

STATEMENT

**HON. TOKE TALAGI
THE HONORABLE DEPUTY PREMIER OF NIUE
MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT**

**ADDRESS AT THE BPOA +10 INTERNATIONAL MEETING HIGH LEVEL
SEGMENT
13 January 2005. Port Luis, Mauritius.**

Mr. President,
Your Excellencies
Honorable Ministers
Distinguished Delegates

Mr. President,

At the outset, let me join the other distinguished colleagues who have spoken before me in congratulating you on being elected to chair this very important international meeting.

I would also like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government and the people of your beautiful country Mauritius for the excellent arrangements for this meeting and for the gracious hospitality that has been extended to me and my delegation

The recent natural disasters that have occurred in 2004 have again highlighted the vulnerability of our countries to the adverse impact of the forces of Nature.

The Tsunami induced tragedy that occurred, a few weeks ago devastating whole economies and claiming hundreds of thousands of lives is the latest such event.

I, on behalf of my government and people of Niue, join others before me in expressing our commiserations and deepest sympathies to those affected and to those who are struggling to rebuild their shattered lives.

My country Niue was devastated by the category 5 cyclone Heta in January 2004 and we are certainly aware of the debilitating and psychological impact that these disasters can

have on people and the countries economic and social wellbeing. Similar, super typhoons have also occurred in the Caribbean in 2004 resulting in similar adverse effects to many countries in that region.

This shows that all coastal areas in the world are no longer safe from the threat posed by the oceans and Small Island developing states like Niue and low lying countries are very much at risk.

We are here to review the BPOA, 10 years on and develop a strategy that will move us forward in a positive and constructive manner. In that process we must continue to make concrete plans to reduce the risk or vulnerabilities of our countries to disasters caused by global warming or the economic impacts of trade globalization We cannot build our resilience to such external factors and influences unless there is a genuine will to ensure that every step is taken to minimize those factors which may cause them.

Mr. President we recognize that we need the respect, assistance and cooperation of our developed country partners to work together with us through interactive partnerships to positively activate the Implementation Phase of the Barbados Plan of Action. To delay action on this will only put the small island developing states in critical danger of economic failure creating even worse poverty and hardship.

Aid is not charity. I believe that aid should be mobilized for investment and used by us, to build robust economies for long term financial and economic stability and sustainability

Therefore we must make full use of this opportunity to make progress in our work and I urge all our participating partners to work together in a cooperative manner to resolve outstanding issues and move forward into the next decade with better programs which will show actual implementation and achievement of the millennium development goals for our small islands.

After 10 years, the Barbados Plan of Action programs and have achieved mixed levels of success. Small Islands Developing States like Niue continue to lack the necessary resources, infrastructure or the capacity to fully implement the Barbados Plan of Action to

the level that it can. Natural disasters have not helped us in our quest.. We also believe that the reluctance of our other partners in the negotiating arena to fully take into account the real concerns of the SIDS and endorse concrete actions in the BPOA framework has also contributed to the slow progress of SIDS to fully implement the BPOA.

We acknowledge that sustainable development is the primary responsibility of nations and that there can be no progress without local understanding participation and action.

We have taken some very deliberate and concrete actions to respond to the enormous challenge of rebuilding after the cyclone. We are committed and resolved and have the desire to maintain our identity as a sovereign nation and to work towards greater economic social and financial stability and sustainability

Let me add Mr President that we are particularly thankful to the governments of New Zealand, Australia, China French Polynesia and France and UNDP in Apia, as well as our friends and neighbors for the immediate assistance provided to us following the destruction caused by Cyclone Heta. We are heartened to know that we have partners who also recognize our resolve and determination as well as our desire to build greater resilience for our country.

We recognize the important role that our youth, civil society and private sector can play in the implementation of the BPOA. They are important for our countries and we must give them the opportunity to be an active partner in determining the direction of our future aspirations. Their participation in this international meeting has been very positive and we must continue to allow them to participate in the future meetings

We also continue to recognize and acknowledge the important role of our regional institutions in this program and we support their continued involvement in this process. We consider it important to ensure that they continue to be adequately resourced as well as promoting sustainable development programs at national and local community levels in partnership with National Government.

We support and believe it critical that the international community implement the UNFCCC and mobilise resources to allow small islands to take appropriate adaptation measures.

We strongly support the action-oriented proposals on poverty, health, water, **waste management**, sanitation and energy. We also urge the international community to recognise and support our cultural initiatives. Our cultures have also been shown to be vulnerable and we must recognise and make concrete measures to ensure that we do not put our cultural heritage in greater jeopardy.

My country is particularly aware of the limits to the carrying capacity of our ecosystems and physical resources of both land and oceans. Our traditional practices are steeped in conservation of our biodiversity. The protection of biodiversity and the promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable tourism, agriculture and forestry, and fisheries is essential to us. We will need support with the implementation needs that will be essential if we are to effectively achieve and integrate our environmental, social and economic goals.

We note the text on institutional arrangements and look forward to engaging fully in any new arrangements of international governance that will build upon our national mechanisms, which are already in place.

Mr. President, we have traveled a long way to come here to this very important meeting. We believe that there is a good spirit and desire by many of us to achieve our common objectives. In our experience we have found that unless there is good will and mutual respect in any negotiations, then whatever we agree to will not be long lasting or genuine. I therefore urge all of us but particularly our developed partners to be more generous of spirit and support for SIDS.

Mr. President

Fakaue lahi-Kia fakamonuina mai he Atua.