



PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
United Nations Member States

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**Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Tonga to the
United Nations**

**On Behalf of the
Pacific Small Island Developing States**

**SIDS Plenary Statement
Commission on Sustainable Development – CSD 17**

**New York
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Madam Chair,

I am honored to speak on behalf of the Pacific Small Islands Developing States (PSIDS) comprising Fiji , Federated States of Micronesia , Kiribati , the Marshall Islands , Nauru , Palau , Papua New Guinea , Samoa , Solomon Islands , Tuvalu , Vanuatu , and my own country, the Kingdom of Tonga.

I would like to align myself with the statement made by the Representative of Grenada on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States. I would like to congratulate you in assuming the role of the Chairman and in leading us through the CSD this year. We hope you can take into account the shared vulnerabilities of all SIDS, particularly in our efforts to adapt to the effects of climate change. We would like to share with you many of the unique challenges faced by the Pacific islands.

This year's focus on agriculture, land, rural development, drought, desertification, African region and the inter-linkages between the issues are timely and crucial in mobilizing the global efforts to implement sustainable development policies. In order for the policies to be effective, we must take into account the impact of the cross-cutting issues such as climate change, food and water security, land conservation and erosion, effective funding sources and implementations of projects.

As a region, we have invested much of our resources into land conservation; most land in the Pacific is customarily owned. In our efforts to promote sustainable practices, our regional and governmental agencies are dedicated to involving local communities in the decision making process, and enhancing self reliance among small agricultural and forest communities. Many of the Pacific islands are threatened by sea-level rise. The sea-level is predicted by the IPCC to rise from 0.19 to 0.58m by the end of the 21st century, and recent science suggests an even greater rate of sea-level rise. This phenomenon evidently poses a serious threat to the security and sovereignty of small island nations across the Pacific. We have initiated a draft resolution entitled 'Security and climate change' to bring further awareness to the issue.

Agricultural practices and rural development in our region have suffered serious implications from the effects of climate change. The infiltration of salt water in soils and freshwater aquifers endangers our traditional food sources, such as taro and pulaka. In addition, the projected reduction in average precipitation will diminish freshwater supplies. All the aforementioned problems exacerbate food scarcity crisis in our region. Community based services must be strengthened in order to engage communities to identify the linkages between agriculture, fisheries, coastal care, health and income generation activities, and to minimize over-fishing practices to ensure the sustainability of future fish supplies.

Climate change has a direct impact on the health and well-being of our people. The health of communities are likely to deteriorate due to decrease in sanitation and malnutrition from food and water scarcity, or the spread of water borne and vector borne diseases. Dengue fever incidence, for example, has increased during warm years and wet seasons. There is a need to intensify the mainstream and to strengthen national sustainable development strategies into all aspects of policy frameworks to ensure that local communities receive adequate resources and knowledge to implement sustainable development practices and disease prevention mechanisms. Direct assistance

to communities minimizes transaction costs and ensures that aid and other resources are used in the most effective manner.

Madam Chair,

The aggregate impacts of climate change will add even more pressure to our small economies by placing enormous demands for immediate social and economic relief, particularly in the aftermath of natural disasters. Low-lying islands such as Tarawa atoll in Kiribati, for instance, will face estimated annual financial damages of more than US \$8-\$16 million a year, or the equivalent of 17-34 percent of Kiribati's gross domestic product. In order to implement efficient solutions to remedy these problems through grassroots community engagement, direct financing and support is needed. We are grateful of the assistance provided by our donor partners, and we strongly urge that donor partners will assist communities through technical training, capacity building and the direct implementation of development projects.