

Country statement during the Ministerial Segment of the Commission

Thank you Mr Chair for the opportunity to address this distinguished forum.

Since this is the first time for the Kingdom of Tonga to take the floor, I would like to [echo others in thanking the] [thank the] Executive Secretary and the Secretariat for the excellent and tireless work in convening us here this week for the 71st Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Our sincere gratitude to the Royal Thai Government and the people of Thailand for their very warm hospitality.

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

The Pacific Island Development Forum has been a unique platform that brings together Pacific Leaders from the public and private sectors and civil society to address sub-regional development challenges, as eloquently stated by the Chair.

In this respect, Pacific leaders recognized the changing global environment, where business as usual is no longer an option and the need to move from silos to synergies in addressing the interlinked challenges of environment and development. Thus, this movement can only be achieved and sustained through strategic partnership arrangements across all sectors and at all levels. The theme, "Green Growth in the Pacific: Building Resilient Sustainable Futures and Genuine Partnerships," reflects Tonga's own objectives to pursue the momentum for investing in blue economy and marine conservation and management development.

People's connections with nature is fast eroding and it should be a priority to re-establish these connections while respecting island ecosystems.

Conservation and sustainable development policies are viewed as important for supporting the national economic and social development priorities, as well as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Government is committed to ensure the sustainable use of the environment by enforcing Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs). Raising the environmental sustainability of economic development to safeguard the interests of future generations is vitally important. Government recognizes the interdependence of the economy on the environment and how this must be fully integrated in decision-making.

The Tongan Government responded to the twin challenges of reducing the Tongan contribution to global Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and improving national energy security by

[On 3rd October 2014, our Pacific Island Ministers responsible for the environment, made a Declaration recognizing the vital importance of the Pacific Ocean to the livelihoods and sustainable economic development of the people of the Pacific, including through providing sustenance, protecting marine biodiversity and in regulating weather and climate variability.

We had recognized the need and adopted an integrated approach to environmental management and sustainable development. This was strongly advocated during the SIDS Conference in Samoa by making Partnerships its main theme and in pushing for implementation through multidisciplinary, multi-sector and multi-stakeholder partnerships as clearly articulated in the SAMOA Pathway.]

We have recognized the synergies and shared linkages between the Post 2015 Development Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway, which provides a window of opportunity to strengthen and focus cooperation between stakeholders in the Pacific in order to meet the development challenges of the sub-region. Our Pacific Leaders had instructed to carry out a joint approach in the regional preparatory process for these two global platforms and I am sure we will continue to carry this joint approach through in their implementation.

To conclude Mr. Chair, the SDGs can be used to scale up environmental action. It was highlighted that Asia Pacific countries need to build capacity, improve governance, strengthen political commitment for implementing the SDGs. Mainstreaming SDGs in national planning is required. Mobilizing financing and enhancing the use and direction of the flows of funding are a pre-requisite for implementation of the SDGs and a transformative post 2015 development agenda. Bilateral and multilateral funding agencies could support countries to align environmental governance structures and financing mechanisms for the delivery of the SDGs and to support countries in their efforts to prepare for the adoption, implementation and reporting on the SDGs.

I thank you Chair.