



Twelfth Pacific Health Ministers Meeting



# Outcome of the Twelfth Pacific Health Ministers Meeting

Rarotonga, Cook Islands

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28–30 August 2017





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# Introduction

We are pleased to present the outcome document of the Twelfth Pacific Health Ministers Meeting held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, in August 2017. It highlights important outcomes, actions and commitments for the health of the population in the region.

At the first meeting in 1995, the Pacific health ministers adopted Healthy Islands as the unifying theme for health promotion and protection in the Pacific. Ministries of health of the Pacific have since worked hard towards the realization of this vision, which is now – more than two decades later – coupled with the progress towards universal health coverage and the attainment of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The biennial Pacific Health Ministers Meeting is an excellent opportunity to exchange updates on progress and benchmarks, as well as to realize potential regional synergies to achieve jointly what is more difficult to do alone.

In 2017, the Government of the Cook Islands cordially hosted the Pacific Health Ministers Meeting with the support from the Pacific Community and the World Health Organization. The main areas of work discussed were: building strong primary health care systems; the adoption of the Healthy Islands Monitoring Framework, which will also be used to monitor relevant SDGs; the strengthening of health information systems; the continued support for prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), especially rheumatic heart disease and mental health; and finally the endorsement of the Pacific Health Security Coordination Plan.

The Pacific health ministers welcomed the newly elected WHO Director-General's special initiative to address climate change impact on health in Small Island Developing States. The countries will continue their cooperation at regional and global levels, including looking for funding opportunities for climate change and health, and supporting the Health Action Day agenda at the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change presided over by Fiji. The Pacific health ministers agreed to include climate change and health as a standing agenda item at future meetings.

We look forward to continuing our work to keep the Pacific and its population healthy.



Dr Shin Young-soo  
WHO Regional Director  
for the Western Pacific



Honourable Nandi Tuaine Glassie  
Minister for Health, Justice &  
Parliamentary Services,  
Cook Islands



Dr Colin Tukuitonga  
Director-General of  
the Secretariat of the  
Pacific Community





## **“Cook Islands Mana”: The journey towards Healthy Islands in the Pacific**

Twelfth Pacific Health Ministers Meeting  
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The ministers agreed that strengthening primary health care and preventive services would be essential to achieve the Healthy Islands vision, to progress towards universal health coverage (UHC) and to attain the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The increasing complexity of delivering health services requires well-functioning and adequately resourced primary health care. This necessitates integration of both public health and clinical services with community outreach, and improving coverage of people-centred services.

The ministers are committed to ensuring that political leaders and the public understand why and how their own country should improve health services and primary health care. Accomplishing UHC and the Healthy Islands vision will entail mobilizing adequate resources and prioritizing health within a sustainable macroeconomic, social and environmental framework.

The ministers reaffirmed that addressing health security risks, including disease outbreaks and disasters, and also addressing the noncommunicable diseases (NCD) epidemic, are priorities that require strong primary health care systems that include both public health and clinical services. It is therefore necessary to increase the share of human and financial resources allocated to lower-level health facilities and community-based services.

The ministers agreed that the Healthy Islands Monitoring Framework developed since the last meeting in 2015 is an important tool for monitoring progress and achievements towards the Healthy Islands vision. It functions



as a governance and accountability framework as well as a mechanism for priority-setting and a tool for political decision-making. The framework can also be used for monitoring progress towards achieving the relevant SDGs.

It was recognized that implementation of the Healthy Islands Monitoring Framework depends on improvements in health information systems (HIS). There is a need for continued support by development partners for strengthening HIS overall, including digitalization and building of national capacity in data management and analysis.

The ministers recognized the robust commitment over the last 10 years for the prevention and control of NCDs in Pacific island countries and territories, but realized that greater emphasis is needed on multisectoral approaches. Continued efforts towards tobacco control and effective clinical management of NCDs are critical. Of special concern to the ministers is the growing burden of childhood obesity, which highlights the need for multiple, sustained and cross-sectoral actions to effectively reduce and prevent childhood obesity. Given the rapidly increasing burden of NCDs in the Pacific, it is crucial that the Pacific island countries' voices are heard on this issue in global forums.

The ministers agreed that more attention is needed on the prevention and control of rheumatic heart disease (RHD) in the Pacific region, given the current heavy burden, and on integrating RHD control into existing health service delivery. Given that some Pacific countries bear the world's highest burden of RHD, the ministers agreed that countries from the region should continue to spearhead efforts to place this issue on the global health agenda – including through a proposed resolution for consideration at the 2018 World Health Assembly.

Mental health services in Pacific island countries and territories are inadequate despite improvements, leaving a large service delivery gap, especially

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