



TUVALU STATEMENT

At the

**4TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SMALL
ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS4)**

Delivered by the

PRIME MINISTER OF TUVALU

HON. FELETI PENITALA TEO, OBE

Antigua and Barbuda

27 – 30 May 2024

Theme:

CHARTING THE COURSE TOWARD RESILIENT PROSPERITY

President of the SIDS4 Conference - Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda Hon. Gaston Browne

Secretary General of the Conference - Mr. Li Jinhua

Esteemed Heads of State and Government

Distinguished Heads of Delegation

Honored Guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Introductory remarks and commendations

1. I am indeed personally honored and privileged, as the newly elected Prime Minister of Tuvalu, to address this distinguished and august international gathering, so soon after my election in February of this year.
2. I bring with me the very warm greetings and best wishes of my people and the government of Tuvalu.
3. I express sincere gratitude and appreciation to our host, the people and the government of Antigua and Barbuda for the generosity and largess of their hospitality and for the exceptional organisation of this decadal conference.

Message of condolences

Mr President.

1. We gather here in Antigua and Barbuda at a time the global community is experiencing multiple and interconnected crises.
2. There are civil and military conflicts, severe inflation, health pandemics, energy security crisis, natural disasters and climate and environmental degradation.
3. To those affected, Tuvalu expresses its profound condolences and sympathies.

4. My government and my people and I pay our tributes and pray for peace in these turbulent times within our UN family.

SIDS4 Theme and Outcome Documents

Mr. President

5. As we assemble here this week, we find ourselves at a critical juncture in the collective efforts of the international community to achieve sustainable development and resilient prosperity for Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
6. Tuvalu expresses its strongest supports for the theme for the conference - “Charting the Course toward Resilient Prosperity”.
7. A theme that resonates and aligns well with Tuvalu’s commitment to sustainable development as documented in Tuvalu’s National Strategy for Sustainable Development titled - *Te Kete*.
8. The theme also holds a profound cultural and indigenous significance, as it is rooted in Tuvalu’s navigational traditions, symbolising the necessity of learning from the past as we steady and paddle our canoe forward.
9. As the global community prepares to transition from the SAMOA Pathway towards the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS), we must reflect seriously on the past decade’s experience of challenges and achievements, so that we can smartly chart a new way forward that would strengthen and foster the resilience and prosperity of SIDS.
10. While the recognition of SIDS by our multilateral systems is deeply appreciated, the special case and unique vulnerabilities of SIDS further exposes the raging challenges that SIDS must contemplate.

11. Therefore, the ABAS underscores the special case and unique challenges of SIDS and emphasises the importance of heightened international collaboration, strong and smart partnerships, and transparent governance to tackle SIDS unique environmental and developmental challenges.

Tuvalu climate change related sea level rise Priorities and Initiatives

Mr. President.

12. Sea level rise is the single greatest threat to Tuvalu's future survivability as a nation and as a people.
13. Therefore, my government is committed to a long-term adaptation plan to reclaim and elevate land and fortify Tuvalu's resilience against climate change induced sea level rise.
14. Sea level rise poses a direct threat to our way of life and sovereignty.
15. Tuvalu continues to experience intense land erosion, wave surges, and coastal inundation with the worst flooding experienced during the high tide season in February and March of this year.
16. We urge SIDS to unite in addressing the issue of sea level rise at the High-Level Meeting during the UNGA79 on September 25, 2024.
17. And I commend the leadership of the UNGA President and the UNSG for getting this issue on the UNGA agenda.
18. Tuvalu expresses the wish that this issue remains as permanent agenda of the UNGA.
19. In February of this year, my government announced 21 immediate strategic priorities, with eight of those priorities aligning well with the "*What do SIDS want?*" goal in the ABAS.

20. As a SIDS nation and one that is highly vulnerable to climate change and sea level rise, Tuvalu is committed to strengthened mitigation and adaptation efforts in collaboration with SIDS, the UN, and development partners.
21. I recall my conversation with the UNSG last week on Thursday in New York when I paid a courtesy call on his excellency.
22. The UNSG, who had visited Tuvalu in 2019, rightly observed that although Tuvalu is one of the countries in the frontline of the impacts of climate change and sea level rise, it is certainly a country that is in the frontline of the frontline countries impacted by climate change and sea level rise.
23. Mr President, Ladies and gentlemen. That quote from the UNSG aptly embodies the extent of the vulnerability of that particular place on earth that I and my people call home.
24. It is, therefore, my contention that it is neither just nor equitable for a country like mine to bear the highest burdens of living with a deteriorating climate system that we do not contribute to its cause.
25. As a result, our fiscal margins and physical shorelines are further narrowed by every storm surge and every natural disaster.
26. Tuvalu has therefore embarked on transformative adaptive solutions such as the Tuvalu Coastal Adaptation Project, the Rising Nations Initiative, and the Future Now project to name a few.
27. I draw the attention of the conference to the joint initiative of Tuvalu and Antigua and Barbuda in establishing the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS) in 2021.

28. COSIS recently secured an advisory opinion of ITLOS to clarify States' legal obligations in respect to countries affected by climate change.
29. The ITLOS Advisory Opinion is a significant achievement bringing the conversation in terms of states obligations in respect of climate change out of political commitments to binding legal obligations.
30. SIDS must, therefore, utilise the Advisory Opinion of ITLOS to hold to account those responsible for the deteriorating climate system we live in.
31. Armed with the same objective, Tuvalu and Vanuatu are spearheading a coalition of countries advocating for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty with the objectives to phase out fossil fuels, promote sustainable development and a just transition to renewable energy, which are critical for climate justice and a sustainable future.

Tuvalu and SDGs

Mr. President.

32. In terms of the progress of the UN-SDGs, the recent UNDP regional human development report determines that the Pacific region is not on track to deliver any of the SDGs.
33. The report forecasted that those SDGs are certainly not achievable by 2030 but possibly by 2065.
34. The forecast comes as no surprise, as Tuvalu and other similarly vulnerable Pacific SIDS faces unique challenges in achieving SDGs.
35. Tuvalu's capacity to achieve the SDGs is severely compromised by our exposure to climate risks, limited resources, geographical isolation, and underdeveloped infrastructure.

36. But Tuvalu is nevertheless committed to the ABAS vision for resilient economies and call on international development partners to provide new, additional, predictable, and increased financial flows to address those challenges.
37. Tuvalu joins other SIDS in calling for changes to the international financial system to close funding gaps and improve access to climate finance.
38. It is critical at this point that consideration of a multilateral indices is established, one that better articulate and reflective of the needs of SIDS in leveraging development efforts to achieve their SDGs.

Concluding remarks

Mr. President

39. In closing, Tuvalu is dedicated to fostering a SIDS international development and cooperation framework that is action-oriented, realistic, achievable and fits for purpose to create a just world where progress protects the vulnerable.
40. An international development framework that facilitates and delivers sustainable and inclusive prosperity for SIDS.
41. The global collective and cooperative efforts must be timely, smart, and efficient, that assures sustainable and inclusive development for all.
42. Let us work together to build a resilient, just, and equitable future, securing a sustainable legacy for the future.
43. The ABAS has been charted, we must act now.
44. I thank you Mr President.

45. Tuvalu mote Atua, Tuvalu for God.

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