fiji, Hon. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, is currently Chair of PPAPD.

The meeting reinforced the importance of national and regional commitment in implementing the “The Pacific Regional Strategy on HIV/AIDS 2004-2008,” recently endorsed by Pacific Heads of Governments at the Leaders Forum Meeting in Samoa in August 2004. The regional strategy features a far-sighted all-encompassing plan in its vision, goal, and principles and highlights the

importance of leadership in any HIV/AIDS intervention.

Providing the keynote address was Dr. Nafis Sadik, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General and Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for HIV/AIDS in the Asia-Pacific region, while the Prime Minister of Fiji, Hon. Laisenia Qarase delivered the opening address of the meeting.

The meeting heard that HIV/AIDS is reaching escalating rates in some Pacific countries, especially in Papua New Guinea. Parliamentarians learned that available statistical data provide only a general guide on the state of HIV/AIDS in the region. The figures only reflect reported cases and do not reflect the true situation of the epidemic in each country because the total pool of infected individuals that are yet to be diagnosed could be a lot higher. WHO estimates that for every diagnosed case of HIV, there are between 5 to 25 undiagnosed cases, depending on the extent of the epidemic in that particular country.

Why Focus on Parliamentarians?

The meeting focused on Parliamentarians because:

- Parliamentarians are national leaders – they are icons of constituencies and Pacific island societies.
- They have leadership roles in leading the fight against HIV/AIDS in our countries.
- Parliamentarians have the mandate and public trust to act in the interests of the people.

- They can influence mobilization of resources both within their countries in the government system or outside of governments as well as from development partners.
- They may be able to establish or strengthen national parliamentary advocacy groups, and national and regional networking to maintain dialogue and action in implementing activities that address HIV/AIDS.
- Parliamentarians can initiate innovative activities to support HIV/AIDS; such as a Parliamentarian exchange visitation programme, where parliamentarians who are actively involved in HIV/AIDS advocacy might visit other countries to share their experiences.
- Parliamentarians bear a special responsibility to set examples that spur others into action. They can also be vulnerable to HIV as they travel widely and therefore there is a need to involve them in HIV initiatives, both nationally and regionally.
- Their ability to contribute to the fight against HIV/AIDS will be greatly enhanced if they know more about the disease, thus the focus on both informing and action.

The meeting culminated in the signing of the “Suva Declaration on HIV/AIDS” by Pacific Parliamentarians, documenting their support and commitments for taking action in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The Suva Declaration on HIV/AIDS

PREAMBLE

We the Parliamentarians from Pacific Island Countries and Territories, at the First Conference for Pacific Parliamentarians on “The Role of Pacific Parliamentarians in the Fight against HIV/AIDS,” convened at the Raffles Tradewinds Convention Centre, Suva, Fiji, from 11 to 13 October 2004 hereby:

reaffirm the declaration of commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS, June 2001), the first Asia-Pacific Ministerial Meeting on HIV/AIDS (Melbourne, October 2001) and the second Asia-Pacific Ministerial Meeting on HIV/AIDS (Bangkok, July 2004);

recall the endorsement of the Pacific Regional Strategy for HIV/AIDS by Pacific leaders at the Pacific Islands Forum Meeting, held in Samoa in August 2004;

further **recall** the emphasis placed on the need to protect women and girls from HIV/AIDS, from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Meeting of Parliamentarians on Women, Development and Democracy (Suva, May 2004), from the 7th Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers responsible for Women’s Affairs (Nadi, June 2004) and the 9th Pacific Triennial Women’s Meeting (Nadi, August 2004);

recognise the potentially devastating consequences of the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS on social, cultural, economic and developmental prospects, national security and political stability; the high cost associated with inadequate intervention strategies, and the limited options available for treatment and care for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA);

recognise that HIV/AIDS is taking an increasingly terrible toll on women and girls, the young, the disadvantaged and other vulnerable groups;

recognise that although countries are experiencing different stages of the HIV pandemic, the Pacific as a region is fast approaching a critical epidemic status;

acknowledge the critical importance of taking urgent multi-sectoral responses to halt the further spread of the HIV infection, in particular among young people;

acknowledge with appreciation the efforts made by national, regional, and international stakeholders (including Global Fund, AusAID, NZAID, French Government, UNFPA, UNDP, UNAIDS and other donor organisations) in assisting our Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) to combat HIV/AIDS, noting that holistic multi-sectoral and transnational intervention strategies are required;

further **acknowledge** the critical place of exemplary political will and leadership as one of the most important tools that has been shown to reduce the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS.

