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FORUM ECONOMIC OFFICIALS MEETING

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FORUM ECONOMIC MINISTERS MEETING

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Virtual

INFORMATION PAPER 5: NCD ROADMAP

Purpose and Summary

Purpose

To provide an update on the progress towards the implementation of the Pacific Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Roadmap, monitored through Pacific Monitoring Alliance for NCD Action (MANA) Dashboard.

Summary

The implementation of the Roadmap has been further strengthened in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), however, there are several NCD related policy and legislation gaps that require urgent national action. Substantial efforts are required, in particular, to:

- i. further raise taxes on tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods and sugary drinks in line with global recommendations and reduce taxes on healthy alternatives such as fruits and vegetables;
- ii. support actions on controlling marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children, restricting marketing of breastmilk substitutes, restricting trans-fat in the food supply, and prohibiting tobacco industry interference; and
- iii. support with additional resources and financial allocation to tackle NCD more effectively at the national level.

A. Overview

To scale up multi-sectoral responses to the Pacific NCD crisis, the inaugural Joint-Forum Economic and Health Ministers Meeting held in the Solomon Islands in 2014 endorsed the Pacific NCD Roadmap. The Ministers committed to five key areas including: 1) strengthen tobacco control by an incremental increase in excise duties to 70% of the retail price of cigarettes; 2) increase in taxation of alcohol products; 3) improve policies on food and drink products directly linked to NCD; 4) enhance primary and secondary prevention of NCD; and 5) strengthen the evidence base for

programme effectiveness. The Roadmap includes a menu of over 30 other multi-sectoral interventions suited to the Pacific region.

2. To assist PICTs to monitor progress on implementing the Pacific NCD Roadmap, the Pacific MANA was established, and a mutual accountability mechanism using the MANA Dashboard was developed. This paper summarises the progress made in 2019-2021 against the baseline MANA status report published for 2017-2018, and the cumulative progress towards the implementation of the Roadmap. The challenges and recommendations to scale up NCD action in PICTs are also addressed.

B. Discussion

Progress

3. The implementation of the Roadmap has been further strengthened in PICTs. The following summarises the progress on the five key recommended areas and other recommended actions identified in the Roadmap. Progress made since the endorsement of PICTs' updated MANA Dashboards may not reflect in this paper.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen tobacco control by an incremental increase in excise duties to 70% of the retail price of cigarettes.

4. Three additional PICTs (Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Solomon Islands and Tokelau) have implemented tobacco taxation measures, resulting in 20 PICTs out of 21 PICTs, that have maintained and/or implemented tobacco taxation measures. To-date, six PICTs (American Samoa, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Palau, Tonga, and Wallis & Futuna) have reached recommended tobacco taxation target.

Recommendation 2: Increase in taxation of alcohol products.

5. One additional PICT (RMI) has implemented alcohol taxation measures resulting in 21 PICTs but, in most cases, taxation is based on beverage type rather than on ethanol content as recommended by the WHO NCD best-buys.

Recommendation 3: Improve policies on food and drink products directly linked to NCD, especially salt and sugary drinks.

6. One additional PICT (New Caledonia) adopted a taxation measure to discourage unhealthy food/beverage choices, bringing the total to 14 PICTs. One additional PICT (Tonga) put in place a policy to reduce population salt consumption resulting in 16 PICTs in total; and six additional PICTs (American Samoa, CNMI, Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, and Tuvalu) have some policy measures to restrict trans-fat in the food supply (from none to now 6 PICTs in total).

7. Two additional PICTs (Palau and Tuvalu) have endorsed food based dietary guidelines resulting in 13 PICTs in total, three additional PICTs (Cook Islands, Niue, and Samoa) have put in place policies to restrict marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children resulting in five PICTs in total, with four more PICTs (Nauru, Palau, PNG and Tonga) putting in place policies to encourage provision and promotion of healthy food choices in schools, which now brings the total to 14 PICTs.

Recommendation 4: Enhance primary and secondary prevention of NCD including scaling up of WHO package of essential noncommunicable (PEN) disease interventions for primary health care.

8. One additional PICT (Palau) has national guidelines in place for the diagnosis and management of at least one of the four main NCDs (total 19 PICTs) and four additional PICTs (FSM Pohnpei, PNG, RMI, and Solomon Islands) have essential NCD medicines included in the national list of essential medicines (total 19 PICTs). Four additional PICTs (FSM, PNG, Tokelau, and W&F) have smoking cessation support of some kind available (total 18 PICTs).

