



THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

1-4 September 2014, Apia, Samoa

Address by Prime Minister Hon. Henry Puna of the Cook Islands

Your Excellencies

Heads of State and Governments

Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa

Leaders and Colleagues from the Pacific and around the World

Heads and Representatives of UN Agencies and International Organisations

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

To the Government and People of Samoa: Talofa and a special Kia Orana from the Cook Islands.

Mr. Chairman

You have done your country proud. We, as your Pacific family, are humbled by your leadership in hosting this historic gathering in our Pacific.

As Pacific Islanders, we often talk about our concept of family and what it means to be part of this family.

The socialisation of our culture and traditions is all wrapped up in this idea of shared caring and nurturing; a common understanding and appreciation; and above all, the foundation of a responsibility to uphold a way of life for the benefit of future generations.

This is where it starts for us. The anchor of the 'Pacific Way'.

This is where it starts and branches outward: to our village community, the Church, and throughout our formalised structures of governance and civil society.

In fact, the Pacific Way is an idea that can span the oceans and ignite a spirit of togetherness even in the harshest adversity of storms and unrest. Our Polynesian voyagers from Hawaii, who would have just arrived in Apia today, will attest to that, having set out on a journey that will take them around the world, navigating 47,000 nautical miles through 85 ports and 26 countries.

Unfortunately, when **we** talk about this idea of the family – this intrinsic value system and the extent and depth to which it permeates our being – **many** in the developed world simply **do not** speak the same language.

When **we** talk about 'the devastating impacts of climate change on remote low-lying communities', some developed countries talk about 'the erosion of private sector profitability'.

When **we** declare a need for 'large scale capital investment', some developed countries' response is to encourage 'small business enterprise'.

And when **our** Leaders talk about the importance of freeing up the political will to drive paradigm shifts in thinking and actions, **other** Leaders speak about the limitations of shackled responsibility to their constituents.

Mr. Chairman

The Small Island Developing States family is a different ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘destination’ and we need the right pathway to bring our partners in the developed world to our doors. That is abundantly clear in terms of allowing the flow of dialogue to gel and form a common purpose. It is our hope that the Samoa pathway is the right pathway.

To start with, the complete and full recognition for national-level enhancement and support is critical for all SIDS, which are facing prolonged economic uncertainty and sustained pressures as a result of population drifts and the displacement of capacity.

Risk management is part of everyday language for us small island developing states.

Many of us are atoll-based communities, remote and low-lying; narrow or lacking in meaningful economic activity; subject to escalating food and transport costs; and wanting in the capacity to contend with advancing change.

Our challenges and constraints reflect a **shared** predicament of threats and vulnerabilities and the need to build upon our inherent resilience. We have a shared duty to find the solutions, together.

For our purpose here in Samoa, our third global conference, we have a theme to address: *‘The sustainable development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships’*.

This is not a call to break down and re-analyse the priorities for our sustainable development, but a call to build real and lasting avenues to move forward so that SIDS will no longer have to tolerate chronic inaction and delay.

We can no longer afford to talk past each other. The language and intention of common interest must be upheld with greater priority.

For the first time, Mr. Chairman, we are now putting genuine and durable partnerships upfront-and-centre in the quest for a sustainable future for SIDS.

I’m pleased to say that the Cook Islands **can** attest to the success of building positive relations, and adopting meaningful working models with a wide range of local, regional and international partners.

Firstly, the country’s largest development project to secure safe and reliable water supply is underway – an infrastructure initiative that has set new levels of cooperation in a historic tripartite arrangement between the People’s Republic of China, the Cook Islands, and New Zealand.

Secondly, Renewable Energy targets once deemed ‘ambitious’ are coming to fruition within the stated timeframes thanks to programmed cooperation with the Government of New Zealand, the European Union and the Asian Development Bank, the Government of Japan through the Pacific Economic Cooperation Fund and SIDS Dock.

The Cook Islands is also benefiting from encouraging levels of private sector investment, which add enormous value and an important dimension to the achievement of national renewable energy goals.

Thirdly, in support of the Pacific Oceanscape concept endorsed by Pacific Leaders in 2011, the Cook Islands launched over one million square kilometre of Marine Park in 2012 with the assistance and encouragement of a number of key partners, including the Oceans 5 Foundation, Conservation International, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the Living Oceans and the Waitt Foundations.

Recognising the importance of our environment and lagoon water quality to our key economic driver tourism, partners New Zealand, Australia and the European Union have clustered resources to assist us.

Mr. Chairman

We celebrate these gains, but recognise that the pursuit for greater levels of resilience and sustainability must continue with renewed vigour and commitment. The forging of meaningful, genuine and durable partnerships is the pathway we must follow today and into the future.

Maintaining the balance between the pillars of sustainable development is fundamental for the existence and survival of Small Island Developing States. As such, we have to accept that as members of the global family, we must account for one another with a sense of shared caring and nurturing, common understanding and appreciation.

Thank you Mr Chairman.

