



TUVALU

Statement

by

The Honourable MAATIA TOAFA

**Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
of Tuvalu**

at the

59th United Nations General Assembly

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Mr. President
Distinguished Heads of State and Government
Excellencies

I have the greatest honour to speak on behalf of the people of Tuvalu who wish me first of all to convey their warmest greetings to this Session of the General Assembly.

We extend our sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election, and assure you of our full cooperation.

We also commend the outgoing President, H.E. Mr. Julia Hunte of St Lucia, for his excellent leadership. Coming from a small island developing State ourselves, we are proud of the many achievements so ably accomplished under his presidency.

We would also like to extend our warmest gratitude to the Secretary General, Mr Kofi Anan, and his staff for their dedication to the work of the United Nations. The UN through the Secretary General's High Representative participated at the Pacific Island Forum Leaders meeting held in Samoa last month, at which a new strategy for regional cooperation in the Pacific, the "Pacific Plan", was considered.

This is highly commendable. Tuvalu, like all Forum members, looks forward to the UN's solidarity and support bilaterally and through the PIF and other Pacific regional organisations to fully realize this Pacific initiative.

Mr. President

Tuvalu is privileged and proud to be in this most indispensable body, the UN. Our presence here proves our belief in the UN's noble principles and goals. At the same time, however, we are constantly reminded of our responsibilities to every Tuvaluan who everyday worries about his future economic, cultural, environmental and long term security and survival on our small, isolated and extremely vulnerable islands.

Is the pride of being in the United Nations comparable to the many aspired needs of our people? Are there any real value of being here to the villagers and local communities, who barely make it beyond the restrictions of poverty of opportunities, marginalization, isolation, economic exclusion, and extreme vulnerabilities?

Mr President

It is our strong belief that to maintain its legitimacy and relevance to ALL, the UN needs to reassess its roles, and its functions so as to better reflect the reality of today's world in line with its principles of sovereign equal participation and representation.

We therefore support ongoing reforms in the United Nation's work. In particular we support the increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent seats in the Security Council. Expansion in our view should be considered on the basis of responsible contribution to international development and peace, and in this vein we would support the allocation of a permanent seat to Japan.

We also believe more equitable representation of the developing countries in the

non-permanent seats of the Council is vital and long overdue.

Mr President

Security challenges continue to create worldwide havoc, fear and uncertainty. Terrorist acts, including the unfortunate seizure of a school in Russia, have proven the continued existence of forces bent on undermining the United Nations founding goals of freedom, peace and security. They have also underscored the urgency with which we, the United Nations, must collectively combat these forces.

Tuvalu is fully committed to joining the fight against international terrorism as required by Security Council resolutions. But we would need to seek the assistance of the UN and the international community to help us fulfill the requirements, particularly on reporting, of these resolutions and of the international anti-terrorism conventions.

Mr President

Tuvalu recognizes the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic to the social and economic development and security of Tuvalu and other Pacific Island countries. Given our exposure and the level of mobility of our communities, particularly our seafarers who serve on merchant ships worldwide, there is an urgent need for assistance from the international community, such as that provided under the Global Fund on HIV/AIDS to combat the threats of the epidemic.

Mr President

As is widely acknowledged, a serious challenge to Tuvalu as to all small island developing States, is our unique vulnerabilities to external forces, caused not by our doing but simply by our own `islandness' of narrow economic bases, isolation, fragmentation and fragility of our ecological environment. These in all translate into significant constraints against development and severe lack of capacity to cope with the many changes that are taking place in the world, especially through globalization.

Yet for us in SIDS, while we witness everyday the forces of trade, communications and travel creating a single global community, the problems of poverty of opportunities, marginalization, and adverse effects of environmental decline continue to plague our efforts. There is a genuine need for the United Nations and the international community to better recognize the special and unique case of small island developing States, and their aspirations to participate more equitably in a globalised world.

Mr President

Sustainable development, particularly for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable developing States is most crucial. This year in June Tuvalu undertook a comprehensive review of its development strategies, and adopted a national sustainable development strategy we call "*The Tuvalu Vision 2015*" premised on international development agendas including the review of the Barbados Programme of Actions for Small Island Developing States, and aimed at building Tuvalu's resilience against the vulnerabilities being faced.

The promotion of good governance, democratic principles and respect for the rule of law is strongly recognized as fundamental to the successful implementation of the Strategy. We acknowledge with greatest appreciation the generous support of the governments of Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Italy and the Republic of China on Taiwan, the UNDESA and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in this exercise. We look forward to partnering with these and others in the international community in the realization of this strategy.

