



TUVALU

Statement

Presented by

The Prime Minister of Tuvalu

Honourable Mr. Willy Telavi

at

The Fourth Least Developed Countries Conference

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Istanbul, Turkey

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Mr President
Distinguished Heads of State and Government
Secretary General
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. As this is my first United Nations high-level conference to participate, I am delighted as Prime Minister of Tuvalu to bring to you all, warm greetings from the people and Government of Tuvalu whom I am honoured to speak on their behalf. First of all, I wish to convey our profound appreciation to the Government and people of Turkey for the warm hospitality accorded to my delegation since our arrival in this beautiful city of Istanbul. In particular the full commitment and generosity of the Government of Turkey in financing the participation of my delegation at this conference is highly commendable and deserves our special thanks.

2. Let me also extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General of this conference and his entire team for their invaluable and untiring efforts in the preparation of all required logistics for this conference. Above all we recognise with deep appreciation the important task undertaken by the United Nations Preparatory Committee for this conference together with all Permanent Missions of UN Member States in New York for their hard work in undertaking intensive negotiations on the new Programme of Action for LDCs.

Mr President,

3. Today, Tuvalu is very pleased to participate in this conference and fully support its purpose as mandated by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 63/227. In this regard, the need to review the progress and challenges faced by LDCs in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA) during the last ten years, and to renew our commitments and partnerships with our development partners, is crucial.

4. Ten years ago we met in Brussels and adopted the BPoA for LDCs for 2001-2010. The implementation of such Programme is not very encouraging as many commitments by both LDCs and development partners remained unfulfilled. For Tuvalu, despite our scarce and limited resources I am pleased to report that we have made some progresses in meeting some of the commitments and goals of the BPoA. This has been attributed mainly to the full integration and mainstreaming of the BPoA commitments into the Government's development strategies detailed in its National Development Strategy for Sustainable Development 2005-2015 known as "Te Kakeega II".

5. My delegation is looking forward toward this conference and exploring ways to improve the LDCs new framework in the context of a rapidly changing global economy. In this context the international community has been forced to weather several crises, including the global financial crisis and subsequent economic downturn, the recent spike in food and energy prices, and climate change. In every case LDCs unfortunately have been among the most negatively impacted.

Mr. President,

6. LDCs are by definition highly vulnerable. And as an LDC and a low-lying Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Tuvalu faces a unique and particular set of challenges that compound its development challenges. At the Third Conference on LDCs the focus was on the eradication of poverty, which is indeed an ongoing issue of great importance to all of us. However, in this conference we believe that in addition to the development issue, vulnerability is another important issue of concern for LDCs.

7. Tuvalu's extreme vulnerability to external economic and environmental shocks is one of the greatest obstacles to its overall development. Tuvalu has a small and fragile economy that is heavily dependent on official development assistance (ODA). As developed countries grapple with stagnating economies, many have reduced their ODA at a time when LDCs are most in need. One of our other major sources of revenue - workers remittances from abroad - is also affected by the volatility in the global economy. Recent events also impact our national expenditures. Tuvalu has limited natural resources, so we must import many of our basic necessities. And because of our geographical isolation, these imports are expensive. The recent run up in food and energy prices has put enormous strain on our national budgets.

8. More seriously, the growing impacts of climate change threaten to undo all our development gains over past years. Tuvalu is an extremely low-lying island nation, with its highest point only a few meters above sea level. Adapting to the impacts of climate change will continue to compete with our other national priorities, like health and education. Rising sea levels already undermined the productivity of our limited local agriculture and will eventually threaten the very existence and survival of our people and our nation.

Mr. President,

9. Let me highlight three priorities for consideration by the international community when tackling the challenges facing LDCs.

First, we must improve the LDC system to better address vulnerability. The current graduation criteria do not adequately account for a country's vulnerability profile, but only combining a number of factors into a single, often misleading metric. Short-term improvements in economic and social indicators are not sustainable unless the underlying vulnerabilities of LDCs are addressed adequately. Small island developing states like Tuvalu are particularly disadvantaged by the current system because of its unique challenges. The required reforms to such system should include a more robust program to help LDCs smooth transition after graduation.

