



**Statement  
by  
Honourable Tuilaepa Lufesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi,  
Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa  
at the General Debate,  
74<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly  
New York, 27 September 2019**

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Mr. President,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today, the General Assembly will adopt the Political Declaration of the SAMOA Pathway Mid-term review. Its value is to hasten the attainment of the sustainable development agenda of Small Island Developing States agreed in Samoa five years ago.

Endorsing the Declaration is the easy part. Claiming ownership of it takes courage. Delivering on promises and making good on undertakings pledged to fully implement the SAMOA Pathway by 2024, is the seal of true leaders.

The themes of our High-level summits this week are well and truly intertwined. From addressing a climate emergency, to providing a rights based universal health coverage, and calling for increased resources to fast track collective action underpinned by a desire for a peaceful and secure world, are

the pillars of the SAMOA Pathway, the blueprint of Small island developing states sustainable development.

**Mr. President,**

As a Pacific island leader, my main message today, and has been consistently for the past twenty-one consecutive years I had attended the General Debate in this Hall, will again be on climate change, the embodiment of Samoa's realities and aspirations and priority policy concern now, and well into the future.

When SIDS first told the world that their coastlines were eroding, the sea level was rising and climate change was humanly induced, some member states scorned at the notion and did not take our concerns seriously. Instead, they wanted scientific evidence to back up our claim, probably as a cover to stall and frustrate our resolve. Yet, when the world's top scientists, including some of their own, validated our concerns scientifically, including the report on the imperative of keeping global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius, some countries refused to accept the evidence and still use every opportunity to discredit such reports.

Science has spoken; the message loud and clear. We cannot use it selectively only when it suits one's agenda. Climate change is real. Climate change is here. It is impacting with far more frequency and severity. It is a security risk of far greater proportions than many people are willing to admit. Sadly, it could lead to the demise of some sovereign states that are low-lying atolls and small island states.

There is a misguided notion to portray climate change as a small island developing states concern only. Nothing can be further from the truth. Climate

change crosses borders uninvited and does not discriminate by size or economic status. It impacts every country, though some, more extensively than others, like Small Island Developing States because of their particular and unique vulnerabilities. Times are changing.

The world has witnessed in recent times epic occurrences of horrific natural disasters, unprecedented in the 74-year history of our organization. Tsunamis, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, flooding, bush fires, droughts have resulted in countless loss of lives and untold suffering and set back for years the development of some countries. Climate change will impact all of us; whether sooner or later.

Climate change is a global problem requiring a decisive response from the world community. It should unite rather than divide us. The challenges of and the solutions to address climate change is already common knowledge. Yet we have failed to deliver ambitious global actions so necessary to address the root causes of climate change through compromise; we must accept basic climate logic.

We need to shift the focus in the climate change relationship from a **"donor-victim"** to a **"partnership"** approach. Because of the universality of climate change on all of us, the partnership should provide the impetus to find solutions in a decisive manner.

**Mr. President,**

Apportioning blame for past wrongs will not restore our environment to its early pristine state. And our focus should always be on today and tomorrow, not on yesterday and what should have been.

Entrenched positions devoid of today's realities and in pursuit of unrelated agendas do not have a role in our collective effort. No one should stay detached and unconcerned to our common plight. We must work together with a sense of urgency and commitment to address climate change now. It should not just be the science that recommends what we should do, but also our conscience and the political will to follow through.

**Mr. President,**

The United Nations remains our last best hope to provide the political will and the necessary commitment to turn the tide against climate change.

Nations in leadership roles are called to account in doing the right thing for our global family. We want leaders who view the world as a single constituency where everyone must work together within the limits of their capacity and capability to be part of the total solution. Leadership is a calling. True Leaders should lead from the front all the time. The cooperation of every country is necessary if we are to win the climate change battle.

We must be innovative and listen to the voices of our youth. Theirs ring of boldness, passion and honesty; their advocacy untainted by ulterior motives or some hidden agenda. They are determined to do the heavy lifting and prepared go the extra mile to ensure that we can no longer ruin irreversibly the future and planet that rightly belongs to them. They deserve nothing less.

**Mr. President,**

Samoa is thankful to the United Nations for the vital role it played during our journey as a mandated territory and as an independent state. As a small

island state with no defense force and an unarmed police service, our membership of the UN is grounded on the promise of peace, rule of law, equality and justice that the UN offers every member state.

The dynamics of the new global agenda continues to test the resolve of our organization. Unity for the common good is needed now more than ever so that nations and people can live in peace and advance a common prosperity. Only through cooperation and multilateral joint effort can we hope to guarantee human rights, achieve peace and security, and effectively pursue sustainable development. The UN remains uniquely suited to the pursuit and coordination of global initiatives to attain these objectives, including efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion as highlighted in the theme for this year's General Debate.

**Mr. President,**

The Secretary General's visit to the Pacific this year was timely given his leadership in calling for ambitious and transformational climate action. The visit allowed him to see and experience firsthand the scale of the challenges facing Pacific small island countries and we commend his determination to share the messages from the Pacific peoples through the recently concluded Climate Action Summit.

