



TUVALU STATEMENT

THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

Presented by:

Hon. Enele Sosene Sopoaga

Prime Minister

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Apia, SAMOA

Please check against delivery

The Hon Prime Minister of Samoa,

1. I extend the warm Greetings and sincere congratulations of the people of Tuvalu to you, The Hon Prime Minister, your Government and people of Samoa for hosting the Third International Conference on SIDS. I also thank you for the excellent preparations, the courtesies and hospitalities extended to me and my delegation - Faafetai tele lava Samoa i lau talimalo. Ia faamanuia le Atua, i le atunuu o Samoa.
2. Tuvalu also wishes to thank the United Nations Secretary General Mr Ban Ki-Moon for his encouraging remarks and the UN Secretariat under the auspices of Under Secretary General Mr Wu Hongbo for the support to this Conference on SIDS.
3. Hon Heads of Governments, Hon Ministers, Heads of Delegations, Excellencies and Dignitaries, Distinguished Delegates Ladies and Gentlemen.
4. Twenty-two years ago in Rio, the international community through its Agenda 21 gave amplified recognition to the 'Special Case' of Small Island Developing States – the SIDS – because of their unique vulnerabilities. All the sustainable development conventions of Rio and the UN in NY and elsewhere since have called for global efforts to address the 'special case' of SIDS.
5. Today in this beautiful island nation of Samoa, far removed from the sophistications of that intriguing island of Manhattan, we gather for the third time in three decades to review how we as a community have fared through in this commitment to the 'special case' of SIDS. Indeed, this is a timely occasion as this is the International Year of SIDS and as we transition and evolve from the MDGs into the mandates of the Sustainable Development Goals and Post 2015 Development Agenda. While we continue to dialogue, it is critically important that we also take into consideration the views of all stakeholders, in particular of the national and local government and community traditional authorities in the post-2015 development agenda and its implementation.
6. As we meet here, we also hear of the new and emerging challenges for SIDS. IPCC findings on climate change are very telling and worrying. Climate change, unless urgently addressed, will have all our sustainable development efforts severely compromised. The implications for SIDS, unless urgent actions are done to reverse and adapt to climate change, are catastrophic - climate change for SIDS is a weapon of mass destruction. And we do not need to look elsewhere for proof than to recall the lives threatening destructions that were recently inflicted on Lalomanu communities, in this island nation of Samoa, and to many communities in ALL other SIDS.
7. As SIDS, we are characterized by multiple structural constraints and vulnerabilities, including for most of us, at least in the Pacific, size, remoteness, narrow resource and low productive capacity, distance from markets, confined export base and therefore

diseconomies of scale, exposure to global environment challenges and external food and energy shocks, global financial crisis, and adverse impacts of climate change. And these are all well documented and acknowledged, in Rio, Barbados, Mauritius, and the many national communications under the Rio MEAs.

8. The big Oceans which sustain SIDS and on which our SIDS lives and cultures are interconnected, are now increasingly becoming a convenient waste dumping ground including acidification and radio-active and nuclear wastes. As a sink of CO₂ and other wastes, and a highway for international trade, it is time the SIDS are properly compensated for their Oceans. And because of climate change, the oceans are now the hands that feed, and increasingly also the hands that can take.
9. Critically, Tuvalu is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change. It is absolutely critical that the international community responds decisively and urgently to the global challenge of climate change. Tuvalu stands at the forefront of the climate change challenge.
10. Over the years, we have witnessed the world stumble along an uncertain path towards a meaningful outcome on climate change. Even some of our close neighbours are still in denial about the science of climate change. This is an enormous tragedy. We must act now. We must push aside these denials, these backward beliefs. We must break our bonds with the fossil fuel industry.
11. We must work together to create a fossil free future. No greater challenge faces the world and its people. Addressing climate change is not about saving sovereignty and national budgets. It is about saving human beings, saving our brothers and sisters, fellow human beings, saving humanity. We must keep in mind that in saving Tuvalu, we save the world!
12. Tuvalu takes note of the draft outcome document, which has been eloquently phrased as the SAMOA Pathway. We must congratulate our host, Samoa, for their leadership. But the question remains: how have we fared since Rio, in providing long term security and survival for SIDS like Tuvalu against global challenges particularly the onslaught of climate change and sea level-rise. And how will the SAMOA Pathway deliver on our aspirations on SIDS security and survival.
13. Mr Chairman, since Rio the situation for Tuvalu has remained unchanged. The 2008 global financial crisis has taught us good lessons. We think globally, but we must act locally. And Tuvalu has done just that. In the wake of abrupt job loss for our seafarers and many other challenges because of the global crisis, the new Government of Tuvalu has committed to a refined 'Roadmap': a sustainable development strategy that is owned and driven by Tuvalu, with the support of our partners, which focusses on the strengthening and empowering of local capacity to better adapt and cope with Tuvalu's vulnerabilities.

