



TUVALU

Statement

Presented by

The Prime Minister of Tuvalu

Honourable Mr. Willy Telavi

at

The World Conference on Sustainable Development

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Please check against delivery

Mr President
Distinguished Heads of State and Government
Secretary General
Ladies and Gentlemen

Talofa and warm Greetings from the people and Government of Tuvalu whom I am honored and privileged to speak on our behalf at this historic event.

At the outset, allow me first of all to express our profound appreciation to the people and Government of Brazil for the warm hospitality accorded to my delegation since our arrival in this beautiful city of Rio de Janeiro, and to thank you for the excellent facilities and services you have provided as host country for this important conference.

Let me also extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General of the conference and Co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee for their excellent leadership and untiring efforts in the long and intensive negotiations they have undertaken together with Member States of the United Nations and other stakeholders on the successful conclusion of the conference outcome document.

Mr President today has a special meaning for my country Tuvalu and our people, as I stand in this podium and seize this unique opportunity on our behalf to tell the world the Future we want for our children and our future generations. The title chosen for the conference outcome document, "The Future We Want", is timely and critical in view of the ongoing impacts of recent multiple global crises which continue to affect us all, especially for a small island developing State (SIDS) like Tuvalu. In this regard, the need to renew our shared vision and commitment to sustainable development and more importantly to act upon what has been agreed as new initiatives for sustainable development is crucial and cannot be overemphasised.

Mr President, during the first Earth Summit held in this same city of Rio de Janeiro twenty years ago, and at the follow up Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, world leaders adopted 'Agenda 21' and the 'Johannesburg Plan of Implementation' respectively as blueprints of global principles and targets for sustainable development. However, after twenty years of global efforts, the implementation and achievement of the required programs and targets under such blueprints is not very encouraging as many commitments remain unfulfilled. In this context, more effort and commitment is needed from every facet of the global community to ensure that critical environment and development issues such as climate change, environment degradation, sustainable

energy, food security, and poverty alleviation are urgently addressed. There is certainly a critical need to do much more to save our planet and to achieve the future we want!

The themes chosen for this conference - green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development - are timely and urgent. Our world is at a turning point, and we need to act now to save our world which is worth living for our future generations.

Mr President, oceans and seas are critical for the earth's ecosystem, food security and sustainable economic prosperity, especially in SIDS like Tuvalu. As a sea-locked country with a vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 900,000 square kilometers compared with its small land area of only 24 square kilometers, a 'green economy' to us in this context is actually a 'blue economy', as we continue to be heavily dependent on the sustainable management and responsible use of oceans and seas and their resources as our only livelihoods.

In order to ensure healthy nutrition and livelihoods for our people and our future generations, countless challenges, such as overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and loss of biodiversity among others must be addressed immediately. Oceans also produce more than half of the oxygen in the atmosphere, and absorb the most carbon from it. Therefore, keeping our oceans and seas healthy is a global and collective responsibility that we all owe to our future generations.

Mr President, the continued recognition and treatment of Tuvalu and other SIDS as 'special case' needs to be strengthened and honored by the international community. This is crucial as it demonstrates the special developmental challenges and assistance that we face and need in our effort to achieve sustainable development.

In 2005, Tuvalu adopted its National Strategy for Sustainable Development: 2005-2015 or 'Te Kakeega II' - a ten year plan to achieve a healthy, educated, peaceful, and prosperous Tuvalu by 2015 through sustainable development strategies and activities. The plan also incorporates other internationally agreed goals including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The successful implementation of such plan to achieve sustainable development and our shared vision for the future we want, depends on the continued support and financial assistance of the international community.

Mr President, the adverse impacts of climate change especially sea level rise continues to remain as Tuvalu's greatest concern, which undermines its sustainable

development, and more critically threatens its very existence as a nation and survival of our people.

Tuvalu, like other Pacific islands, is extremely vulnerable to natural disasters which can seriously endanger our whole population and put our development efforts of past years at high risk. Last year water security in Tuvalu was seriously threatened by the most severe drought the country has ever faced in history which required the Government to declare a state of emergency and sought external assistance from the international community and our development partners.

While a lot has been done globally to address climate change, there are still significant gaps that need urgent attention. Developed countries need to scale-up and provide new and improved climate change mitigation and adaptation financial support to poor and most vulnerable countries. Developing countries also need to contribute to this global effort. For example, as a least developed country, Tuvalu has set a renewable energy target of 100 per cent clean power by 2020. Although this may be an insignificant contribution towards our global effort to mitigate the root cause of global warming due to its size, Tuvalu does not want to compromise the state of the environment for fast gained economic growth.

Mr President, the ongoing impacts of recent global crises which are exacerbated by the adverse impact of climate change, continue to be major challenges for Tuvalu in our efforts to implement the appropriate and required means of achieving the three pillars of sustainable development. However, despite Tuvalu's extreme vulnerability to such external economic and environmental shocks, which are the greatest obstacles to our overall development, the Committee for Development Policy of the United Nations has recently recommended for Tuvalu to be graduated from the least developed country category.

Under the current circumstances facing the global economy, couple with the fact that Tuvalu is the smallest LDC with a small and fragile economy that is heavily dependent on ODA, we firmly believe that such recommendation is a grave and untimely mistake. In this regard, the appropriate body of the United Nations responsible for the question of Tuvalu's graduation is requested to consider Tuvalu's position on this issue based on its unique situation and its own merits.

Mr President, whilst Tuvalu appreciates the ongoing support and financial assistance from our traditional development partners and the international community through multilateral and regional organizations, the continued and invaluable

contribution by the Government of Taiwan towards achieving Tuvalu's sustainable development goals is fully recognized and acknowledged by the Government and people of Tuvalu. In this regard, the meaningful participation and contribution of Taiwan in the UN subsidiary bodies to achieve our global shared vision for sustainable development should be recognized and entertained without any reservation.

Mr President, despite the comprehensive outcome document finally agreed after intensive negotiations, it cannot be constructively realized without the effective and timely mobilization of the required resources for its implementation. In this regard Tuvalu highly commends the provisions in the outcome document for donor countries to fulfill their ODA commitments of 0.7 per cent and 0.15 - 0.20 per cent of their gross national product to developing and least developed countries respectively, and to increase the rate of their aid disbursements to meet their existing commitments.

Mr President, in conclusion, let me underscore the importance and urgent need for the international community and all stakeholders to honor our obligations and commitments to undertake practical and timely measures to implement our shared vision for the "Future we want" for our children and our future generations. We need to look beyond our national borders and see the world as a whole, and as a common place for humankind to live. Let us act as one body, one nation, and one world to save this planet as our promise and commitment for the future we want for our children! We cannot afford to wait for another twenty years to take action! Let us start today!

I thank you.

Tuvalu mo te Atua - Tuvalu For God