

Draft address of H.E. Mr. Siaosi 'Ofa ki Vahafola Sovaleni, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment, Kingdom of Tonga and Co-Chair of the Second Session of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

I am honored to address you this morning in my capacity as one of the co-chairs of the second session of the APFSD in 2015. As we forge a path forward as one region, let us revisit our major achievements in building a robust architecture for achieving sustainable development in our region through the APFSD.

The successful conclusion of a number of critical international agreements in 2015 did not only reinforce the strength of the multilateral process, but also emphasized the value of regional processes in facilitating and strengthening global consensus. I am particularly proud of what we have achieved through the Forum by serving as a bridge between the local and global, and by connecting local stakeholders to the global agenda. As a region, our collective efforts enabled us to contribute substantive regional perspectives to global debates, in particular towards shaping the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

His Excellency Mr. Vajira Narampanawa, the Secretary of the State Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka and one of the vice-chairs of the past session of APFSD, reported the outcomes of the second session of the APFSD at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) at a moderated session held on 30 June with the theme “Regional Support to National Action.”

His Excellency Mr. Narampanawa’s presentation highlighted the key messages from the second session of APFSD and confirmed the importance of a holistic approach to sustainable development, based on balanced integration of three dimensions – social, economic, and environment and more inclusive development paths. We called for political commitment and leadership to realize sustainable development aspirations. We recognized that a forward-looking agenda needs the engagement of stakeholders in the region. Finally, we noted that the Forum could play a pivotal role in translating the global discourse on sustainable development into tangible outcomes at the regional and local levels.

Our deliberations at the past APFSD, which was attended by more than 400 participants, were enriched by the inputs of various associated forums, namely Asia-Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development, which was organized as a preparatory event for APFSD; the Regional Conference on

Aligning Corporate Sustainability with SDGs; and the first UNEP Forum of Ministers and Environmental Authorities of Asia Pacific.

I trust that the present and future sessions of APFSD will continue to embody the same spirit of collaboration and multi-stakeholder engagement that has become the mark of the past APFSD.

The last APFSD shaped and strengthened regional and multi-stakeholder consensus on some of the critical issues on sustainable development facing the region and provided a strong link between national and global levels. This APFSD is the opportunity to consolidate this consensus into a plan of action and to think forward for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. I trust that our region will continue to be a strong voice within the HLPF in its subsequent deliberations, particularly on issues that are critical for our region to successfully achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

At our last meeting, we agreed to define a regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda and decide on the form, function and modalities of the APFSD after 2016 based on the outcome of the seventieth session of the General Assembly through an intergovernmental consultative process and I am pleased to note that the Preparatory Senior Officials Meeting yesterday made a significant headway in putting in place the foundation for agreements on these critical tasks.

I sincerely hope that the APFSD will continue to play an important role in the region, allowing for dialogue on progress on the SDGs, exchange on best practices, and recommendations for policy and investment options in order to achieve sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.

I am looking forward to our deliberations in the next couple of days. I thank you.