14. With our meagre financial resources, we are already doing more with little that we have, investing in human development and our own natural resources. The Tuvalu Trust Fund, an international partnership with friends is critical in this effort. But serious gaps exist, not of our own doing, but by our continuing vulnerabilities to forces decided globally beyond our control. We welcome new partnerships on climate change, food security and the production sector, natural resources and solid waste, energy security and infrastructure, IT, and human security and development.
15. While our fisheries sector has proven to be hugely successful, there is a pressing need to manage the resources properly and ensure environmental protection. In this regard, we fully support the Pacific Forum Leaders Palau declaration on Oceans, and strongly believe oceans must be a stand-alone SDG target. We also stand firmly behind the recommendations by the Pacific Fisheries Ministers that call on developed countries and their fishing industries to support the efforts of Pacific SIDS to better manage their fishery resources in accordance with the UNCLOS. Our priority is for the full recognition of our rights under the UNCLOS. In this sense we must drive for concerted actions amongst the global community.
16. At the global level, the international response to SIDS is far from being adequate. Fat on words, but thin on delivery. The ODA target of 0.7% of GNI to help developing countries with special developmental needs remains unfulfilled. And despite the multiplicity and enormity of financial resources verbally promised under the various MEAs, including under the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol and the much talked about Climate Green Fund, in reality, delivery has not happened. No special windows have been provided with easy access to the SIDS for meaningful implementation.
17. Tuvalu appreciates the variety of projects to help adapt to the impacts of climate change. But we are suffering a mindset of assistance that focuses on reconnaissance, report writing and consultancies. We need partnerships that are **more action oriented, partnerships that avoid middle men and middle institutions** that have constrained positive impacts on the targeted communities, and partnerships that are not simply pilot but full scale projects. To help create the necessary environment for a country driven approach to our response to climate change, there is also an urgent need to establish a special Climate Resilience Trust Fund to support a long-term programme to climate proof Tuvalu.
18. The SAMOA Pathway has separate sections on both Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction even though there is a significant overlap between these two issues. It is critical that we avoid misconceptions on coordination and unnecessary regional competition for funding responses under these two thematic issues, and ensure proper coordination and support by regional bodies for effective implementation at the country level.
19. Mr. Chairman, in the 2011 MDG progress report, Tuvalu was assessed to be “on track” on four of its MDGs. We appreciate the partnerships with the donors, civil society, and our

regional and international partners, in advancing our development trajectory. There is “potential” to achieve the other targets (gender, HIV/ AIDS, and environment). But as can be expected, the poverty MDG was “unlikely” to be achieved. And this clearly shows how ill placed the whole MDG approach is on SIDS, which focusses too much on ends only while ignoring the fundamental global factors exacerbating our vulnerabilities. We must avoid this path, we must focus on empowering and enabling SIDS to own and drive their own social and sustainable development.

20. One chronic problem for Tuvalu is the issue of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The Government is fully committed to improving our diet, improving sporting and exercise programmes. We also strongly support the Pacific Finance and Health Ministers joint outcome on NCDs. But we need international help to resolve this problem particularly to manage and control the influx of commercialized and imported food-supply and to encourage more use of home grown organic food and island food. Partnerships on food and sporting and physical events are welcome.
21. The SAMOA Pathway makes reference to Least Developed Countries. As a LDC listed for graduation out of the LDC category we call on the international community and in particular ECOSOC to review the criteria for LDC status. While our economy and educational status is relatively good, our nation’s economy could be wiped out by one cyclone. One event could ruin us. The growing impacts of climate change are eroding our opportunities for development. It is fundamental that the impacts of climate change are included in the criteria for LDC status.
22. The SAMOA Pathway includes a section on technology transfer. It is very evident in Tuvalu that the transfer of technology has not been effectively and adequately materialized. We acknowledge the Secretary-General’s vision of Sustainable Energy for All and long for the day where energy bills in our countries budget do not crowd out other important development aspirations.
23. Tuvalu has set a target of 100% renewable energy economy by the year 2020 as commitment to climate change and poverty eradication, and we acknowledge the support of the EU, NZ, Pacific regional organisations and other partners. We welcome new partnerships in this area.
24. Effective and reliable communications is also a critical issue for a small island country like Tuvalu. We suffer the tyranny of distance. We need a reliable and fast communication service for our outer islands and rest of the world. This is critical for times when Tuvalu is struck with severe weather events and medical emergencies. We kindly ask that the international community support Tuvalu in the establishment of a fast and reliable 4g internet service for all our islands.

25. As a small island nation, employment opportunities are limited. We have a growing number of unemployed youth, who are keen to find meaningful employment but have limited opportunities. We urgently need opportunities for labour mobility in SIDS regions. Temporary migration-employment schemes such as the NZ and the Australian work schemes for Pacific SIDS have been very rewarding for SIDS in enhancing work ethics, time management and financial/budget skills, technical know-how, labor-rights and basic legal awareness. It is important that better job security and labour mobility from SIDS are developed and supported by proper education and training.
26. The outcome of this Conference on SIDS, as such Mr Chairman, cannot be another SIDS ONLY platform of implementation. It must be a truly and long-lasting partnership for the international community and SIDS to improve capacity, build and transfer appropriate technology and develop a long term secure environment with easy access to international financing to address SIDS special case and save the SIDS. Yes, we SIDS take the lead. But it has to be a two-way traffic built on mutual trust, confidence and respect. The vast resources of SIDS are grounds for partnerships.
27. In its implementation, yes national authorities take the lead. But we must also involve the local government and community authorities in rural areas as they in fact are the land and resource owners, and the key catalysts for wider partnerships with the youth, the women and community.
28. Finally, Mr Chairman, I wish to briefly return to the issue of climate change. I am sure that all SIDS agree that the new agreement to be concluded in Paris in 2015 should be a new protocol under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. It is unfortunate that we are not able to say this in the SAMOA Pathway. A new protocol will give the legal certainty that we need to ensure that commitments to reduce greenhouse gases and commitments to support vulnerable countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change are real and not based on legal ambiguity and uncertainty.
29. For this most serious challenge, we cannot give up. We must not take a defeatist approach of re-locating and leaving our beautiful islands, our human rights. We need a legal guarantee that our future, the future of the World, is not at risk. This is Article II, the fundamental objective of the UNFCCC, to which we as the international community have all committed.
30. Leaders of the World, Tuvaluan children and your children are inter-related. We are all interconnected as a human race. We must share what we can spare for the SIDS.
“In saving Tuvalu, you save the World”.

TUVALU MO TE ATUA
Mr Chairman, I thank you.