

SAMOA



STATEMENT

by

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PRIME MINISTER

of

THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF SAMOA

at the

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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Mr. President,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Samoa joined the United Nations thirty-five years ago, a decision rooted firmly in our belief in the principle of sovereign equality of all member states, with the same rights and responsibilities. This sentiment underpins our relationship with our Organization as it evolves into a global family of interdependent nations.

Our organization remains one of the last, if not the greatest bastion against the serious challenges and uncertainties that beset our world: from financial and economic crises, climate change, environment degradation, land desertification, ocean acidification, destruction of fishery resources, endemic poverty, and dangerous threats to peace and security. It is why we continue to support the United Nations and look to its timely interventions and leadership in addressing and finding collective solutions in the challenges the world faces.

Mr. President,

It is in the context of the leadership role of the United Nations that the visit of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon earlier this month to the Pacific region as a special guest of the Pacific leaders Forum in New Zealand was particularly significant. The visit enabled the Secretary-General to see firsthand the scale of the challenges facing vulnerable Pacific small island countries. The visit, the first ever to the Pacific by an incumbent Secretary-General in the UN's sixty six (66) years of existence, was a historical milestone in the relationship between the Pacific region and the United Nations. The fact that the Secretary-General is from the Asia-Pacific region and that the visit took place before the start of his second term, not at the end, were positive aspects that were not lost on the Pacific leaders.

Mr. Ban Ki-moon's advocacy and support of Pacific issues in the different international foras dealing with sustainable development, climate change and peace and security as

we already witnessed on Wednesday when presenting his report to the General assembly, will be invaluable in placing Pacific concerns at centre-stage for attention and support where needed.

The United Nations is the world's premier organization. Its role in the various areas of development and in improving the human condition must be exemplary and unequivocal. The United Nations work and influence to encourage governments to respect and uphold fundamental human rights is sorely needed in parts of our Pacific region and across the world.

Mr. President,

In our region as well, the work of the United Nations to facilitate the choices of Pacific people to exercise their right to self determination continues to form an important part of our Pacific region's association with the United Nations. In this respect, we strongly urge the United Nations to play a more pro-active role towards the achievement of this goal.

Mr. President,

Development, security and human rights are mutually reinforcing pillars of the United Nations. Equal progress on all three fronts should be the norm, not the exception.

A decade on into the new millennium, we find our Assembly meeting against the backdrop of a world teetering over many fronts of uncertainties.

A full recovery of the global economy to pre-2008 levels continues to be an elusive goal. The immediate to medium-term outlook is not promising and doesn't instill confidence. While some governments are being assisted with their budgetary difficulties, others, in contrast, are struggling on their own to provide some of the basic necessities for their people. Achieving the time-bound MDGs in their totality is becoming difficult by the day.

In terms of crises, whether it is economic, climate change or food crisis, the most and worst impacted by any of these without exception are some of the UN recognized vulnerable groups, the least developed countries and the small island developing states. Samoa belongs to both categories.

Though the United Nations has committed through internationally agreed development frameworks such as the Brussels Programme of Action, the Barbados Programme of Action and others to help vulnerable economies attain economic growth, sustainable development and the resilience to endure external shocks, the reality is that the needs of these groups always outstrip resources available to them. This mismatch is due in part to undercapitalized frameworks with no dedicated funding.

Mr. President,

Earlier this week, the United Nations focused long overdue attention on the insidious health threat of non communicable diseases (NCDs). If left unchecked, NCDs will not only devastate the health of our people but also has the potential to wreak havoc in our economies with the incidence of these so-called lifestyle diseases impacting heavily on the productive aged population.

Samoa therefore adds its voice to the call to consider the "Reduction of Non-communicable Diseases" as one of the diseases included in the Millennium Development Goals and to which sufficient resources and donor partnership actions should also prioritise.

Mr. President,

These are real concerns. Sustainable economic development is a priority issue for Samoa and the Pacific island countries. This is why we are hopeful that the Conference on Development next June in Brazil will allow for a serious discussion and re-orientation of the whole UN community on the importance of identifying and providing the

necessary resources for the implementation of the already agreed to Programmes of Actions and other global arrangements that the United Nations underwrites.

The theme of this year's Pacific Forum was "Converting potential into prosperity". In line with this is the advocacy led by the Pacific countries to raise the profile of the oceans agenda towards a strong Blue economy outcome to ensure that the importance of the oceans to our islands is captured as an integral component of the Rio+20 outcome. The ocean provides the Pacific region with opportunities and challenges, best reflected in the four-pronged focus on **(i)** conservation, **(ii)** sustainable management **(iii)** balanced harvesting and **(iv)** greater economic return from the utilization of fishery and marine resources.

