



*Permanent Mission of the Republic of Nauru  
to the United Nations*

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Special Envoy of H.E. the President of the Republic of Nauru

Country Statement: “Building Resilience to Natural Disasters  
and Major Economic Crisis”

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Mr. President,  
Madam Executive Secretary,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Nauru welcomes the opportunity to participate at the Sixty-ninth session of ESCAP on the theme, "Building resilience to natural disasters and major economic crisis."

Building the resilience of the smallest and the most vulnerable among us is a critical endeavor noting that our challenges are immense while our means are limited. How can a small nation like Nauru, which struggles to recover from a single shock, build resilience against the rising and ceaseless tide of natural and economic disaster.

From my country's perspective, resilience is a product of well-planned and developed infrastructure, strong institutions, and a strong economy. These three elements determine whether a hurricane becomes a temporary, if painful setback, or an economy-wrecking disaster. They enable a country to alleviate human suffering during financial shocks or prevent prolonged economic downturns. Without them, countries will be reliant on the charity of others to rebuild in the aftermath of a crisis.

These three elements – infrastructure, institutions, and economy – are also inextricably linked in a way that makes it difficult to have one without the others.

This needs to change. We must find ways to mobilize financial resources that are accessible to even the most vulnerable countries, so that they can invest in their infrastructure and begin to realize their full social and economic potential. This requires a paradigm shift away from international development policies based primarily on donor priorities and short-term profit seeking toward ones based on actual need.

We must also move beyond sporadic capacity building efforts in the form of one-off workshops and consultant reports toward true institutional building. My country would greatly benefit from a maintained in-country presence of international agencies to mentor Nauruans and guarantee that enduring skills are sustainably transferred to the local population.

However, we recognize that building resilience will always be an uphill battle as long as we face an increasing tide of man-made disasters, because, make no mistake, those are becoming the most dangerous.

**Mr. President,**

On the environmental side, temperatures are rising faster, droughts, fires and floods are raging across the planet. Sea level is projected to rise by a meter or more by the end of the century. And we are presiding over the sixth great extinction event.

Humanity is facing a crisis of unfathomable proportions. And the solutions we are being offered? Climate proofing. Should we be reassured? Or are we being handed a roll of duct tape in lieu of the deep structural reforms and development programs needed to bring true resilience to our countries?

The fact of the matter is that greenhouse gas emissions must be brought down rapidly to near zero by the middle of this century, or there may be little left in our country to climate proof.

Recognizing some climate impacts are unavoidable, developing countries have called for the establishment of an international mechanism to address loss and damage to help rebuild when disaster strikes, as well as to cope with slow onset impacts like sea level rise and ocean acidification, which threaten to undermine the foundations of our sustainable development. The mechanisms should be ***international*** in scale so that the large risk pool maximizes its cost effectiveness.

An effective mechanism will also require a comprehensive understanding of climate risks – to our infrastructure, to our industry, and to our territorial integrity – so that adequate financial resources can be mobilized. ESCAP may be well suited to assist in gathering relevant data and helping perform a comprehensive risk analysis.

On the economic side, we are trapped in an increasingly volatile global financial system. The demand for outsized returns has fueled destructive speculation and downright corruption to an extent not witnessed since before the Great Depression. Bringing stability and the rule of law to this broken system must be an international priority of paramount importance. Again ESCAP can play a role in helping us understand the full extent of our economic vulnerability.

When treating a patient, a doctor's first rule is "do no harm." We should adopt the same at the international level and stop adding to the challenges vulnerable countries already face.

**Mr. President,**

To be frank, there is little that can be done alone to build resilience. Nauru is one of the many Small Island Developing States (SIDS) whose status as a 'special case' for environment and development was recognized in Agenda 21 in 1992.

We have repeatedly reaffirmed this recognition, but few concrete steps have been taken to appropriately address them. Our sustainable development is lagging, and the Barbados Programme of Action, the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation including other international agreements confirm that there remains enormous gaps in the system of international support for SIDS.

As we embark on elaborating and designing our post 2015 Development Agenda, we must ensure that our system of governance is effective not just for today or the next few years but to meet the ultimate challenge of enabling everybody to achieve a better standard of life.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we should not forget that true resilience can only be achieved after fully appreciating the scale of the challenge.

Thank you.