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**Statement of the Health Ministers from the Pacific Island Countries
At the 75th World Health Assembly in Geneva
Delivered by Marcus Samo, Secretary
FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs**

22-28 May 2022

Theme: Health for peace, peace for health

Salutation:

Mr. President and Vice Presidents of the 75th World Health Assembly,
Director-General of the World Health Organization,
Excellencies, Honorable Ministers, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I share these words on behalf of my fellow ministers and colleagues from the Pacific.

Opening:

A quarter of a century ago, our predecessors in the Pacific dared to dream of a better future. The *Healthy Islands vision* they created is one in which:

Children are nurtured in body and mind;
Environments invite learning and leisure;
People work and age with dignity;
Ecological balance is a source of pride; and
The ocean which sustains us is protected.

Mr. President,

There is wisdom in these words. In the same way that health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, peace is not merely the absence of war. The women and men who set that vision years ago knew that true peace and prosperity only come when we overcome inequities, when we protect the planet that sustains us and the source of our pride; and when all of us, from infancy to our elder years, can live healthy and fulfilling lives.

Can we truly say we are at peace when some countries, particularly the small island states, continue to sink beneath the rising waves? Can we say we are at peace when we continue to pollute our oceans and poison the fish and marine life that **are vital for our economic and food security** today and into the future **and hold one of the keys to ending hunger and poverty**? Is a parent at peace when her child is ill but cannot access the treatment so easily available to others? Is a breadwinner at peace when he cannot even make the one-dollar a day to provide for the life of his family?

Even in the more traditional sense of peace and war, we know that conflict thrives under conditions of inequity and of struggle over limited resources. As our climate changes, leaving

some areas parched with others submerged, we will see further impacts on both our security and on our health.

Mr. President,

That is why, as our predecessors so wisely knew, we need to work towards that broader concept of peace based upon fairness, environmental stewardship and health for all.

The chasm between the can-not-do and can-do, between the able and disable, between the rich and the poor, the healthy and unhealthy must be narrowed and become a thing of the past. To succeed in this, however, we need the backing of a strong and independent WHO. We must all have a say in setting the priorities of the global health programmes which are supposed to serve every Member State. That is why we welcome the discussion on the sustainable financing of WHO.

For WHO's support has been essential in the Pacific. We would like to thank our WHO colleagues and partners for your ongoing assistance, particularly during the pandemic. There are mothers, fathers, children, and friends who are alive today--- because of you-- thanks to the advice you shared, the partners you coordinated with and the 160,000 kilograms of medical equipment and supplies you sent.

Conclusion:

To conclude, I want to remind us all of the broader definition of peace and the vision of a healthier future set by those who came before us. We in the Pacific will continue to work alongside our fellow Member States as we strive towards a fairer, healthier, and more peaceful world-- as we continue to extend to all peoples what we seek from each: peace, friendship, cooperation and love in our common humanity. We cannot attain a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being if Peace throughout the world is not our common purpose.

Peace for Health. Peace. Peace. Peace. Thank you.