The emphasis of efforts to maximize economic benefits from fisheries recognizes its vital contribution in supporting sustainable economic development and attempts to address the long held concern of Pacific islands that they have been for far too long short-changed and unfairly compensated for the fishery resources found within our waters worth many billions of dollars with less than one percent (1%) received by Pacific island countries.

The Pacific states have long been committed to efforts to conserve and manage fisheries resources in the region. It has therefore been also a point of long frustration that vessels of major fishing nations continue to fish illegally in Pacific waters. And even when caught in illegal fishing activities it is by no means a certainty that prosecution and enforcement of penalties will be successful when infringing fishing vessels have heavy financial resources backing their defenses.

We therefore again urge cooperation from all nations with fishing fleets in the Pacific to work together with our Pacific countries to stop illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing practices in the Pacific. The Pacific carries the last major stocks of some key fish species that in other oceans have already been depleted, contaminated and devastated. Successful conservation and effective management of harvest levels in the long term is

absolutely critical, not just for Pacific countries and distant water fishing nations but ultimately the availability of fish supplies to the rest of the world in the years ahead. Successful conservation and management of fish stocks in the Pacific is, pure and simple, good business for everyone.

Mr. President,

Climate change was again singled out by Pacific leaders during its summit just concluded as "*the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific*". Natural catastrophes are capable of destruction that devastates entire communities. We know from the tragic experiences which our country endured of the great pain from the loss of lives, destruction of property and set back to the national economy that disasters are capable of inflicting.

It is therefore imperative that adequate resources are available and that these can indeed be accessed with ease through different direct modalities to assist countries meet their mitigation and adaptation programmes.

The Green Climate Fund is now in design phase. The representatives of governments and experts involved will do well to pay attention to the existing climate funding architecture so that shortcomings of other funding mechanisms will not be repeated.

Mr. President,

Without the necessary financial resources and technical support, Samoa's ability to adapt and mitigate against climate change will be severely curtailed.

Thankfully, Samoa continues to benefit under the Fast Start Finance window both bilaterally and through regional projects made available from the generous support of our traditional and new development partners, such as Australia, China, European Union, Japan, New Zealand, Italy, ADB, GEF, World Bank and the United Nations to name only some. We are very grateful.

Mr. President,

Countries in different parts of the world look to the United Nations and its stronger members for peacekeeping arrangements to give time for these communities in strife to reestablish and find lasting solutions. Samoa continues to lend its unwavering support to this aspect of the UN's mandate and I again reaffirm this support which is underpinned by my country's contribution and involvement of our police officers in UN peacekeeping operations in Sudan, Liberia and Timor Leste. Additionally, Samoa continues to be an integral part of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) under the umbrella of the Pacific Forum.

Mr. President,

Samoa warmly welcomes the admission of South Sudan as United Nation's newest member in July this year.

Samoa joins the support of the international community in the courage of the people of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and now Syria to seek relief from oppression and gain the freedoms and human rights that they are correctly entitled to.

A year ago on this podium I had no expectation of the "Arab Spring" and spoke in earnest of the hope that progress would come in the then historic process to bring permanent peace to the peoples of Israel and Palestine.

It is our long-held conviction that an independent Palestinian nation taking its rightful place in our global family living side by side with a secure Israel is the only road to permanent peace.

But while we all know that this is the sensible outcome that must be achieved, it will sadly remain elusive without a clear sense of commitment and willingness by both sides to negotiate in good faith.

For genuine and permanent peace between Palestine and the State of Israel, there must be direct negotiations between the two countries. Addressing the symptoms but

not the root causes of the conflict will be short-sighted and the result unsustainable. Solutions must be decided by the two parties and not imposed from outside. Without this strong buy-in from the Israelis and Palestinians themselves, any solutions will at best be short-lived.

More than ever visionary leadership on both sides that see beyond the immediate dictates of short-sighted interests and instead willing to seize the opportunity to fashion a just and durable peace settlement is critically needed at this point.

Mr. President,

Terrorism, in its various forms and manifestations, is responsible for the horror and fear that has continued to grip the world's attention. No country is immune from the reaches of terrorism, and we are all affected in varying degrees.

Terrorist acts committed under whatever pretext or purpose can never be justified as morally acceptable. Equally, countering terrorism does not confer immunity from the rule of law, nor the abandonment of the principles of a civilized society.

No country on its own can win the war against terrorism. Only by pooling our resources together and working collaboratively with each can we stand a chance of defeating this senseless menace. Samoa despite the heavy cost is doing its best to meet our obligations in this collective effort.

Mr. President,

Modest progress has been achieved in the efforts to reform the Security Council. Samoa remains convinced that an expanded Security Council that mirrors present day realities is essential for multilateralism and for the Council's integrity and credibility. Increases in both the permanent and non-permanent categories should be part and parcel of the reform package.

Thank you.