

SAMOA



STATEMENT BY

**THE HONOURABLE
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**PRIME MINISTER OF THE
INDEPENDENT STATE OF SAMOA**

AT THE

**SIXTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

New York, 26 September 2008

Please check against delivery

Mr. President,

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations personifies multilateralism. It is a living testimony of the inter-governmental process at work.

Samoa's membership of the United Nations is grounded on the promise of hope, equality and justice the United Nations offers the member states, irrespective of their economic, political or military strengths.

Looking back, our organization has not lived up to the lofty goals enshrined in its Charter. Its credibility has been tarnished and undermined, and its performance questioned at times.

Yet, these perceived failings of our organization are of our own making,

- when we allow vested interests of a few to take precedence over urgent and deserving needs of the majority,
- when we accept flawed perceptions that certain issues, states and regions are more important than others, distorting the world's focus and the allocation of resources,
- when we turn a blind eye and let the numerical superiority of groups, or the importance of some stakeholders to frustrate informed discussions of critical issues to score points and achieve symbolic wins that help no one in the long run, and
- when the long list of broken promises and unfulfilled undertakings couched in eloquent yet meaningless rhetoric creates frustration and mistrust amongst member states.

The end result is that if no one takes responsibility, the future of the United Nations would be in doubt and the cost to the world incalculable.

Mr. President,

We have no one but ourselves to blame for any deficit in the credibility of our organization. What we urgently need is a collective sense of trust and commitment to its Charter. Only then will the United Nations remain relevant and regain the confidence of our members.

There is so much at stake for the world to just sit idly by. Strong global leadership is at a premium. Governments must yield not to vested interests and expediency of time, but because it is the ethical and just thing to do.

Mr. President,

That was my message from this podium last year, one I am happy to restate again today.

No member state is too powerful or too small not to be part of the solution to make United Nations an agent of change, a beacon of hope during these challenging times. And no contribution is trivial or unimportant not to matter. To states in leadership positions, I implore you to lead with humility, fairness and with a kind heart. The world expects nothing less. Leadership and responsibility are, after all, one and the same.

Clearly, member states can only do so much. We need a committed Secretariat that is aware and sensitive to the needs of the people it exists to serve. That is a priority prerequisite that is non-negotiable.

Samoa supports the Secretary-General's vision to create a professional career service that is flexible and mobile to allow for quick and positive responses to the diverse demands of member states. The need for the UN to deliver as one entity cannot be overemphasized. It adds value and quality to the process, eliminates wastage, minimizes overlaps and ensures scarce resources entrusted to its care are used optimally to supplement members' hard-earned efforts.

Mr. President,

Right now our world faces a difficult and troubled time. As members of the global community, our futures are inextricably linked.

For Samoa, the small size of our country and isolation from the major markets and permanent vulnerability to climate change are factors beyond our control. Yet even as a least developed small island nation, with little to no contribution to the causes of today's crises, Samoa is not shielded from their immediate negative impacts and long term consequences.

Global crises, as we know from bitter experience in global warming, in energy and with food, and now the mayhem in financial markets that threatens to engulf the world affect all our nations irrespective of whether we contributed to these crises or not at all.

Mr. President,

This is why, in spite of shortcomings in the organization, the United Nations remains the only viable institution that draws all the nations of our world together. However, the necessity to revitalize the General Assembly and to reform the Security Council has been obvious for many years. In the case of the Security Council, as long as its current composition and rules ignore today's realities, it will continue to struggle to effectively carry out its intended tasks as we have witnessed over many years.

Samoa remains firm in its position that the permanent and non-permanent membership categories of the Security Council should be expanded. Member states with legitimate credentials should be encouraged to stake their claims. Importantly, the inter-

governmental process should commence in earnest during the current session to bring finality to an issue that has taxed members' patience and endurance for over a decade and a half.

As the very minimum, the unanimous support of the current Permanent Members of the Security Council is a must. We hope therefore that candidature states and permanent members reach out to each other in good faith and set aside the barriers that continue to frustrate the reforms to the Security Council that we all know must be made.

Mr. President,

An observation made over many years is what seems to be indifference, whether intended or not, on the part of some of the leader nations of our organization towards small and economically weak states, which while they observe good governance and practice sound economic management, are nevertheless faced with the constant struggle to sustain and maintain the hard won gains on these fronts.

