



Statement
by
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Prime Minister of Samoa and
President of the Third International Conference on
Small Island Developing Countries
Upolu Plenary Hall, Faleata Complex
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Honourable Presidents and Prime Ministers,
Honourable Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers of State,
Your Excellency the President of the United Nations General Assembly,
Your Excellency the Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Your Excellency the Conference Secretary-General of the Third
International Conference on Small Island Developing States,
Your Excellencies the Heads of Delegations,
Heads and Representatives of United Nations Agencies,
Representatives of Non-Governmental organizations, civil societies and
major groups,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I want to welcome you all to a conference that Samoa, its government and people have worked hard and long to make a special event. We are proud to be given this opportunity to show and share with you our home, our realities and our aspirations. To the UN membership, I thank you for giving us this honour.

Many of you have traveled a considerable distance to be here. Thank you for making the journey. From some places on the globe,

Samoa is a long distance away. But so too is New York and Europe, places we are required to travel to on a regular basis. My hope is that those who have traveled far will come to appreciate the great distances that many island representatives have to traverse whenever the world community convenes global events like today's conference. But distance does not need to be a tyranny if we work together to understand our many differing perspectives.

In an increasingly interrelated world, critical problems do not recognize borders and hold no respect for sovereignty. The big problems of our small islands will sooner rather than later impact every country irrespective of level of development or prosperity. Clearly we need to work together and partner with others to achieve our full potentials in order to effectively address our expanding challenges.

Excellencies,

The overarching theme of our conference is the sustainable development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships. We thank the international community for accepting our proposal for this to be the focus of our conference. And the extent to which partnership has been embraced and woven in the conference's programme shows the potential for a similar approach in comparable United Nations meetings elsewhere.

Our partnerships theme allows each and all of us, countries, regional and international organizations, civil society, the private sector – all gathered here who support the cause of SIDS – to set out specific commitments. SIDS priorities and means to implement them have already been articulated, negotiated and agreed upon and now a matter of U.N. record. We hope that partnerships will help provide the means to implement them.

There are always great opportunities to deliver moralistic statements and declarations of intent. But grandstanding won't achieve our goals. Blaming and shaming and apportioning culpability is uncharacteristic of genuine partnerships. While strong and clear words

are welcome, declared commitments to action are even more warmly embraced.

It is crucial that as we work through this conference, as we are involved in the partnership dialogues, as we attend and listen and learn from the large array of side events and parallel activities, we keep clearly in mind that the work starts here. This conference is built on the Barbados and Mauritius conferences of the past 20 years. We know from those great events that it is what follows on that makes the real difference.

Excellencies,

The 'special case of SIDS' is a clear recognition by partners of our vulnerabilities and the unique challenges faced by our small, isolated, but incredibly beautiful and unique island nations. Our articulation of that special case over the last 20 years, and its translation into action is the very underpinning of the partnerships we celebrate and launch this week. It enables our partners to embark on a journey with us over time to help build resilient and meaningful futures for our people, and indeed for the rest of the world who enjoy what SIDS have to offer.

Our conference is being held on the threshold of some very important events, not only for SIDS but for all the human family. Three weeks from today, Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon will host the Leaders Climate Summit in New York. We as Heads of State and Government should take the lead. To support an ambitious climate change treaty in 2015, we should announce bold commitments of what we can do, not what others should do. The outcome of our Summit should send a clear signal to the Lima Conference to negotiate in earnest and in good faith so that Paris becomes the conference of hope for SIDS in 2015.

In singling out climate change, I want to remind us that 22 years ago at the Earth Summit in Rio, it was we the islanders, through our Alliance of Small Island States who insisted on placing climate change on the international agenda – where it remains a priority item to this day.

Our message is the same today as it was in Rio in 1992: climate change is a global problem, yet international action to address it remains grossly inadequate. Small island states contribute the least to the causes of climate change – yet suffer most from its effects. As an existential issue to SIDS low-lying islands, sympathy and pity will not provide solace nor halt the devastational impacts of climate change – hence why we want all our partners to step forward and commit to address once and for all the root causes of climate change.

