

**Speech by Hon. Prime Minister, Susuga Tuilaepa Lupesoli'ai Sailele Malielegaoi at
the official opening of the Forty Sixth Asian and Pacific Coconut Community
(APCC) Ministerial Meeting, 2-5 February 2010, Apia, Samoa**

Reverend Mose Lata
Your Excellencies
Honourable Ministers
The Executive Director of APCC
Government Delegates
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour to address and officially open this Forty Sixth Asian and Pacific Coconut Community Ministerial Meeting in Apia.

I also wish to extend a cordial welcome to all the Ministers and other distinguished delegates from around the Asia and Pacific regions who are here to attend this very important conference. Special greeting is extended to our overseas guests who are here for the first time. I hope that your stay in Samoa will be a pleasant one, and that you will also have an opportunity to experience our unique brand of hospitality.

On behalf of the government, I wish to express our appreciation for being allowed to host this APCC meeting in Samoa. This meeting was postponed from early December 2009 due to the tsunami that struck our shores in late September the same year. I sincerely hope that the local organizers have provided all the comforts you need and please note that we are more than willing to play host to any future meetings.

The principal objective of this meeting is to provide a forum for the exchange of views at the political and policy levels on coconut development issues, and it should establish priority goals setting by Heads of Agriculture in the Asia and Pacific Regions. Your expressed views are very important in light of the challenges currently facing the coconut industry.

In September 2008, Samoa played host to the Pacific Second Regional Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry. The theme for that year was food security, nutritional balance, and sustainability of developments and resources. This same spirit is also valid to the development of the coconut industry. In this context, emphasis must be made of the significant value of the coconut tree to the diversity of farming systems and practices of small holder farmers, as well as the coconut's many other uses by the business community and all people.

At the present time, food security and biofuel are high in the agenda within our regions and beyond. This is particularly so, since the cost of living is skyrocketing, as triggered by the adverse effects of climate change and a significant increase in the price of fossil

fuels. It is therefore a concern for everyone to be prepared to meet the challenges, and consequently continue to live in relative comfort given such difficult circumstances.

In respect to the biofuel issue, it may be viewed as a stimulus for agricultural business opportunities, to be considered with good management policies to ensure the availability of alternative sources of energy, without compromising food security.

In Samoa, government and the private sector are committed to coconut replanting schemes, and research on various coconut related value adding activities to ensure economic opportunities for people in the rural districts. Infrastructural support with access roads is also a priority of government to facilitate such farming and agro-business ventures.

The environmental difficulties that are already plaguing the farming community need to be managed. As such, the farmers must be more resilient through the adoption of adaptable farming practices, and commodities with high degree of resistance or tolerance.

An interactive consultation in this forum will result in a communiqué to direct and spearhead the active participation of APCC on programmes that benefit all in the Asia and Pacific regions.

On that note, the Asia and Pacific Coconut Community is to be acknowledged as the implementing agency to develop and maintain the necessary supporting services for countries in the Asia and Pacific regions.

I would also like to acknowledge the most generous assistance and the many contributions that the international community has made over the years for our people through APCC.

To conclude, I wish you a successful conference, and it is my pleasure to now declare this APCC Ministers' meeting officially open.

Soifua ma ia manuia.