



REPUBLIC OF NAURU

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER FOR COMMERCE, INDUSTRY & ENVIRONMENT
UN FOOD SYSTEMS PRE-SUMMIT
26TH – 28TH JULY 2021**

Your Excellencies
Honourable Ministers
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and gentlemen

Chair,

It is my honour to represent the Republic of Nauru at the 2021 UN Food Systems Pre-Summit. My statement will form part of a symphony of messages that will echo across the world the urgent need to set bold ambitions to transform our global food systems. I want to applaud the efforts of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for convening this important virtual gathering, which is a critical milestone in this Decade of Action on the way to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The upcoming Summit, and the national dialogues that will inform it, have provided a timely opportunity to re-examine our food systems, and to identify policies and actions that can make them healthier, more affordable, more resilient, and more secure.

Nauru's food system remains challenged by a myriad of factors that stem from geographic, climatic, demographic, and socio-economic vulnerabilities. Our own vulnerability to shocks in the food system was exposed by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to limited arable land, Nauru is almost entirely dependent on imported food, the bulk of which arrives at our port once a month. Quarantine

restrictions temporarily interrupted those shipments, leaving us only a few weeks worth of food on the shelves.

We were fortunate to avoid a crisis as shipments resumed, but climate change has the potential for interruptions to our food supply. Any climate-related disaster in key food producing regions of the world can cause prices in Nauru to skyrocket, as happened during the 2008 food crisis. Climate change is also projected to threaten the viability of our fish stocks and the Blue Economy, in which all Pacific Island communities rely on for subsistence and sustainable livelihoods.

Nauruans already pay some of the highest prices in the world for basic food staples, and a supply shock can drive prices out of reach for most. This lack of affordability has contributed to a separate public health crisis of non-communicable diseases in Nauru.

It is clear to a small island nation like Nauru that food insecurity can have enormous negative ramifications for our public health and economic stability. Indeed, for us, food security has become an issue of national security.

For this reason, Nauru is exploring the potential for dramatically scaling up domestic food production. Therefore, we are looking seriously at soil-less food production systems that can use what limited land we have as efficiently as possible. This will go hand-in-hand with efforts to build human capacity and improve sustainable land and marine resource management.

Food production will be integrated into our headline climate change resilience strategy – the Higher Ground Initiative. This generational undertaking will migrate most of Nauru’s population from vulnerable coastal areas to the higher elevation interior. This integrated approach to food systems and urban sustainability will build our resilience to external shocks, improve our balance of trade, diversify our economy, and provide a more healthy and affordable diet for our people.

However, we realize that we can not do all of this alone. We will require capacity building and affordable financing to deploy modern, soil-less food production systems. We want to work with like-minded

partners who are motivated to advance our sustainable vision of a new Pacific urbanism.

We also need to see more regional and international cooperation, so disruptions to food production in one bread basket do not cause shortages and price spikes in vulnerable countries on the other side of the globe. In a world that needs to feed more than 7.3 billion people daily, where almost 800 million do not have enough food for adequate nutrition, and where climate change is already affecting agriculture, it is clear that we must create a global food system that is more productive, sustainable, and resilient.

The path is before us and while we have not yet shifted to the desired state, I am convinced our collective strengths fuelled by the vision of this summit will drive us to our desired destination.

In closing, Nauru is excited to participate in this important process. We believe it will have a positive impact on our national food systems as we strive to build a healthier, more resilient, and a more sustainable future for our small island nation.

Thank you