

Statement delivered by Mr. Willy Missack on behalf of the NGO Major Group, 10 July at 10 AM.

Madam chair, distinguished panelists, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to address two key issues:

- Responding to the challenges in the current global milieu through a process of empowerment
- and the importance of education in order to promote inclusive development.

At the heart of everything we are discussing today is local ownership and commitment. If international agendas, such as the SDGs and the SAMOA pathway are to deliver on their promises to the peoples of the world, they must be embraced by those in villages and neighborhoods, and translated by them into reality. How, then is such ownership built?

Experience has demonstrated that this often begins with youth. The qualities at this stage of life are naturally geared towards justice and action. We must channel and learn from this spirit. Empowering young people to create change is key to building ownership. This involves a variety of factors and elements, but one of particular importance is a holistic educational process, process that strengthens human resources with qualities of respect, honesty, service to humanity, humility, and truthfulness — as well as intellectual capacities.

Building these capacities allows a population to make use of external resources in ways that recognize their own abilities and does not create dependency. This is vital. While we know there will need to be a much more equitable distribution of material resources in a more just and equal world, the transfer of resources leads to lasting progress only to the degree that it supports a process of local populations taking ownership of their own path of development.

One example of such a process that has arisen in the Pacific Islands is that of the Preparation for Social Action program. This program seeks to empower youth by making math, science, language, community development and technology applicable to young people's everyday lives, in part by integrating

those academic skills with the moral and spiritual capabilities needed to live a life of service to the common good. Its curriculum is both conceptual and action-oriented, integrating study with community building activities.

In places where this program has flourished, two populations, so often considered recipients of aid, have shown how they are in reality the drivers of development: the youth, and the islanders ourselves.

While external support is always welcome and indeed vital given the global challenges we face, it must be done in a way that recognizes the inherent capacities of the populations themselves.

We have found that when approached in this way, a population can be prepared to address a range of challenges, whether they be unemployment, violence against women, and even natural disasters and the effects of climate change. This is central to truly sustainable development.