

Statement by His Excellency President Baron Waqa  
Republic of Nauru

71<sup>st</sup> Session of the UNESCAP Commission  
28 June 2015  
Bangkok, Thailand

Your Excellency, General Prayuth Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of Thailand  
Your Excellencies My Fellow Pacific Leaders  
Your Excellency, Mr. Ly Tuch of Cambodia, outgoing Chair of the 70<sup>th</sup>  
Commission  
Dr Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary of the United Nations and Executive  
Secretary of ESCAP  
Excellencies  
Distinguished Delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to express from the onset, my profound gratitude and appreciation to the government and people of Thailand for the warm welcome accorded to me, my wife and my delegation since our arrival in this beautiful country. I had a chance to tour parts of Pattaya on Tuesday and visited the Noongnooch Pattaya Garden. It was indeed very beautiful.

Yesterday, Leaders from the Pacific were given opportunities to highlight development activities in their countries, especially on the challenges and success stories and on implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, which ranges from a green economy and climate change mitigation, to macroeconomic policies and sustainable development.

Since Nauru achieved its independence more than 48 years ago, the challenges associated with our isolation, diseconomies of scale, high cost of transportation, and high cost of fuel, has constantly been a significant drain on our national coffers.

Energy use and transportation have been two very significant challenges that faced successive governments over the last 5 decades, and has become acute in the last 15 years given the high cost of fuel imports.

Challenges caused by decades of unsustainable economic practices led to an erosion of many essential services such as banking, international transportation services and the lack of development of a proper port. This was exacerbated by NCDs which is a major cause of deaths of our most productive people.

About 10 years ago, we embarked on structural reforms to adjust and diversify our economy. We adopted the National Sustainable Development Strategy and it became our guide in our development endeavours.

Since the establishment of the regional processing centre for asylum seekers in 2012 and the adoption of sound macroeconomic policies by my government, we have made significant strides in our economic development.

I am happy to say that with a 10% economic growth achieved in 2014, real progress has been achieved.

For example, consolidated public debt has been significantly reduced and new financial regimes have been implemented to improve services. A new trust fund will soon be established, and my government has already set aside significant funds to invest.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to share with you a success story, a story to do with the national airline - Nauru Airlines. When the national airline was established more than 40 years ago, it was always struggling to generate profit. From a one passenger plane 3 years ago, the airline now operates five 737 aircrafts - 4 passengers and 1 freighter planes. For the first time in its history, airline operations have been entirely paid for by its own revenue stream which also funded the expansion, primarily to service Nauru, and to also service neighbouring countries in passengers and freight. The freighter aircraft has been extremely valuable for our isolated islands bringing in much needed produce from Australia, and the option to use it for exports of high quality fish and agricultural products from the neighbouring countries are currently being explored.

Other priority matters that should be mentioned that Nauru is addressing includes:

- Embarkation on rehabilitation of 80% of the land which was rendered uninhabitable after more than 100 years of phosphate mining;

- Development of sustainable energy through the 'Energy Road Map' and the plan to develop 50% renewable energy by solar power by the year 2020; and
- Improve disaster management response and risk mitigation.

It is fitting Mr. Chairman that I mention at this juncture, the role of responsible media coverage and reporting concerning small island states. Nauru has been on the receiving end recently of biased and unsubstantiated reporting by foreign media and left wing groups regarding the government decision to ban the social media Facebook.

In a tiny community with only 10,000 people and where nearly everyone knows one another, the effects of social media to inform and to advertise is very powerful indeed. The power to disrupt, embarrass, destroy one's reputation, and to create instability is a power social media also has a grip on society to further add to social decadence and lawlessness.

The use of Facebook on Nauru to circulate nude pictures of young girls, and the unregulated use of language to intimidate and to create tensions among friends and families is something that our small and vulnerable society cannot and will not accept. As the leader of my country, I have to protect my people. The ban on use of Facebook and porn sites on Nauru is in the interest of protecting the country, especially on our young generation.

However, noting the benefits of Facebook especially in promoting trade and commerce on Nauru, it would be in the interest of some to know that we have commenced discussions with Facebook management to see how the concerns of the government can be resolved. This is very important to us, since as a nation founded on Christian principles, our values and ways must be protected. Our national motto "Gods' Will First' embodies this, and we as a people must adhere to this principle.

Finally Mr. Chairman,

Nauru welcomes assistance from ESCAP on issues concerning sustainable development and especially in training and capacity building at the national level. Undertaking attachments to other countries in the ESCAP region to learn

their experiences will also be beneficial for small countries like Nauru, and I call on organisations like ESCAP to consider assistance along this pathway.

Nauru also welcomes assistance in areas concerning the review of its NSDS so that our economic and social development can be sustainable for our people.

With those few words, thank you very much.

----- END -----