Paradoxically, the only time these struggling states get noticed is when they totter on the brink if not well on the way to becoming failed states. By then the cost in salvage action and remedial programmes would be enormous. The willingness therefore of leader nations to listen and to try and understand early the problems of states struggling to sustain good governance and economic management would go a long way to creating effective partnerships and deploy scarce resources efficiently and in the process engenders goodwill and trust.

Mr. President,

Troubled spots around the world are on the rise, including in our own Pacific region. Some are occasioned by outside forces and influences and others through domestically induced factors. We all aspire to the same values in life notwithstanding our differences. Hence, why we must heed the lessons of history and provide appropriate encouragement and interventions to help states regain good governance and abide by the principles of democracy.

Mr. President,

Yesterday's High Level Meeting on MDGs was a timely reminder, not of what we have achieved by the mid-way point, but what decisive actions must be taken urgently if the time-bound targets set at the dawn of the new millennium are to be met.

Samoa participated in the recent Accra Meeting on Aid Effectiveness which further refined the pathways to the MDGs review just concluded and the Doha meeting on Financing for Development in November 2008.

Our strategic plan from 2008-2012 is a comprehensive development framework linked to the budget process for the implementation of the MDGs with strategic targeting of those goals with minimal progress through priority resource allocation.

We are grateful to the Governments of the People's Republic of China and the United Kingdom for their support through debt relief. Similarly, we want to acknowledge the innovative partnerships we are engaged in with our development partners, both old and new giving us full ownership of the process in our quest to achieve as many of the MDGs as we possibly can.

In September 2007, my government worked closely with the United Nations system and others to promote the achievement of the MDGs during the South Pacific Games 2007 in Samoa. Part of the innovative way of using sports as a vehicle to effect change in behavior and to relay development messages led to the installation of a solar-powered "MDG Scoreboard" in front of the Government Building to monitor national progress in MDGs.

Mr. President,

Climate Change continues to play a pivotal role in the decisions of the Leaders in our region. Our Pacific Islands Forum meeting in August 2008 adopted for the first time the Niue Declaration on Climate Change. Our Forum Communiqué of the same summit highlighted the vulnerability of Pacific small island developing states to the impacts of climate change. The European Union and the Pacific Islands Forum Troika last week agreed to work together to highlight the on-going vulnerability of Pacific islands to the impacts of sea level rise. And our representatives to the United Nations are working with likeminded countries to bring to the fore the security implications of climate change.

In total, these efforts and partnerships should convince those in self denial that climate change is real, its effects have already been felt by some Pacific island states, and that for some low lying islands climate change is an "existential" issue with their long term survivability at stake.

Only through selfless and concerted efforts by all countries led by the major green house gas emitters can we have a fighting chance of lessening the destructive impact of climate change and enhances the chances of a credible post-Kyoto Agreement beyond 2012. To reach that goal, the Bali Road Map in its four pillars of adaptation, mitigation, finance and technology should be supported both in word and in deed.

Mr. President,

The unpredictable weather patterns of recent times affecting all regions of the world is a sober reminder of our limitations as human beings against the force of natural elements no matter how well, and technologically sound our preparations are.

We need a global response if we are to succeed. Samoa was pleased therefore to see Australia took its place as a state party to the Kyoto Protocol at the Bali meeting. We remain optimistic that either through a change of heart or through new circumstances, other countries will join the Kyoto Protocol to strengthen the implementation regimes of the convention.

I mentioned last year the offer of the United Nations System to establish an Inter-Agency Climate Change Centre in Samoa for coordinated support to Pacific island countries and regional organizations for climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Given the clear importance to the Pacific region of the project, Samoa has allocated land (16 acres) to locate the Centre and awaits the availability of the necessary resources to be made available by the United Nations so that the facility, which is already public knowledge in the region, can be constructed.

Mr. President,

Samoa continues to support the UN peacekeeping efforts worldwide. Small as we are, Samoan police continue to serve side by side with officers from other countries in Liberia, Sudan and East Timor as part of our on-going commitment.

Within the Pacific region, our solidarity to challenges facing our neighbors means a guaranteed Samoan police presence in the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands under the umbrella of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Mr. President,

A durable peace settlement in the Middle East continues to elude us. But that's not ground to be pessimistic. We should support every effort to create conditions conducive to the creation of an independent Palestinian State alongside a secure and safe State of Israel to succeed.

Finally, those bent on creating fear and panic throughout the world will stop at nothing to achieve their aims. We must not be held hostage to their devious designs. Individually and collectively we must step up our efforts to combat the threat of international terrorism in its many manifestations. No country can succeed on its own. Only by working collaboratively can we be successful.

I thank you.