



TUVALU

Presented by

PRIME MINISTER OF TUVALU

Honourable Enele Sosene Sopoanga

at

The 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly

General Debate

September 27, 2017

New York

President of the General Assembly

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Government and people of Tuvalu, to address the General Assembly, and to congratulate you on your appointment to the presidency of our 73rd Session. Tuvalu has full confidence in your leadership, and that together with the Secretary General's support, to further advance our work.
2. Tuvalu also re-affirms its commitment to the noble values and principles of the UN, of which it has high pride to be Member since we joined in the year 2000.
3. Tuvalu acknowledges with sincere affections the passing of the late Kofi Anan, former Secretary General, and his outstanding contributions to this body, leading us from the dusk of the past Century, into the dawn of the Twenty-First Century.

73rd UNGA Session

4. President, we welcome the theme of the 73rd General Debate, "Making the United Nations Relevant for all people: Global Leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies."
5. It rightly reminds us that we now need responsible global leadership more than ever. Leadership that values multilateralism, trust and the moral responsibility to help those who need help. This is the leadership the world needs to succeed against the defining global challenges of the UN SDGs in particular of climate change and environmental degradation.

UNSG high level events during the high-level week

6. This year was characterized by the fear of a potential nuclear war as if we have not learnt from the wrongs of the past. Now we have nuclear weapons that are much more powerful than those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

7. Numerous nuclear tests in our Pacific region have caused unimaginable damages to the environment and health of our people. Some of our islands are still coping with the effects of nuclear radiation decades after those nuclear tests. The recent Pacific leaders meeting in Nauru reaffirmed our commitment to peace and security in the Pacific region. Under the Boe Declaration on Pacific Regional Security, we are calling for urgent actions not only on military, but on human security issues as well.

8. In this spirit, Tuvalu two days ago, signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which offers the international community an opportunity to ban this weaponry. We urge all of us to take up concrete actions to make our world safe.

Non-Communicable Diseases and Tuberculosis

9. Non-communicable diseases and tuberculosis hit the poor and vulnerable particularly hard and drive them deeper into poverty. We commend the successful outcomes of the high-level meetings of the General Assembly on NCDs and TB convened by the UN Secretary General, but the rhetoric alone is not enough, they must be followed by meaningful actions on the ground to drive healthy life-styles and diets, supported by adequate financing and monitoring modalities to ensure integrated progress.

10. Addressing this in a manner of urgency is critical, and to this end in Tuvalu, we have introduced an all Friday afternoon sweat-breaks to all workers in work places, and in the villages to encourage more active and healthy life-style, through more physical activities like sporting, gardening, and fishing.

Climate Change and The Paris Agreement

11. For SIDS and LDCs, however, the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, depends entirely on how we can address issues of climate change. Current global warming trend spells a very bleak and miserable future for

SIDS, especially for low-lying atolls like Tuvalu. A future that demands huge investments on mitigation and adaptation that are simply beyond our capabilities.

12. The Paris Agreement offers us a lifeline. But the current commitments in the Paris Agreement constitutes only a third of what is needed to avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change. This is a direct threat to our existence and survival.

13. As already established based on the IPCC's assessments, unless the global community steps up our actions to significantly lower GHG emissions, SIDS like Tuvalu will disappear completely within the next 30-50 years – disappear completely. I repeat again what I said in COP21, Paris, just imagine if you were in my shoes, how would you feel? And what would you do?

14. Climate change is a weapon of mass destruction. It is slaughtering fellow human beings world-over. The UN cannot and must not allow the biggest GHG emitters to turn away from their moral duty to urgently reduce GHG emissions, and to save SIDS like Tuvalu with appropriate adaptation support. It will be shameful for the whole of humanity to ever allow Tuvalu disappear. Every single year wasted with no actions on climate change, draws Tuvalu a year closer to its total demise from earth. But Tuvalu will never give up, we will fight to protect and save our islands, our people, our culture, and our future.

15. We appeal to this Noble House not to allow this to happen. Tuvalu, whose islands and lagoons were used by the American forces in the Second World War to conquer the enemy in the Pacific, urges President Trump and the USA to re-join the Paris Agreement, so we can all paddle together to save the world against our single most threatening enemy of climate change. Failing this, Tuvalu strongly proposes that we the signatories of the Paris Agreement must quickly return to Paris to critically and urgently re-assess our mitigation pledges and dramatically increase our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas pollution. We cannot allow one country to desert the process and derail our efforts.

16. The next Conference of Parties in Poland is a critically important milestone for climate change action. We must ensure that the Implementation Guidelines for the Paris Agreement are concluded. We must also ensure that the Talanoa Dialogue process leads to a strong political declaration and decision that responds to the IPCC 1.5 deg C report and sets a pathway for enhanced climate change action.

17. In this regard we seek a commitment from every nation to enhance their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as a matter of urgency. On our own part, Tuvalu is fully committed to shifting to 100% renewable energy by 2020 despite our negligent greenhouse gas emissions. I extend our deep appreciation to the Governments of India and France for their initiative on solar energy development, under the International Solar Alliance, and to the EU, NZ, Taiwan, Italy, Austria, Japan and the World Bank for their support on energy efficiency and solar energy development in Tuvalu.

18. I wish to acknowledge the efforts of notable members of the Security Council in bringing climate change to the fore of its peace and security agenda. This is a genuine commitment to addressing the most important challenge of our time and the greatest single threat to humanity. It is our humble hope that the whole of the Security Council membership can agree to have climate change as a permanent item on its Agenda.

