



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

by

**LORD TU'IVAKANO,
PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF THE TONGA**

On the occasion of the

OPENING SESSION OF THE MINISTERIAL SEGMENT

7 AUGUST, 2014, 9: 00 AM – 10: 00 AM

UN CONFERENCE CENTRE,

Bangkok, Thailand,



THE PHASE II OF THE

70TH SESSION

OF THE

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
(UNESCAP),**

4-8 August, 2014,

**YOUR EXCELLENCY MR. TSHERING TOBGAY,
HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER OF BHUTAN,**

**YOUR EXCELLENCY MR. KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO,
HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER OF TIMOR-LESTE,**

**YOUR EXCELLENCY MR. MANASVI SRISODAPOL, DEPUTY
PERMANENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF THAILAND,**

**YOUR EXCELLENCY MS. SHAMSHAD AKHTAR, UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF ESCAP,**

**YOUR EXCELLENCY MS. NOELEEN HEYZER, UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND
SPECIAL ADVISOR TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON
TIMOR-LESTE,**

YOUR EXCELLENCIES DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

A few days ago, when the Commission convened, the ESCAP hosted discussions on the key findings of the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2014*, the Commission launched its flagship publication and the theme study, on “Regional connectivity for shared prosperity.” In addition, member states presented on various issues,

particularly the preparations for the *Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States* (SIDS) in Samoa this September and an array of development issues relevant to the least developed (LDC) and landlocked developing countries in light of the context of the development agenda beyond 2015.

We live in a tremendous age of transition, of great uncertainty amid global turbulence. As the economic power has shifted to the Asia region, with Asia becoming the “engine room” of Global growth, placing greater demands on the limited earthly resources we must all share, as well as contributing to the negative effects of our fragile climate, thus making it a pivotal region in all social and economic aspects.

As a result, this has highlighted the vulnerabilities of the LDC, LLDC and SIDS, experiencing rising economic and social inequalities even within our own Asia Pacific Region, but today, as the countries of the Asia-Pacific region – we come together to meet and face these challenges and advance together for the future.

As policymakers and heads of governments, we come to the ESCAP for a high-level exchange and shared perspectives from these bodies of countries - all in the common pursuit of inclusive and sustainable development.

LADIES AND GENTLMEN,

I refer to the wonderful remarks of the Executive Secretary at the *Preparatory meeting of the Special Body on Least Developed, Landlocked Developing and Pacific Small Island Developing Countries* on August 3rd.

In your opening statement you discussed the extreme diversity and complexity of these groups of countries which complicates their path to development and I quote:

“SIDS Exhibit Mixed Performance amid a Multitude of Challenges” whilst the “LDC made Good Progress but Challenges Remain” and for the LLDC, there is an indication of “Uneven LLDC Performance in a Difficult Internal and External Environment.”

As a member country of the PSIDS, this multitude of challenges you mentioned, ranges from exposure to *Sea Level Rise to the ravages of Climate Change* and the Pacific Islands *high dependence on imported fossil fuel for energy*.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

The Asia and the Pacific is the most disaster prone region in the world. Climate change and its adverse effects may become the top ranked - silent killer in the pacific region if we do not act now.

While effective early warning systems for natural disasters such as tsunami, cyclones and drought can help save lives and livelihoods, access to scientific information and knowledge remains a challenge for many of our islands in the region.

I am pleased to highlight that the ESCAP has supported the PACIFIC SIDS, in the development of the Pacific Regional Energy Data Repository or PRDR - under the auspices of the Pacific Community, which is in support of the UN Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All initiative.

The PRDR is an initiative to address the challenge of lack of access to invaluable energy data, identified as the root causal problem for the slow development of reliable, clean, affordable, accessible energy in the Pacific, which was borne out of the Pacific Leaders Energy Summit hosted by Tonga in March 2013. This Pacific Leaders initiative was tasked to me to make happen and armed with this mandate I led the Tongan Delegation to the 1st Asia Pacific Energy Forum held in Vladivostok in May last year. The APEF was a success by all accounts and the PRDR formed part of the Ministerial Plan of Action under the Vladivostok Declaration. I would again like to recognize the excellent arrangements and hosting by the Russian Government of the 1st APEF.

Following on from this, Tonga worked with the other Pacific Governments and the Pacific Regional Data Repository for SE4ALL Declaration was signed in New York, on the side lines of the General Assembly and presented to the Secretary General. I am extremely pleased that later this month the launch of the PRDR for SE4ALL will take place in Samoa. The ESCAP Office Bangkok and Suva have been instrumental in supporting this Pacific Leaders initiative and on behalf of the Pacific Leaders and through you Madame Executive Secretary, Thank You.

As we all anticipate the upcoming event of the 3rd International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which is to be held in Samoa from September 1-4, 2014, the opportunity to address Your Excellencies and esteemed members of the ESCAP is timely and invaluable.

The important question is how ESCAP can assist members States in the implementation of the outcome of the Samoa Conference, and the development agenda beyond 2015.

Going forward, from the conclusion of that Preparatory meeting I am honoured to represent the collective voice of the group of countries in the Pacific SIDS, in thanking the ESCAP for planning to support the

Recommendations of the SAMOA Pathway, the draft Outcome Document for the 3rd SIDS next month.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Against this backdrop, we meet here today to exchange good practices and discuss strategies for supporting these recommendations at the UN's Regional Conference and General Assembly in September.

And in the hope to shape future efforts to build more resilient communities and nations –it will be the shared prosperity and strength from our regional connectivity and integration that can save most of us, whether we are from the Least Developed Countries or Landlocked Nations or those in the Small Island Developing States!

Over the course of the two days, we are looking forward to the Ministerial Roundtable talks on this year's theme - '*Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity*'- there are many drivers behind each region's economic success, and many strategies for enhancing this regional connectivity.

What's important from these deliberations will be identifying ways that we can strengthen the coordination of our regional cooperation, provide for better quantifiable mechanisms that provide for performance evaluation and allow us as Governments to continually reassess our

policies to ensure Sustainable Development is achieved in a timely manner.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

Perhaps, just as important to most of us from the Ministerial Panel will be Asia-Pacific perspectives on sustainable development and development financing.

Each region has large financing requirements needed to strengthen social and economic development – but the real challenge is – how do we mobilize this financing to ensure strong and stable financial systems and at the same time for Developing States, like Tonga, that require financial assistance, how do we access the limited development funds in a timely manner. Therefore in going forward, the Region should work collectively to ensure that it nurtures and address these issues taking into account our own different financial and fiscal capacity.

There are many ways to achieve this, from extending finance to meet the people's needs and the region's development, to us as policymakers and regulators working together with the private sector to develop more diversified and balanced financial sectors – which we all know can be the key to reinforcing financial stability and sustainability.

For those of us in SIDS, a critical issue which remains to be addressed is how to enhance country capacities to set up and improve the functioning of capital markets, institutions and regulatory frameworks.

Of course, this will mean a lot of work has to be done! –and with the Ministerial Segment, as well as the discussions over the next two days, it is my fervent hope that your decisions and deliberations will garner to make a difference and address these gaps and challenges.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you fruitful deliberations.

‘Ofa atu,