We **commit** ourselves, as national leaders and legislators, to join forces in the fight against HIV/AIDS and are determined to translate our political will and commitment to action.

We **stand firm** in our unrelenting political commitment to accept the responsibility and set examples that would stimulate others to take action and make right choices.

We **pledge** to mobilise political support and resources from government in partnership with development agencies, regional bodies, private sector, civil societies and faith-based organisations to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

We **reaffirm** the commitment by our leaders to achieving Goal 6 (combat HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria) of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to implementing the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action.

We **reaffirm** that Goal 6 of the MDGs cannot be achieved in isolation and that sustainable progress on the Goal 6 targets will depend largely on our progress with Goal 1 (poverty and hunger eradication) and Goal 3 (gender equality and empowerment of women).

We **reaffirm** that our strategy in fighting against HIV/AIDS should acknowledge positive traditional, cultural and religious values of our Pacific communities, which are based on compassion, solidarity, reconciliation, care and support, and affirm the protection and promotion of human rights.

And we **emphasise** the need for leadership, and non-partisan political support and commitment, and respect existing programmes and structures that put people first.

ADVOCACY

We the Pacific Parliamentarians hereby commit ourselves to:

be **proactive and energetic** advocates for HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. We will ensure that HIV/AIDS is put at the forefront of discussion, debates and other engagements we undertake at all levels right down to grassroots level, with our constituencies, and at the highest political level;

acknowledge the central role of the family and our traditional systems in promoting positive family and societal values that will help our younger generation in the fight against HIV/AIDS;

acknowledge the critical role of PLWHA in the fight against HIV/AIDS and strongly support their involvement, whilst as the same time ensuring their dignity and rights are protected especially at the workplace, and in their communities, and that their needs for compassion, care, treatment and support are mainstreamed into national structures and regional programmes;

acknowledge the central role of media in the

fight against HIV/AIDS. We reaffirm the need for positive, sensitive and responsible reporting on HIV/AIDS. We commit ourselves to work positively with the media at every opportunity to promote the fight against HIV/AIDS as well as ensuring that the dignity, rights and needs of PLWHA are protected;

encourage partnerships with faith-based organisations, established institutional trade unions (such as teachers trade unions), community leaders and civil society groups, including NGOs specifically working on HIV/AIDS, PLWHA and their networks, development partners and governmental institutions in the region in order to maximize coverage and raise awareness on HIV/AIDS to reach people at all levels and all walks of life, with a particular focus on teachers, students and vulnerable groups.

support intervention and prevention strategies beyond the “Abstinence, Be Faithful, Condoms, Delay” (ABCD) approach, such as promoting education for all, particularly for vulnerable groups and young people;

promote HIV/AIDS strategies that specifically focus on women and girls. We commit to advocate with our governments and constituencies to encourage and facilitate policies and legislative actions that promote women’s economic and social empowerment, including their equal access to resources and opportunities, and to a life free of violence and discrimination;

recognise that today the vast majority of HIV/AIDS cases worldwide are sexually transmitted or associated with pregnancy, child birth or breast feeding. We commit to integrating HIV/AIDS services and reproductive health care in ways that work for women and girls and that increase their access to these vital services;

reaffirm the right of young people to knowledge and skills that promote informed choices and increased livelihood opportunities. This right must include the right to sexual education, and user-friendly reproductive health services. We call upon our governments to encourage families, civil societies, faith-based organisations and national and local institutions to provide them with these services;

also reaffirm the right of all Pacific Island peoples to lives free of poverty. We commit ourselves to advocating policies conducive to the eradication of poverty and the removal of all economic and social inequalities.

advocate for the provision of readily available Reproductive Health commodities, especially male and female condoms, at all appropriate levels in our countries to ensure they are accessible when needed;

encourage information-sharing on success stories to expand our knowledge and translate our commitment into action;

strongly encourage Pacific Island Countries and Territories to share information and

monitor our respective implementation of the various national strategies and international instruments on HIV/AIDS, and cooperate with one another for the effective implementation of the Pacific Regional Strategy on HIV/AIDS recently approved by the leaders as a common platform for action at national and regional levels respectively.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

We the Pacific Parliamentarians will review, reform and enact appropriate legislation that:

encourages and facilitates legislative actions within our governments and constituencies, including the establishment of appropriate Parliamentary Committees to spearhead the fight against HIV/AIDS;

promotes economic independence, equal access to resources and opportunities and a life free of stigma, violence and discrimination of the most vulnerable groups in our communities, particularly women and girls, the young and the disadvantaged;

reinforces universal human rights legislation to protect and ensure the dignity of PLWHA;

promotes an integrated response to HIV/AIDS that takes into account the interrelation between Sexual Rights and Reproductive Health Rights and prevention of HIV/AIDS and strategies that specifically focus on women and girls;

protects in the workplace the rights of PLWHA and those at greatest risk of HIV/AIDS, taking into account established international guidelines on HIV/AIDS in the workplace; and

further **protects** the rights of people in the communities and other settings.

