



TUVALU

Statement
Presented by
PRIME MINISTER

Honourable Enele Sosene Sopoaga

at

The 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

General Debate

27 September 2014

New York

Please check against delivery

Mr. President

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It is indeed a great honor and pleasure to participate in this 69th General Assembly of this august body, on behalf of the Government and people of Tuvalu. I congratulate you Mr. President on your election and let me wish the General Assembly success and blessings under your able guidance. I also wish to thank the outgoing President of the GA for a successful 68th Session. Likewise I applaud Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, the Secretariat and all the specialized UN agencies and staff for their tireless energy and efforts.

2. Let me also note for records Tuvalu's sincere congratulations to Fiji for its successful holding of general elections. In the same vein we also congratulate New Zealand.

3. Mr. President, we, through the United Nations, have worked diligently to deliver on the noble visions and principles enshrined in the United Nations charter. Our shared goal is for world peace, security and prosperity.

4. Tuvalu celebrates its 36th Anniversary of Independence next week, on 1st of October, and we remain proud to be a Member of this Great Body. We must applaud the achievements of the UN. But we cannot be too over congratulatory. Tuvalu also feels the sadness of loss of lives and suffering of fellow human beings from crisis world-over. The loss due to terrorism, poverty, environmental degradation especially climate change, the Ebola, the loss of lives in Syria, Israel, Palestine, the Middle East, and in Ukraine, and elsewhere due to political conflicts is most disturbing. Tuvalu shares the grief of these people.

5. We in the UN must work harder to address the root-causes. We support the urgent need for reforms in the UN Security Council for the expansion of

its permanent and non-permanent seats of its agenda to include climate change as a Security Council issue. As we continue, though, one question stares us right in the eyes: do we leaders really care, do we mean what we say here in the UN? A kindergarten school in Tuvalu asked me recently, do we have a tomorrow and can you save us?

6. A reflection on how this noble body can help respond to these fundamental questions gives me mixed feelings. Indeed we are encouraged by the momentum of strong leadership on climate change, for example, concluded at the Climate Summit earlier in the week. But at the same time, we are also discouraged by the lack of care displayed most conspicuously by the deniers of climate change, including some of our neighbours in the Pacific.

7. Tuvalu believes the UN must not be distracted by the deniers of climate change. We must remain committed to turning the momentum of political leadership garnered this week into real actions for a more collective, strategic, and pragmatic response to these crises. We must walk the talk on all fronts of the human crisis to ensure global peace and security.

8. Mr President, we have talked a lot in the UN to design a sustainable development goals and Post 2015 development agenda. The tentative goals and targets identified under the reforms are reflective of a membership that needs the same high aspiration and honorable goals as espoused under the UN Charter for a world of peace, security, opportunities and prosperity.

9. The UN must remain universal and relevant in bringing the real issues and events into focus and to the attention of the global community. The United Nations should be more responsive and understanding of the diverse circumstances and needs of its membership and the need to contextualize the strategic activities, taking into account the variable and special circumstances of each membership. The UN must also improve its presence in all countries, in particular in vulnerable SIDS like Tuvalu.

10. We must also take heed of the lessons learnt from the global financial crisis which also retracted our hard earned development advances in the MDGs. These global realities affect even the far remote, small economies like Tuvalu, and can further exacerbate Tuvalu's vulnerabilities. The new SDGs with better accountability and transparency measures must provide for economies, big and small, the capacity to address vulnerabilities and ensure sustainability. It must also improve on the means of implementation and on governance mechanisms that are inclusive, and in which the voices of all countries, and all stakeholders including the local government and authorities are heard in decision-making.

11. Mr President, the dedication of this year as the International SIDS Year is much appreciated. At the beginning of this month we congregated in the beautiful and tranquil island of the Independent State of Samoa, for the 3rd International Conference on the Small Island Developing States which concluded with an outcome SAMOA Pathway and many partnerships to address the special needs and circumstances of SIDS.

12. While Tuvalu acknowledges the support of the UN membership and the exemplary leadership of the Samoa Government and people that had led to the huge success of the Conference, we also believe the ultimate measure of success is the delivery of tangible actions on the ground in SIDS reflective of their unique "special case". There is an urgent need to seriously consider proper integration of the SAMOA Pathway and of the establishment of a special window for SIDS into the UN post-2015 SD agenda and into all other UN and its specialised agencies programmes for effective implementation, with particular attention for simplified access to climate change financing in SIDS.

13. Mr President, the graduation criteria for LDCs and their application requires proper scrutiny and review as they are not relevant to the said SIDS characteristics. A SIDS may achieve high per capita GNI and high human development index, but it will always be forever a small island developing

States, one cannot graduate from the natural constraints and environmental vulnerabilities of being a SIDS.

