



# PIANGO

Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations

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## MEDIA STATEMENT

### COMMIT TO GENUINE PARTNERSHIPS, SAY CSOs

*For Immediate Release*

Nuku'alofa, Tonga (6 May, 2010) – Pacific Island civil society leaders meeting in the Tongan capital Nuku'alofa this week are calling for genuine and sustained partnerships with Pacific governments, stakeholders and development partners as Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) assess their effectiveness as part of a global process to examine the future of international aid and to evaluate its effectiveness.

The regional consultation, being held from 5-7 May, 2010 is organised by the Pacific Islands Association of Non Government Organisations (PIANGO) and supported by the Civil Society Forum of Tonga (CSFT). It is being funded by InterAction (United States) and the Commonwealth Foundation (London). PIANGO, as the regional NGO coordinating body, has been given the role to lead the Global Open Forum process for the Pacific.

Tongan Minister for Finance, Planning and Development, the Hon. Afu'alo Matoto said: "The Pacific is facing challenging times which necessitate Pacific governments and civil society organisations such as Churches, NGOs, the private sector and local communities work cooperatively and in partnership to mitigate the onslaught of challenges such as the global financial crisis and climate change."

He added that the Government of Tonga would like to see PIANGO and CSFT become stronger and effectively complement government's efforts to serving our mutual constituencies and working together at the global level to advocate strong Pacific Island perspectives on common concerns affecting our region.

Deputy Director of the Commonwealth Foundation, Mr Vijay Krishnarayan said: "As we reflect on the process of aid and development, one of the important lessons has to be that it is not always necessary to set up new institutions, mechanisms or platforms to deal with a particular issue or challenge. For that reason, I was pleased to see in this region you have identified the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs with its history, structure and credibility as the appropriate organisation to take this discussion forward. I am pleased to have been given this opportunity for the Commonwealth Foundation to show its continuing commitment to PIANGO in this small way."

In delivering the keynote address, Mr Kaliopate Tavola, former Minister for Foreign Affairs, External Relations and Trade in the Fijian government said CSOs needed an enabling environment in which to effectively operate and thus needed to interface with government and inter-governmental bodies.

“CSOs need to respond effectively to governments’ initiatives for engagement and as such CSOs need aid effectiveness, harmonisation and managing for development results. CSOs also want development results from aid funded activities and as such need to be accountable to their funders, sponsors and financial beneficiaries,” he said.

Mr Tavola said frameworks for government and CSO engagement currently existed in international treaties and agreements such as the Cotonou Agreement. These, he said, were legally binding and suggested CSOs use these as leverage to persuade governments to formally commit to engagement with them.

“The extent to which CSOs can be effective depends on factors that are determined by donors, governments and other development stakeholders, the overall regulatory framework, measures to promote CSO accountability to citizens and beneficiaries, opportunities for CSOs to engage in dialogue with government and donors and enforcement of human rights standards,” said Ms Carolyn Long, Director of Global Partnerships with the United States-based NGO Inter Action.

“In the Open Forum, CSOs should come together to propose concrete guidelines for minimum enabling standards that donors, governments and others can put in place to facilitate CSO development effectiveness,” she said.

The Tonga meeting will pull together Pacific Islands’ CSO contributions on development effectiveness for the global Open Forum process; identify areas to strengthen the development practices of Pacific Island CSOs and assess how donors and Pacific Governments can be best support CSOs as development actors in their own right. The meeting will also identify common principles and guidelines for CSO development effectiveness based on lessons learned from current and past development practices.

In addition, the meeting will also evaluate PIANGO’s current Strategic Plan which expires at the end of 2010 and will enable the organisation to prepare for the next strategic planning period 2011-2014. The revised Strategic Plan will be presented for endorsement at the next PIANGO Council meeting in July/August 2011. (ENDS)

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