



*Permanent Mission of the Republic of Nauru  
to the United Nations*

**Statement by**

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Head of Delegation**

**at the**

**United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development**

**Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
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Madam President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates

At the outset, I would like to thank the Government of Brazil and the people of Rio de Janeiro for being the gracious hosts of this historic event – now for the second time.

The city has become synonymous with the multilateral effort to create a sustainable world -- its beauty and extraordinary people were a source of energy and inspiration during this important undertaking.

The theme for this conference is: “The Future We Want.” On one hand, the choice was entirely appropriate. It captures the reality that, despite our diversity of nationality, religion, language, and culture, there are some fundamental needs that we all share:

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nutritious food and clean water, access to basic health care, a good education, good job opportunities, and a healthy environment. In addition, we are all committed to leaving a better and more prosperous world for our children. In short, we all share a desire for life with dignity.

However, the theme of this week also suggests that we all have the power to choose the future we want. While this may be true for some, it is certainly not true for all.

We now live in an interconnected world, and to a great extent, our welfare rests in the hands of others. This is particularly true for the smallest and most vulnerable among us. In the last decade alone, Nauru has been forced to weather the financial crisis and associated global economic downturn, price spikes in food and energy, and of course the increasing impacts of climate change. These are all human-made disasters for which Nauru bears almost no responsibility, but we and vulnerable countries like us continue to pay the biggest price.

Nor have the fruits of globalization been shared equitably. The economic rules have been written by and for an increasingly unaccountable transnational elite, who have amassed private fortunes while the vast majority of the world's citizens still struggle to provide for their most basic needs. We stand at the pinnacle of modern civilization and are daily witness to technological innovation and material wealth unequalled in the history of humankind, and yet millions still go without access to clean water.

Four years ago, when the global financial system stood on the brink of collapse, a handful of governments were able to mobilize trillions of dollars to save a small number of corporations. It is clear that the failure to protect the poor and vulnerable from humanitarian catastrophe is not due to a lack of money, but rather distorted priorities.

Madam President,

On my way to this center every day I have seen in the distance the imposing statue of Christ the Redeemer and am reminded of the Godly principle: "to whom much is given, much shall be required."

We face environmental crisis on land, in the oceans, and in the atmosphere, but perhaps the most dangerous crisis is in our governance. The international institutions we have established seem ill equipped to address the challenges before us. Multilateralism itself is plagued by a mistrust engendered in large part because those who have gained so much, have given back so very little. It is the reason why some countries have been forced to look for alternative forums for addressing their needs. We can no longer afford to wait for the most privileged to do what is required.

Make no mistake, the world we have created has been the result of a series of choices – choices that have determined who will be rich and who will be poor. A different set of choices can lead to very different outcomes.

Madam President,

We cannot continue simply reaffirming our recognition of problems identified decades ago. The solutions will remain elusive as long as inequitable systems remain in place. Restoring trust in multilateralism and building a more just economic system will not be easy, and time is not on our side.

But we do have a chance to begin here in Rio. For example, the Pacific SIDS vision for a “Blue Economy” is well reflected in the outcome document and, if fully implemented, will help stem the precipitous decline in the fish stocks and coral reefs that we depend on for food and survival. We, developing countries, are taking steps. We have no choice. We cannot easily exploit other countries’ resources. And others must play their part as well and take measures to ensure the long-term health of fish stocks.

We welcome the outcome on ocean acidification, and we must follow up to urgently reduce greenhouse gas emissions and work collectively to build the resilience of marine ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

We have also infused new energy into making islands a model for sustainable development at the next SIDS conference in the Pacific in 2014, a project that began here in Rio twenty years ago but has delivered little in terms of real benefits to our people. This should build upon the groundbreaking declaration that the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) made in Barbados last month to significantly increase the supply of renewable energy in our countries. Though SIDS may be small, we are doing what we can.

But these and other outcomes must be backed by real financial resources so that our aspirations do not remain merely words on paper. It will require those who have thus far used their immense economic and political power to thwart progress to instead take the lead. It will require taking on very powerful interests and challenging entrenched orthodoxy. It will require a recognition and respect for our universal humanity. Most of all, it will require us all to fully embrace, “The Future We Want.”

Thank you.