And in the implementation of your national commitments, SIDS' vulnerability should not be advanced or used as the reason for doing so. What individual countries do is first and foremost for the benefit of their people and their own economies. By necessity and survival, SIDS have no choice but to mitigate and adapt to the changing environment no matter what. It's the future of our people that is at stake – hence why we have to act now, not tomorrow with or without the support of others.

Looking back, AOSIS has come of age. Its writ is no longer a monopoly of climate change. Its advocacy now extends to all three pillars of sustainable development, and more. Full credit goes to Nauru, our current chair, for its dedicated and committed leadership of the group during significant developments in the multilateral arena. The preceding chairmanship of Grenada from the Caricom region is also deserving of special mention for advancing the goals of the group. With the shift of the leadership at the start of 2015 to a member of the African and Indian Ocean, we are optimistic that AOSIS will continue to provide the moral voice in the climate change negotiations – as the proverbial “canary in the coal mine”. We will continue to sound the alarm bells whether states hear it or heed it. Anything else is not an option.

As SIDS, we benefit from the different perspectives and support of our development partners, our regional organizations as well as the UN system. We call for further effort to ensure that there is clarity between

regional and global mandates to avoid unnecessary tensions and to ensure that both are given appropriate balance when policies are being developed that impact SIDS.

Excellencies,

One of the realities of SIDS is the pace of change occurring around them. The 21st century will see more change than all of history before it. By their very characteristics of remoteness, size, etc SIDS are vulnerable to missing the opportunities that come with such globalization and change. The challenge going forward from this conference will be to ensure that this does not happen at all costs. Never before will we need strong and focused support from our many partners. Never before has there been a greater need for the UN system to work in clear and focused support of SIDS.

I want to acknowledge the partnership between the United Nations Secretary-General and the UN member states in designating 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States, the first time a group has been accorded such rare recognition.

We are “sea-locked” nations. The inclusion of oceans as a potential “stand-alone” sustainable development goal through our persistent advocacy underscores the importance of oceans to our people. Oceans are the world’s most important shared resource connecting all people; they act as vast ecosystems regulating climate and weather and are a driving force in the global economy. The sea may divide us, but it actually connects us and brings us together – not simply in terms of the bad news that is the global rise in sea level, but as an asset whose sustainable development binds us together and can contribute to our collective wealth as nations.

Excellencies,

One of my pleasant responsibilities as President of the conference is to facilitate the adoption by consensus of the **SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action**, or the **SAMOA Pathway** in short, before the closure of our conference. To this end, I want to recognize the hard

work and the accommodating spirit which characterized the negotiations of our Outcome Document under New Zealand and Singapore co-chairmanship. The fact that the SAMOA Pathway was approved months ahead of our conference was a rarity in the UN context, and to take place at a time of unprecedented action and effort across many areas of the sustainable development agenda is clearly genuine partnerships at work.

This week we meet to chart a course to continue and increase efforts to protect, develop and maintain the contribution that SIDS make to the global community and to themselves. SIDS viability and prosperity are interconnected with the actions and development pathways of your own countries no matter the size and economic status. In our global village, we must be attentive to ensure there is equilibrium amongst the three pillars of sustainable development. Because where a few countries take advantage of economic, environmental or social scales, it will indeed have dire implications and consequences on the rest of the world. This sense of balance and support, of give and take, must be the foundational values upon which genuine and durable partnerships amongst SIDS and with SIDS and others should be anchored for now and the long haul.

We have launched a new and evolving framework for partnerships. We have also brought the private sector and other major stakeholders to the same table with SIDS and their partners. The pre-conference Forums of last week, the parallel events, the side events and the Multi-stakeholder Partnership Dialogues this week will hopefully serve as the new template for the UN to do things differently and innovatively. SIDS deserve nothing less. We hope that the SAMOA Pathway will be a pathway of concrete commitments from all our partners to lead SIDS to a future where there is hope for the smallest amongst us, so that no one is left behind.

That must be our legacy. My fellow SIDS leaders are determined that it will be. Thank you.