RESOURCE MOBILISATION

We the Pacific Parliamentarians pledge to:

advocate for adequate levels of financial and other resources to the most in need for multi-sectoral responses to the HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support programmes within all relevant ministries, civil society organisations, with particular emphasis on PLWHA;

ensure that our countries allocate and spend financial and other resources from our national budgets and help identify the gaps for resource mobilisation;

recommend the establishment of a Pacific Regional Fund to assist and expand national and regional programmes in the fight against HIV/AIDS;

call on the international community, development partners and the pharmaceutical industry to make Anti-Retroviral (ARV) drugs more accessible and affordable for small Pacific Island developing countries and, where possible, subsidise the costs for these drugs;

recognize that effective mobilisation against the HIV/AIDS epidemic requires strong leadership from all sectors of society including core institutions of society such as legislative bodies. Maximising resource mobilisation will better facilitate availability, accessibility and affordability of essential commodities including reproductive health commodities (particularly male and female condoms), drugs for opportunistic infections and Anti-Retroviral (ARV) drugs;

ensure transparent management and coordination of available resources for Reproductive Health and the fight against HIV/AIDS in order to maximize efficient utilization and distribution of resources for greater impact;

promote the fight against HIV/AIDS as a priority social, family, cultural, development and economic issue. Taking action on the issue would demonstrate that Pacific Parliamentarians are a proactive and responsible group; and

support the lead role of the Pacific Parliamentarian Assembly on Population and Development (PPAPD) in mobilising technical and financial resources, in close collaboration with our regional and international development partners and other stakeholders to facilitate follow-up actions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The conference expresses its sincere gratitude to the Fiji Parliament and people of the Republic of Fiji Islands for hosting this first meeting to mobilise Pacific Parliamentarians in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The conference also acknowledges with appreciation the following development partners for providing financial resources that brought this important initiative to fruition: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID), Asian Forum for Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), World Health Organization (WHO), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

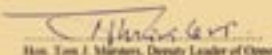
The Conference acknowledges with gratitude all the resource people at the meeting, particularly the two PLWHA speakers.

ADOPTION

We, the Pacific Parliamentarians hereby, unanimously adopt, the "Suva Declaration on the Fight against HIV/AIDS" in the Pacific Region, this 13th day of October 2004.

Signatories to the Suva Declaration on HIV/AIDS

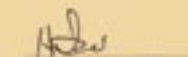

Hon. Frankina Tione Pulu (MP)
American Samoa


Hon. Tom I. Marsters, Deputy Leader of Opposition
Cook Islands


Hon. Naniwa Poyal
Federated States of Micronesia


Hon. U. Col. Jovanat Kankimoan, Chairman, Social Services Committee and
Leader of the House
Fiji Islands

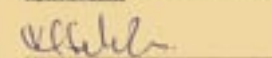

Hon. Nanaiana Kinau, Minister for Health and Medical Services
Republic of Kiribati


Hon. Sam Hokima Aani
Republic of the Marshall Islands


Hon. Anapora Sakimata, Speaker
Tonga

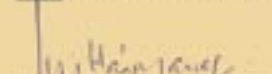

Ms. Patricia Goa, Congresswoman, Palika Party
New Caledonia

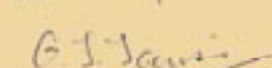

Hon. Dr. Barara Dan Zefania, Chairman of Committee on HIV/AIDS Advocacy
Palau, New Guinea


Hon. Tefilo Vales, MP
Samoa


Hon. Dr. Stephen Sange Ananua, MP
Solomon Islands


Dr. Teikiria Inerua, Director of Health Advisor
Tahiti


Hon. Havaia Te'ohiangani, MP
Tonga


Hon. Obinola Tansi, Speaker
Togo


Hon. Junzo Maki, Speaker
Republic of Vanuatu





Dr. Nafis Sadik, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General and Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific.



Hon. Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister of Fiji



Delegates at the opening ceremony of the meeting



Signing of the Suva Declaration by the Tongan Delegate



Ms Joana Raitini with parliamentarians



Dr Nafis Sadik with Representatives of UN Agencies



Hon. Lady Carol Kidu, Minister for Welfare and Social Development, PNG



Panelists facilitate HIV/AIDS discussion