Second, developed countries should maintain and gradually increase the flow of ODA to LDCs. For over 35 years, developed countries have repeatedly pledged to deliver ODA equal to 0.7% of their GNP, however few have actually fulfilled this modest goal. Many of these countries are facing domestic pressure to reduce foreign aid, putting at risk our hard-won development gains. Sustainable development depends on a predictable flow of financial resources, without which decades of gains can be undone in a matter of a short period.

Third, the world must take immediate action to address climate change as a cross-cutting issue. At the on-going climate change negotiations, Tuvalu has consistently made serious proposals that are consistent with the latest science. These proposals have largely been ignored by developed countries. We cannot continue down the current path. Annex I Parties must agree to a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol this year in Durban and the ambition of their mitigation commitments must be raised. Scaled-up, new and additional sources of climate change finance must be provided to developing countries to enable them adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change and begin reducing their own emissions. Time is running out. We need to take URGENT actions now to save Tuvalu and the world. Our existence and survival cannot be compromised.

Mr. President,

10. LDCs must overcome their serious challenges to achieve their development aspirations. For that reason, Tuvalu would like to underline the importance of reaching a meaningful and realistic outcome for LDCs at this conference that will address their special situation and unique development needs and challenges. Continuing with business as usual is not an option.

11. We also firmly believe that the sustainable development of LDCs relies heavily on strong and active partnerships between LDCs and the international community, which should be clearly reflected in the new Programme of Action. In

this regard, let me underscore the importance of the South-South Cooperation (SSC) which contributes significantly to the overall development of LDCs. In this respect I call upon developing countries which are in a position to do so, to enhance their contributions and cooperation towards this common purpose for LDCs.

12. In the spirit of active partnerships, my delegation would like to acknowledge with great appreciation, in addition to Tuvalu's traditional donors and development partners, the special and on-going contributions provided by the Government of Taiwan in the overall development of Tuvalu as an LDC, and the Government of Cuba for the development of its health sector through the training of its medical students.

Mr. President

13. The importance of improving access to international financial mechanisms, and other sources of support for LDCs cannot be over-emphasised. As the smallest LDC in terms of its physical size, population, resources and its economy, Tuvalu in many cases cannot access or fully utilize these international sources. This is where the special case and needs of LDCs like Tuvalu should be fully understood and well recognised by the donor community as a benchmark for determining their respective programme of assistance to LDCs.

14. Hence we firmly believe that the outcome document for this conference should set up aid assistance programs which focus more directly on the specific needs and challenges of each LDC. In this context, the "no one size fits all" approach should be used as a guiding principle in determining the appropriate program of assistance for each LDC.

15. A comprehensive outcome of this conference should also address the capacity building needs of LDCs. Tuvalu cannot fully realize its development potentials without greater opportunities for trade. The extreme geographical isolation of Tuvalu and other SIDS must be considered and strategies for overcoming such challenge need also to be developed. For example, Tuvalu requires greater investments in large scale infrastructure such as an international airport, if we are to participate fully in international trade. Indeed, Tuvalu does not suffer from extreme poverty but from "poverty of opportunities" due to its smallness and isolation.

Mr. President,

16. In conclusion, let me reiterate and underscore the need and importance for the Istanbul Programme of Action to clearly reflect the reality facing LDCs

in terms of their respective development needs and challenges. Clearly, LDCs cannot achieve the objectives and goals of such Programme on their own, without the continuous and increase commitment and assistance from development partners and all other stakeholders from parliament, private sector, and civil society from both developing and developed countries.

17. However such commitments without timely actions to deliver concrete results on the ground may well leave small and poor countries like Tuvalu continues to shoulder the burden. In this context Tuvalu undoubtedly continues to rely heavily on overseas development assistance from the international community to face its development challenges and protect its vulnerable people.

18. I am confident that with strong and meaningful partnerships and political will and support from both LDCs and our development partners, we should be able to implement the new LDCs Program of Action for the next decade successfully in a true spirit of cooperation and solidarity.

Tuvalu mo te Atua - Tuvalu For God

I thank you.