19. Madam President, we believe that the nexus between climate change and security is fundamental. For a nation like Tuvalu our security and our future are contingent on urgent action to address climate change. We therefore reiterate our call for the appointment of a Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on climate change and security. The Special Representative will hopefully create the necessary catalyst for a UN wide response to climate change and security.

20. We also call on the Security Council to appoint a special rapporteur to produce regular review of global, regional and national security threats caused by climate change.

Global Compact on Migration

21. We welcome the successful conclusion of the intergovernmental negotiation on the Global Compact on Migration and applaud the spirit of responsible leadership and multilateral cooperation to support the ever-increasing populations that are being affected by conflicts and environmental crisis including climate change.

22. We believe however, that all human rights of climate change displaced people should be protected under an international legal agreement. We therefore reiterate the Tuvalu proposal for a UN Resolution on the establishment of a legal process to protect the human rights of people displaced by climate change. The proposal is fully supported by the Polynesian Leaders Group, the SIS Leaders, and in the Pacific Island Country Leaders.

LDC Graduation

23 This year Tuvalu has proposed to remain an LDC because our ability to achieve sustainable development is being severely compromised by our vulnerability to climate change. We noted with appreciation the support that we have received from development partners on our proposal.

24. However, it is our earnest belief that SIDS unique extreme vulnerabilities must be considered as a fundamental criteria of graduation from the LDC category.

SIDS

25. The particular concerns of highly vulnerable SIDS, like Tuvalu, cannot be ignored. In our NSSD, Te Kakeega III, our unique vulnerability is recognized as enemy number one to SDGs achievement. In this regard we call on ECOSOC to create a special category for SIDS so that we can be afforded special considerations in a similar fashion to LDCs.

26. We note the UN Secretary General's recently released report on the "Assessment resulting from the evolving mandates of the small island developing

States units of the Secretariat”. The expanded responsibilities of the SIDS unit in UNDESA and the OHRLLS should be matched with expanded resources. We strongly urge the UN Secretary General to make available additional resource for these units. We also believe that all UN Agencies should identify and develop special programs for SIDS.

27. We welcome the review of the S.A.M.O.A. pathway and hope that this review will truly reflect and respond to the unique circumstances of SIDS and their extreme economic, environmental and social vulnerability and direct action to address this vulnerability.

28. In the South Pacific region, we are making small steps to address this vulnerability. We are in the process of developing a Pacific Island Climate Change Insurance Facility. We seek support from the UN wide system to assist us in developing this Facility.

Ocean

29. Madam President, our small island economy is inextricably linked to the oceans. The Oceans is us, our culture, our life and our survival. For us, it is the source of life: food, ecosystems, biodiversity, freshwater, and economies. The ocean presents our greatest hope to achieving sustainable livelihoods for our people, security and survival. However, with global warming, acidification, coral bleaching, solid wastes and plastic pollution, inshore and off-shore fish-stocks on which national economies dependent, are gravely affected. The UN must provide the strongest leadership to drive genuine partnerships to address these issues.

30. It is therefore very important that the interests of small islands developing states are reflected in the ongoing discussions on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity including beyond areas of national jurisdiction. We seek international cooperation that ensures our equal and fair participation in the

management and sharing of benefits from the oceans including in areas beyond national jurisdictions.

Taiwan, Cuba, West Papua

31. Madam President, the exclusion of Taiwan from the UN systems denied its 23 million people their fundamental rights to participate, benefit and contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Already Taiwan is a responsible and able partner to Tuvalu and many countries around the world and could only do more if it is allowed its rightful place and role in our global efforts.

32. The UN has to make the necessary arrangements to let Taiwan participate in its meetings, activities, and mechanisms. Tuvalu strongly supports the ROC/Taiwan active participation in UN specialized agencies including in the UNFCCC, WHO, and ICAO.

33. In a similar manner, the long unilateral economic embargo on Cuba directly constraints the development aspiration of the people of Cuba. It neglected the human rights and the spirit of cooperation espoused in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

34. Likewise, our United Nations must engage with the people of West Papua to find lasting solutions to their struggles.

35. Madam President, the 2030 Agenda is a “plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity,” and was adopted on the basis of the principles of inclusiveness and universality. We must therefore engage every country and every people for a successful 2030 Agenda.

PIF 2019 in Tuvalu

36. Next year in August 2019, Tuvalu will host the 50th Pacific Islands Forum of Leaders. I extend our humble invitation to all PIF Leaders, our friends and especially

our Development Partners, bilateral and multilateral, to join us in Tuvalu. We want to put on record our deepest appreciation to the Government of Taiwan for their generous support to help us prepare for this important regional event. Similarly I want to acknowledge similar support from the Governments of India, Taiwan, and the ROK to host the PIF summit.

37. On 1st of October, Tuvalu will celebrate its 40th Anniversary of Independence. Whilst holding high our national pride in being an Independent Nation, we fully acknowledge that Tuvalu would never have achieved such a status without the due consideration of Members of this august Body to whom we offer our sincere gratitude. In our stride, we acknowledge with deep appreciation the generosity of all our development partners, particularly our traditional partners the Republic of China, Taiwan, India, Republic of Korea, Australia, New, New Zealand, the EU, Japan, UK, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank. As we paddle our canoe over the next forty years, we seek for the continuing goodwill of the UN family, to further advancing our achievements based on genuine and durable partnerships.

38. In conclusion, Tuvalu strongly believes that our collective effort to achieve the sustainable development Agenda 2030, and to secure global peace, security and prosperity, will be severely compromised unless we all paddle together to urgently address climate change: **to Save Tuvalu, to Save the world.**

I thank you Madam President

TUVALU MO TE ATUA