14. Recognising the call made in the SAMOA Pathway, and given the ambiguity surrounding the recommendation for its LDC graduation, Tuvalu seeks the further deferral of its LDC graduation until a thorough assessment and review of the application of LDC graduation is carried out taking into full account of the recent report of the UNCTAD and others on Tuvalu.

15. Mr. President, with 24 square kilometers of land juxtaposed against 900,000 square kilometers of the Pacific Ocean, the sea has always been the lifeline for our people for food and economic growth. As custodians of the Pacific Ocean, Tuvalu fully supports an SDG on Oceans as also underscored in the Pacific Leaders Forum Palau Declaration. We call on the UN to honor the health of the oceans as it is earth life support system. To this end, we also support the commencement of negotiations towards an Implementing Agreement under the Law of the Sea to give better protection to the oceans.

16. Mr. President, the seriousness and URGENCY for actions against climate change has been reaffirmed not only by the 5th Assessment Report of the IPCC but also by world leaders, and strongly echoed by youth leaders this week in this very Great Hall. What else do we need to hear to stop the denial for actions. In Tuvalu, we are experiencing unprecedented life threatening impacts from climate change. For a low lying country with an elevation of barely 2-3 meters above sea level, like our fellow atoll island nations of Kiribati, Marshall Islands, the Maldives and Tokelau, Tuvalu's security and survival and the future and human rights of its citizens is seriously being compromised. We cannot continue along this path.

17. The SG's Climate Summit earlier this week, in which I, on behalf of Tuvalu, was honoured to be a co-chair with the President of Bolivia, allowed us yet another opportunity to hear from youth, women and community leaders at the frontline of climate impacts from all regions of the world including from

my own Pacific. They underscored the urgent need to take concrete actions against climate change. Tuvalu highly commends the SG for his strong leadership, and welcomes the announcements made by Heads of States and partners during the Summit. We commit to building on this momentum and that from the recent SIDS meeting through to Lima later this year and onwards to Paris in 2015.

18. Mr. President, Tuvalu fully supports a stand-alone SDG on Climate Change. We urgently need a commitment from all countries to support a new climate change protocol to be concluded in Paris in 2015. We must urgently address climate change in a legal and forward looking manner, otherwise our Post 2015 agenda will be meaningless and many will be left behind. We therefore urge all Parties to work urgently to negotiate the new protocol, to curb GHG emissions and keep average temperature well below 1.5 degrees Celsius. The protocol must include loss and damage and insurance mechanisms for SIDS against climate change, and must provide adequate and accessible financing for adaptation support to SIDS, like Tuvalu. There is no time for half measures like we witnessed in Copenhagen in 2009. It is also critical that the new Green Climate Fund and other existing climate change funds are adequately resourced, and access by SIDS is simplified for expedient actions on the ground.

19. We all must step up and take commitments to reduce our emissions and support those that are vulnerable. For Tuvalu, we are committed to employing 100% renewable energy for our electrification by the year 2020. Already we are well on the way to achieving this target thanks to the generous support of international partners, including the EU, Japan, New Zealand, Italy, Austria, the UAE, the ICUN and the IRENA. Tuvalu is also party to the Majuro Declaration.

20. Mr. President, Tuvalu has made steady progress towards the achievement of its MDGs, with strategic complementary assistance from the donor community. We have designed a roadmap to advance our

developmental strides as we transition from MDGs to SDGs. National policies have been adopted and implemented on financial management, women and gender development, people with disabilities, youth, the protection of families and other sectors of national priorities like climate change, energy, food security, fisheries, IT, health and education and outer islands development. A lot needs to be done, and we call for support from international partners through mutual partnerships with us in Tuvalu.

21. Mr. President, the future we want is one of inclusiveness, where all partnerships are important. The Government of Tuvalu reiterates its position that the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba runs counter to the need for promoting dialogue and ensuring the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for solidarity, cooperation and friendly relations amongst all nations.

22. Tuvalu also fully supports Taiwan's meaningful participation in UN specialized agencies and mechanisms, including the WHO, ICAO and the UNFCCC. We recognize the cooperative spirit shown by Taiwan in their involvement in the Post 2015 Development agenda. We recognize the need to include Taiwan in the global fight against climate change. We recognize Taiwan's role as a regional peace maker. Taiwan supports scholarships and capacity building for experts, students and officials from many developing countries in all sectors, including my own country Tuvalu.

23. Finally, Mr President, I want to say this in clear and unambiguous terms. We are at a turning point for the future of small island nations like Tuvalu. We can create MDGs and SDGs but unless there is a global commitment to these goals, particularly against climate change, we will have failed humanity.

24. Unless we stop greenhouse gas pollution, we will have failed our future generations. The future is ours to create. Let us be bold. Let us be seen as the

ones that created a future for all, - a future that includes saving human beings and saving the children of Tuvalu. For, if we save Tuvalu, we save the World.

TUVALU MO TE ATUA

SIPI-KANA and thank you Mr President.