

**Statement by the Ulu o Tokelau
Aliko Faipule Kuresa Nasau**

(As Read)

The President of the Conference

Heads of State and Government

The Secretary-General of the United Nations

The President of the General Assembly

The Secretary-General of the Conference

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr President, *Malo Ni!* And I convey warm Tokelau Greetings.

On behalf of the people of Tokelau, I want to acknowledge God our Heavenly Father for His guidance in making this event possible. I commend the Government of Samoa for bringing the world to the Pacific. Samoa had been working tirelessly to ensure that small islands like ours can attend this SIDS Conference. Tokelau may not be an independent state; we are a “true” Small Island Developing State. Our total land area is approximately 12 square kilometers, and our land is only 3-5 metres above sea-level at the highest point.

I also wish to extend Tokelau’s sincere appreciation to the Government of New Zealand, who has given our people an opportunity to add our unique voice to this global family. Tokelau is proud to be represented at this important meeting and to share with you a brief glimpse of our reality as the people of Tokelau.

A number of distinguished delegates may not have heard of Tokelau before today. That is not surprising as we are one of the world’s most geographically isolated nations. Located 500 kilometers north of Samoa there are only 1400 of us living across our 3 atolls. You can only reach our shores by taking a 24-hour boat journey from Samoa.

What we have in common with other SIDS from the Pacific is our vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change. Let me be clear - climate change is already having a negative impact on Tokelau. We are seeing signs of coastal erosion and ocean acidification. This is of deep concern to us due to our fragile biodiversity and the fact that revenue from our fisheries resource is a significant source of income.

Tokelau and SIDS as a global family must face the challenges of climate change head on. This is our duty to future generations. We must not fail.

What if the impacts of climate change is not addressed for nations such as ours? Our people stand to lose not only our unique environment and land, but also our culture, language and traditions which are our identity.

The situation looks bleak. Yet, despite our size and our minimal carbon footprint, Tokelau is leading by example in the Pacific region by switching from diesel-generated electricity to clean, renewable and reliable solar energy.

We partnered up with New Zealand for the Tokelau Renewable Energy Project. Since 2012 solar arrays installed on each atoll supply 90% of Tokelau's electricity needs. That makes Tokelau one of the world's top nations in renewably-sourced electricity - and the first to run almost exclusively on solar-generated power.

This project shows the world the vision of the leaders and communities in Tokelau for a better and more sustainable future.

My challenge to us here today, is to agree as SIDS collectively on a platform for action going forward. If Tokelau can achieve such a good result in the renewable energy space, imagine what we, as SIDS, can do together. We must unite and be strong. Let no one be left behind nor let us shy away from difficult conversations.

To the people and the Government of the Independent State of Samoa - you have made Samoa and the Pacific family proud. We can only pray that your efforts bring us closer to the ultimate goal of ensuring a safer and sustainable future for our region and beyond. Let me convey a big thank you - *fa'afetai tele lava.*

Thank you and God Bless.