9. Regarding programmes related to infant nutrition, one additional PICT (Samoa) has restrictions on the marketing of breast milk substitutes (total six PICTs), one additional PICT (PNG) has a public hospital certified as a baby-friendly hospital (total five PICTs), and six additional PICTs (CNMI, Guam, Samoa, Tuvalu, and W&F) have legislation to provide at least 12 weeks paid maternity leave and breast-feeding facilities, resulting in a total of 14 PICTs out of 21 PICTs.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen the evidence base for better investment planning and program effectiveness.

10. The monitoring of adult NCD risk prevalence data has been completed in two additional PICTs (RMI and W&F) (total 14 PICTs) while three additional PICTs (American Samoa, Niue, and RMI) monitoring adolescent prevalence data (total 17 PICTs). With one additional PICT (PNG), 19 PICTs now have functioning systems for generating cause-specific mortality data on a routine basis. Four additional PICTs (New Caledonia, RMI, Tonga, and Wallis & Futuna) now reported routinely collecting and reporting child growth data – thus bringing the total to 15 PICTs.

11. Some PICTs have undertaken tax impact assessments on various products such as tobacco, alcohol, sugar-sweetened beverages, and other discretionary foods, and fruits and vegetables. Many of these studies found that increasing taxes resulted in increased price of product at point-of-sale, increased government revenue, and decreased import quantities. Similarly, some studies estimated that decreased tax resulted in reduced prices of products and increased consumption.

Other recommended actions

i. Leadership and governance

12. Seven additional PICTs (CNMI, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, RMI and Tokelau) have established a multi-sectoral NCD taskforce to oversee the implementation of their national NCD plan, resulting in now a total of 12 of the 21 PICTs establishing such a mechanism. Four more PICTs (Nauru, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands and Tokelau) have developed a national multi-sectoral NCD strategy, which brings the total to 17 PICTs now having a national multi-sectoral NCD strategy in place.

ii. Other preventive policy and legislation

13. Most have legislation to create smoke free public places with two additional PICTs (FSM Kosrae and Niue) (total 20 PICTs); two additional PICTs (American Samoa and Niue) have legislation for health warnings on tobacco packaging (total 17 PICTs); two additional countries (Niue, and Tokelau) have legislation to restrict advertising (total 19 PICTs); and four additional PICTs (FSM Pohnpei, Niue, Samoa, and Tokelau) restrict sales and licensing (total 18 PICTs).

14. One additional PICT (FSM Pohnpei) has licenses to restrict sales of alcohol (total 21 PICTs), two additional PICTs (FSM Pohnpei and PNG) have regulations in place to control drink driving (total 20 PICTs), and two additional PICTs (FSM and Nauru) restrict alcohol advertising (total 8 PICTs).

15. Two additional PICTs (CNMI and Palau) have compulsory physical education in school (total 15 PICTs). Five additional PICTs (American Samoa, FSM Pohnpei, Palau, RMI and Tokelau) have a government-level system in place to support enforcement of NCD risk factors although the strength of enforcement systems varies greatly.

Challenges

16. While strong policy and legislation are in place in some areas, substantial efforts are still required to further raise taxes on tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy foods and drinks inline with global recommendations and reduce taxes on healthy alternatives such as fruits and vegetables. There are still several policy and legislation gaps that challenge addressing NCDs. These include, for example, preventing tobacco industry interference, restricting trans-fats in the food supply, restricting marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children, restricting marketing of breastmilk substitutes, and enforcing policies and legislations. These challenges are exacerbated by the tensions between the framing of health and trade policy objectives at national and regional level although there is recognition of global trade as a driver of NCDs. In addition, with the reallocation of resources to prepare for and response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant challenge in the implementation of NCD related policies and legislation in PICTs. There is also a need to strengthen leadership and financing to address NCD and address NCD in a sustained ‘whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

C. Next Steps

17. The implementation of the Roadmap has been further strengthened in PICTs, however, there are several NCD related policy and legislation gaps that require urgent national action to address Pacific NCD crisis and promote the wellbeing of all Pacific people.

18. In conclusion, substantial efforts are required, in particular, to:

- i. further raise taxes on tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy foods and sugary drinks in-line with global recommendations and reduce taxes on healthy alternatives such as fruits and vegetables;
- ii. support actions on controlling marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children, restricting marketing of breastmilk substitutes, restricting trans-fat in the food supply, and prohibiting tobacco industry interference; and
- iii. support with additional resources and financial allocation to tackle NCD more effectively at the national level.