The UN Secretariat and agencies are key partners for the Blue Pacific Continent in addressing some of our regional priorities such as climate change, resilience, oceans, fisheries, gender equality, human rights, the SIDS and sustainable development agenda.

The Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF) is a *'game changing'* regional initiative for the Blue Pacific and its peoples. Its key purpose is to provide predictable, sustainable, accessible and accountable grant funding for disaster risk preparedness to ensure Pacific communities are safe and resilient. It fills a critical financing gap in the Pacific, as the Facility focuses on small-scale and low quantum disaster risk preparedness projects that are not widely supported and financed by major development partners, including multilateral development banks. It also complements existing priorities and efforts of national governments and development partners in building resilience of Pacific countries and communities. There is room for support from the international community.

Furthermore, we have heard during the week of the importance of deepening dialogue to find solutions to the challenges of the practice of de-risking, considered to be an existential threat to small islands states by putting them at risk of losing access to the global financial system and enhancing vulnerability.

We welcome the recommendation for the establishment of a UN Multi Country Office in the Northern Pacific. This is an important delivery of the promise for better engagement, presence and UN system support for the Pacific region. This is also a tangible contribution to some of the asks of the SAMOA Pathway.

On the UN Development System reform, we welcome the support extended to the UN Resident Coordinators in their new role with real additional human resources on the ground to implement other aspects of the reform. The UN should deliver as one both in rhetoric and in practice to avoid duplication of

responsibilities and a clear definition of roles against diminishing resources. We hope that the Resident Coordinator's reform will provide a harmonized, effective and efficient response to member states' priority needs. Close collaboration with the Pacific regional organizations is critical.

I wish to re-emphasize the importance of the Multi Country Office based in Samoa, given our firm commitment to the partnership with the UN and our confidence in what we can also contribute to the UN agenda for Samoa's people as well as for the Pacific, SIDS and the UN family.

**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. As the Secretary General rightly put during his opening statement this week *"every measure to uphold human rights helps deliver sustainable development and peace."*

The sector wide approach Samoa has adopted in implementing the Sustainable Development goals allows us to enforce the three key pillars of sustainable development. This will be an important part of our preparations for our second Voluntary National Review in 2020, given our commitment to adopt a Human Rights approach to the implementation of SDGs. Aligning the reporting and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the SAMOA Pathway with the Universal Periodic Review under Human Rights Council and the other Human Rights Conventions will be a challenge. However, this will not be

insurmountable. If successful, this will be an important development in meeting our international obligations and in utilizing efficiently our limited resources.

We believe in embracing inclusiveness and secure citizens' rights to development including through the proper engagement of the key vulnerable groups such as women and girls, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Transparency and accountability is also crucial in the implementation process, thus for Samoa, our Audit Office has recently prepared a *Performance Audit of the Preparedness for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals for Samoa*.

Building on synergies and addressing gaps to ensure better prioritization, will definitely help galvanize support for implementing the SDGs thus addressing poverty eradication, support quality education, mobilize climate action and lead to more effective inclusion.

**Mr. President,**

In addition to the climate crisis, we are seeing continued conflicts, rising terrorism, disrupted peace processes, mass displacements, trade wars and growing tensions worldwide. Even our usually peaceful Pacific region was not spared from the reaches of terrorism as witnessed in the Christchurch terrorist attacks. No country on its own can win the war against terrorism and only by pooling our resources and working collaboratively can we stand a chance of defeating this senseless menace.



We continue to look to the United Nations to bring member states together to be part of the solution to make it an agent of change; and assurance of hope during these challenging times. All contributions matter and are important. We take pride in our Police peacekeepers deployed to Sudan and South Sudan including our active engagement in the disarmament agenda. We continue to advocate for respect of the rule of law and we recently co-hosted the Women Peace and Security Summit for the Pacific. This was to support the promotion and implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on United Nations Women Peace and Security Agenda. The Pacific highlighted the importance of heeding the call of the Pacific Islands Forum leaders to ensure that traditional and cultural norms be acknowledged and considered as an underpinning imperative of all security initiatives under the regional security plan.

As well we played host to the 2nd Pacific Islands Roundtable on International Humanitarian Law which looked at ways to promote the principles of the Geneva Convention as well as encouraging the region to ratify key weapons treaties such as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Arms Trade Treaty.

We ratified this year the Convention against Torture bringing to six the number of core Human Rights Conventions we are a states party to. We endeavour to meet our commitment to ratify all 9 core human rights conventions before our next Universal Periodic Review and will continue to advocate for the importance of our Samoan culture and the role of the churches in promoting human rights for all in Samoa.

**Mr. President,**

Let me conclude again with a reference to the SAMOA Pathway which I started off with. I am pleased that five years since its adoption, there has been positive progress and concrete developments not only in terms of UN system response to SIDS issues, but also the dedicated attention by the International Community to SIDS priorities. While there is still more to be done, I am confident that in the spirit of genuine and durable partnerships, exciting developments are afoot to further assist in the realization of SIDS sustainable development goals as encapsulated in the SAMOA Pathway.

Thank you