
Securing our future in the Pacific



Pacific Islands Forum
with United Nations Missions

*Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji,
Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau,
Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands,
Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu*

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PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM STATEMENT FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HIGH-LEVEL MID- TERM REVIEW OF THE S.A.M.O.A PATHWAY

DELIVER BY
HON. CHARLOT SALWAI
PRIME MINISTER OF VANUATU

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UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK

Mr. President and Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Firstly, I wish to acknowledge and commend you Mr. President and your co-facilitators – Fiji and Ireland - for your able leadership in in the leadup to the adoption of today's High-Level Political Forum, and of this process.

Mr. President, as custodians of the world's largest natural carbon sink with the most extensive coral reefs, the largest tuna fisheries supplying 60% of global tuna catch and 20% of global protein, the fate of our 11 million Pacific islanders is inextricably linked with the fate of the rest of the world's 7.7 billion people. Yet, we are alarmed that despite three decades of UNFCCC negotiations, the Paris Agreement and SDG 13, greenhouse gases continue to rise unabated impacting our security and future of our Blue Pacific.

In the Pacific region, climate and ocean are warming. Our sea levels are rising at double the global average and our corals are dying. Disasters, in particular cyclones, flooding and droughts have increased in intensity and costs.

Catastrophic events are undoing decades of progress, taking lives, destroying infrastructure, homes, biodiversity and adversely affecting food, water security, livelihoods and service. Costs to regional GDP of climate change induced disasters quadrupled from 3.8 % in 2013 to 15.6% in 2016. Category 5 Cyclones Pam, Winston and Gita caused 64%, 30% and 38% of GDP losses in Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga respectively. Pockets of populations in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Tuvalu and Fiji have already been displaced due to climate impacts.

The 2017 World Risk Report identified six of the 15 most disaster risk countries in the world to be in the Pacific.

While we struggle with these externally induced consequences, we are confronted with similarly troubling national realities amplified by the climate change crisis. Inequality is rising with an estimated one in four Pacific islanders living below national poverty lines. Youth unemployment in the Pacific is double the global average. Gender inequality is reflected in the reality that up to 60% of our women have experienced violence over their lifetimes. Non-Communicable Diseases is at crisis levels with some of the highest global rates of NCDs accounting for up to 84 percent of deaths. 7 out of the 10 countries in the world with the highest rates of diabetes are in the Pacific.

The Pacific is the only region to have combined global reporting for the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway and are tracking at regional level progress of the 223 partnerships promised from the SAMOA Pathway and UN Oceans conferences.

Partnerships are certainly part of the solution and remain a centerpiece of the Samoa Pathway, and we have continued to explore the means for monitoring and ensuring full implementation of commitments through the SIDS Partnership Framework. However, any successful partnership, be it cross sectoral, multi-stakeholder, or public-private, requires adequate and predictable resources. While we are grateful for 223 global partnerships for the Pacific SIDS, we are concerned that only 42% have reported with limited awareness and accountability for these partnerships at national levels.

We applaud the efforts of the Secretary General to reposition the United Nations Development System to deliver an effective and fit for purpose UN Development System that would help programme countries implement the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development. In this vein we also welcome the decision of the Secretary General to establish an MCO in the North Pacific.

In our recent Leaders meeting in Tuvalu last month, we endorsed the Kainaki II Declaration. For Urgent Climate Action Now, where we, as leaders, continue to call for more ambitious action. We have successfully mobilized 1.57 billion from the Green Climate Fund, have established a regional Hub for NDCs and a regional Climate Change Centre to support implementation and track progress on our commitments.

To conclude, we call on the UN member states, UN system and development partners to assist us:

1. By agreeing to meet or exceed Nationally Determined Contributions to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels;
2. For the G7 and G20 members to rapidly implement commitments to phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies;
3. To mobilise and better utilise existing financing; strengthen capacities, systems, institutions and partnerships; and increase investment in statistical systems in the Pacific region;
4. To continue efforts towards meeting their global climate finance commitment of USD 100 billion per year by 2020 from a variety of sources in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation, through bilateral, regional or global mechanisms, including the replenishment of the Green Climate Fund; To rapidly accelerate transformational and innovative interventions including access to green and carbon neutral technology, trade and ICT; and
5. By providing progress reports on the SIDS partnerships.

Thank you