Mr President

As a poorly resourced small island developing State and an LDC as well, even our best efforts to escape the cycle of poverty and marginalization are doomed without the meaningful support of the international community, civil society, and the private sector. The Millennium Summit Declaration, Monterrey Consensus, and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation have all provided clear roadmaps for partnerships towards sustainable development.

The signposts so offered under these roadmaps will remain mere rhetoric unless they translate into real developments responsive to the unique needs of SIDS like Tuvalu.

It is for these reasons that full and effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Actions for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (BPOA) is ever so crucial. Tuvalu is very encouraged by the progress so far achieved in the review of the programme.

However, we would need to state that the success of further implementation of the BPOA will be dependent entirely on better appreciation of the unique situation of SIDS like Tuvalu, easier access to, and the provision of adequate financial and technical resources, development and diffusion of appropriate technology particularly new and renewable energy, and capacity building .

In terms of natural resources, Tuvalu is really a BIG OCEAN small island country. The Pacific Ocean that surrounds our islands provides the vital source of our livelihoods and economic and social development. Increasingly, however, we are becoming concerned with the real threats of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and of pollution to the oceans from waste, particularly the transshipment of highly radioactive and toxic materials in our region. We would need to seek the understanding of the international community to help us save our oceans, and support fully the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy adopted by leaders in 2002.

Mr President

The overall decline in Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) in real terms, is cause for serious concern. The failure of developed countries to fulfill the UN minimum target of 0.7% of their Gross National Product (GNP) in ODA for SIDS, translates into lower economic growth as well as into further widening the gap with SIDS like Tuvalu. This needs to be addressed urgently.

An important source of financial flows to developing countries, particularly also to SIDS like Tuvalu, is the migrant workers' remittances from developed countries. Indeed remittances from our overseas workers and particularly Tuvaluan seafarers serving abroad provide a substantive source of income so vital for social and economic development in Tuvalu.

Tuvalu fully supports the affording of urgent attention to the issue of migrant workers' rights including the maintenance of competency on international standards, and their safety and security on the international agenda, to ensure sustaining this vital source of capital for SIDS.

The Mauritius International Meeting in January must result in stronger commitment from the international community and in pragmatic and doable actions on the ground in all SIDS.

Mr President,

An issue of continuing concerns to Tuvalu is the question of the representation of the ROC on Taiwan in the United Nations. Regrettably, this august body cannot be said to be universal without the rightful representation of the twenty-three million people of the ROC on Taiwan. Tuvalu feels that the active and responsible participation of the the Republic of China on Taiwan in world affairs especially in trade, commerce, and international development without representation in the UN is unjust and morally wrong, and needs to be corrected.

Mr President

We in Tuvalu live in constant fear of the adverse impacts of climate change and sea level rise. With a height of a mere three meters above sea level, our livelihoods and sources of food security are already affected badly, with increased salinity in ground water, land erosion, coral bleaching and total anxiety. The threat is real and serious, and is of no difference to a slow and insidious form of terrorism against Tuvalu.

Tuvalu therefore accords significant importance to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol as they provide the most appropriate global framework to reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). We congratulate the UNFCCC Secretariat as the Convention marks its tenth anniversary this year. However, we are deeply concerned by the failure and the lack of leadership on the part of industrialized countries in the implementation of commitments, and in the ratification and enforcing of the Kyoto Protocol.

Mr President

Indeed we in SIDS recognize that all nations must take steps to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) at some stage. However, Tuvalu believes that the Kyoto Protocol must be the first step in this direction for now, and for setting the way forward in the future. The Protocol as such must be entered into force without delay.

But in saying this, the industrialized world must act first as it is their historical emissions that are creating the problems of today. Actions must also include assisting SIDS in their adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change, particularly in terms of urgently providing adequate financial and technical resources in line with the responsibilities and obligations under the UNFCCC.

As we mark the tenth anniversary of the UNFCCC, and as we begin to look into future actions against climate change and sea level rise, we appeal for more attention from the United Nations, whose existence is for world peace and security, and for stronger leadership by the international community against this global threat.

Mr President

In conclusion we want to say that efforts aimed at the sustainable development of small island developing States like Tuvalu, will be of no meaning unless the issue of climate change and sea level is addressed decisively, and with urgency. Tuvalu's interest in enforcing Kyoto is not self-serving. The more serious consequences of not acting now, as we are already witnessing world over, will be felt everywhere.

It is our hope that out of this Common House of our UN family, there will emerge better understanding and goodwill for the long lasting security and survival of Tuvalu and SIDS, and of the whole world.

God Bless the United Nations.

TUVALU MO TE ATUA.