



## **Statement by Tuvalu**

### ***Prime Minister's Remarks on behalf of the PIF at the PIF Leaders Meeting with UN-SG***

Friday, 27 September 2024

09:00am. to 09:45am.

Conference Room 8, UN Headquarters, New York

**Mr. Secretary-General,**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. Sea-level rise is not merely a climate issue, rather it is a severe manifestation of climate change that threatens Pacific communities, especially in low-lying nations<sup>1</sup> like mine, and its urgency cannot be overstated.
2. Climate change-related sea-level rise remains the single greatest threat<sup>2</sup> to low-lying island and other Small Island Developing States in the Pacific region. Being the defining issue that imperils the livelihoods and wellbeing of our peoples<sup>3</sup>, it will continue to threaten the core of our existence - our statehood, our sovereignty, our identity and our very livelihood.
3. In the face of such a great threat, it is not enough to speak of ambition—we need action. The time for hollow promises has passed. What we face today requires boldness, courage, and above all, solidarity.

Mr. Secretary-General

4. We need not be reminded of the science on the serious, irreversible threats and adverse impacts of climate change-related sea-level rise.<sup>4</sup> The IPCC as the authoritative scientific body on climate change has revealed that the science is non-negotiable. Therefore, we should note with grave concern of our collective future that global greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, reaching record levels, and based on current trends and without urgent action, we will exceed 1.5°C as early as 2030 and reach 3°C or more by the end of this century.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 53rd Pacific Islands Forum Communiqué 2004

<sup>2</sup> Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Action Now 2019

<sup>3</sup> Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise 2021

<sup>4</sup> AOSIS Declaration on Sea-Level Rise and Statehood 2024

<sup>5</sup> IPCC Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C 2018

5. We are at a critical juncture, and accurate, reliable data is our compass. If we are to navigate this crisis, global cooperation in scientific research and data sharing is paramount. Too many nations are flying blind in this fight, lacking the tools and information needed to make informed, lifesaving decisions. This must change.
6. I have stood on the shores of my homeland, watching the ocean claim more land each year. I have heard the same stories from leaders across the world. The people of my nation, and many others, are looking to this assembly with hope, and also with an urgent demand for change.
7. When entire nations stand at the brink of extinction, we must ensure that their statehood and sovereignty are preserved. We must continue to elevate our shared understanding that under international law there is a principle that a State, once established, continues to exist and endure, and maintain its status and effectiveness<sup>6</sup>, and that international law does not contemplate the demise of statehood in the context of climate change-related sea-level rise.<sup>7</sup>
8. In the PIF Leaders Meeting in Tonga, the leaders strongly called for the inclusion of sea-level rise as a standalone agenda item in the UNGA and other relevant UN processes. To achieve this, we look forward to your office's advice and guidance.

Mr. Secretary-General,

9. The financial burden of building resilience against these rising seas is beyond the capacity of most vulnerable nations. Let me be clear: adaptation finance is not charity it is a moral obligation. Nations on the frontlines of this crisis are being punished for a problem they did not cause. It is time for the world to step up and meet its commitments—no more delays, no more excuses. The future of entire populations hangs in the balance.
10. The PIF Leaders express their profound gratitude to you Secretary-General for your support and we welcome your efforts in the capitalization of the Pacific Resilience Facility.
11. The seas may be rising, but we must rise higher. Today, we stand at a crossroads. We can choose inaction, allowing the tide to swallow not just our lands but our future. Or we can choose to fight back—with resilience, with unity, and with unyielding resolve. Let us turn this moment into a rallying cry for the world, a declaration that we will not be washed away, that our nations will not fade silently into the ocean.
12. We must not rest on our laurels but call for strong action, solidarity, and leadership. We must not be remembered as the generation that stood idle while the seas swallowed our future—rather we must be the ones who rose, who stood firm, and who turned the tide.

I thank you, Mr. Secretary-General.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid 4

<sup>7</sup> Declaration on the Continuity of Statehood and the Protection of Persons 2023