

MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS SPEECH FOR OPENING OF FUNAFUTI URBAN DIALOGUE WORKSHOP

2 July 2010

First I would like to welcome you all this morning especially our two guests Sarah and Sachin travelling from Fiji to assist with this workshop.

I would also like to thank everyone for taking the trouble to make yourself available to attend this very important workshop which we call the *Funafuti Urban Dialogue Workshop*.

This workshop is one of the long outstanding important activities of the Ministry of Home Affairs mandated in the Kakeega II to achieve national development goals. The need to develop and manage urbanization is critical since Funafuti is increasingly transforming into an urban area and at present there is no proper institutional set up to coordinate develop and manage this transformation. As such Funafuti is beginning to show symptoms of both negative and positive impact of urbanization and learning from the experience of developed and developing countries in the world and neighboring Pacific countries, rational pro-actions to manage urbanization is vital.

Before Tuvalu became independent from British Colonial Administration in 1978 the population of Funafuti was less than half of the Funafuti population of 3,839 during the 1991 census after Funafuti was being made seat of the state and capital of Tuvalu; however eleven years later in 2002 the population increased to 4,492. Normally in any urban area the population increase is always associated with all the social problems and economic development. Social problems common to urban areas include unemployment, overcrowded households, insufficient water, sanitation, environment degradation, land and marine resources rapid depletion, land scarcity, rubbish, etc. Some of these social problems are currently felt and some are not felt yet. Unemployment is very high on Funafuti since a noticeable number of both adult and young people are coming and living on Funafuti looking for employment. Overcrowding is very obvious as Funafuti has highest average household size of 7.0 with Vaitupu as second highest with 6.4 while in population density Funafuti has the highest number of people of 1,420 per square kilometer while the other island range between 5 and 323 people per square kilometer. Insufficient water supply is obvious and manifested in the 24 hr operation of the water truck when it is not raining for 2-3 weeks. Dumping of rubbish at non designated and illegal site is very common and it is very obvious that the level of garbage had been increasing and had varied tremendously since the last 15 years.

Increasing population in urban areas also has its advantage and for one is national economic development through the formal and informal business activities, however this will only work well if urbanization is well managed and policies are in favor of these business activities in order to develop and sustain them to contribute to national economy.

Therefore the priority now is to know the current situation of Funafuti as an urban area. The important questions we need to find answers for are: What is definition of the urban in the context of Funafuti?

What are the key issues and challenges of urbanization on Funafuti? What are the benefits of urbanization? How can these challenges be approached and addressed?

The purpose of this workshop is to allow all stakeholders to meet and discuss these questions among themselves in order to come up with ideas of how to manage urbanization on Funafuti while it is developing into the future.

As we can see now that your role in this workshop is very important for the future of Tuvalu. Therefore I call upon every one of you to participate to the fullest so that the expected outcome from the workshop can be achieved.

Now I declare Funafuti Urban Dialogue Workshop OPEN.

Thank you.