**CONFERENCE SPEECH**

**FOR**

**SAKAIO MANOA**

Good afternoon and welcome to this year's ICT Official Meeting. I want to thank all of you for taking the time and expressing the interest to be here. (**If there is anyone in particular you wan to thank for organizing the event or for being present, do that here**). I would like to take a moment to acknowledge \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for the excellent and thorough work that has been done to organize this meeting. In addition, I would also like to extend a particular note of gratitude to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for participating in this important event. It is our intention that vital connections will be established, relevant questions will be asked and answered, and partnerships will be forged and maintained in order to foster understanding, technological advancement, and heightened awareness in the field of communications technology and in particular in the thematic areas of ICT for sustainable development, ICT for disaster risk and management, and ICT in support of cyber security. It is humbling to see so many committed, involved and distinguished guest and participants. It is no secret that our world is rapidly evolving on so many levels. From geopolitical, technological, and economic advancements and challenges to the ever-evolving changes in our environment, communication impacts our lives at every level. All we have is communication and connectivity has become such an integral part of our lives that we tend to take the nuances and subtleties for granted. It is not possible to be too informed, too connected, or too prepared for what lies ahead. And whether there are changes or threats to our collective well being around the corner or in the near or distant future, we, as a community, and by community I refer to our individual domains, the Pacific Islands, and ultimately the entire global trajectory, must plan our strategies for the future. We must also be prepared for conditions and challenges that we might possibly face **TODAY**.

The one condition that is constant in this new world of perpetual innovation and heightened connectivity is **change**. Each one of us must be committed to adapting to the changes and shifts in every scenario we might face. As quickly as a concept is introduced, the likelihood of obsolescence follows closely behind. As an example, security threats can become more and more sophisticated and can mimic real life conditions. (**If you want to mention a recent cyber security threat as an example, do so here**). We frequently hear of large institutions suffering security breaches from hackers. In fact as recently as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I am sure we all heard about the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Each one of us must be hyper observant in order to recognize and deflect the negative influences that conspire to threaten our safety.

At the same time, as our environment’s atmosphere morphs continually, so do our daily basic functions. Our senses and reflexes are adapting as we are bombarded by data and input from a myriad of sources. No matter where we go, we are linked to everyone- whether we like it or not. We are all learning to multi-task in greater depth than ever before, and it is our duty and obligation as leaders to be open to learning and finding newer and more effective ways to insure our technological advances are safe, secure, effective and supportive of every aspect of each citizen’s life.

In a research paper, Worldbank reported, "Over the last six years, more than two million people in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands gained access to mobile phones. In countries like Vanuatu, eight in ten people now have a mobile phone connection.... Villagers, who for years had made treacherous three-hour long boat trips to make a simple phone call to the capital, are now calling and texting family in other provinces and other countries. Access to mobile phones has reduced isolation, made it easier and cheaper to do business, and increased government options for service delivery." That was written "a million years ago..." Or in simpler terms, in **2013**…. which might as well have been a million years ago given the advances that have been made since then. (**If you want, say that with emphasis and wait for the laugh**). The march of technological advancement is unstoppable and relentless. A Pew research report forecasts that in **just five short years**, by the year 2020 **NINETY PERCENT** of the world's population will have a mobile phone. That's the good news and the bad news. Statistics like these emphasize the absolute need for fluidity in interface and familiarity with the functionality that is literally at our fingertips. As well as the general population has and will have greater access to communication for more universal and quotidian purposes, so will those groups that conspire against us. Although technology management on the ground levels- and by that I mean the general populace at large, is increasing, it is the mandate of the leaders in government, technology, and all manner of business and the humanities, to constantly maintain and sustain a fluid environment of information exchange and that is why we are here at this event.

Some of the points of focus will be:

* ICT for sustainable development
* ICT for disaster risk and management and response
* ICT for cyber security

ICT for sustainable development is a fascinating topic that can inspire never-ending discourse- and as the world evolves, that is the whole point. As though we are peeling a massive onion, every layer of information we discover and transmit begets another layer of issues and scenarios that need to be resolved. This is something that is prevalent in every area of the world. Just as a great work of art is never truly “finished,” neither is the investigative processes needed to support continual technological advancement in order to sustain our populations. Each region around the world has its own mandate to find the means to employ ICT to support all channels of education, commerce, regulatory reforms, infrastructure support, and the Pacific region is no exception. Every country and community has their unique challenges when it comes to keeping up with global innovations and conditions. Sustainable and effective ICT practices have the potential to revolutionize the way we learn and teach, the way in which we administer health care, the efficiency in our response to natural disasters and human suffering, the way business at every level from the small local merchant to mega conglomerates find the means to function effectively and efficiently. Like the villagers in Vanuatu who used to have to travel for three hours to make a phone call, each one of us has a lot at stake. At every level of the human condition, when technology is used with optimal functionality, lives transform- but it is up to each one of us to work together to discover the means to s[achieve and support that transformation.

Many mornings we wake up to hear the news of devastating and possibly unpredictable natural disasters occurring. From earth shattering quakes in Nepal to tsunamis and landslides elsewhere in the world, we cannot **YET** fully predict what will happen and when it will hit, but with heightened accessibility through ICT, devastating aftermaths can be impacted in positive ways. As we will share, ICT management provides a “critical platform and tool for early warning and developing response mechanisms for assessing damages during disasters. From state of the art video stream to increasingly sophisticated broadband technologies, response, relief and distribution of vital resources, information and equipment is more possible than ever before.”

Our world has always had threats of attack hanging over our heads, but in the modern era those threats are swift, devastating and insidious. Cyber threats can be seemingly benign… after all, who REALLY cares about spam? Or they can potentially bring down big business, government, and the way in which we live our lives. Ignorance is **NOT** bliss. In order to prepare for and neutralize these threats, we need to be informed of the ways in which we can access and employ ICT functions to protect, deflect, and hopefully eradicate the possibility of attacks.

Scott Cook, the cofounder of Intuit has said, “We’re still in the first minutes of the first day of the Internet revolution.” It doesn’t matter if he said this last week or last year or ten years ago. The technology that is being developed is perpetually new. The potential impact on our lives, businesses, and the future of our civilization is being written right now… by **US**, and so it is up to us to learn as much as we can and explore the ways in which we can employ ICT to enrich our lives, protect our communities, and sustain viable economies. I want to encourage every one of you to participate fully in this conference. Ask questions. Initiate conversation. Share data. Explore solutions. We are on a very exciting journey together and it is our duty to secure the well being of our children, our constituents, and our contemporaries to insure a safe and productive future for all. Thank you!