



TUVALU STATEMENT

to the
SEVENTY-FIRST UNESCAP SESSION

Presented by:

Hon. Enele Sosene Sopoaga

Prime Minister

May 28-29, 2015

Bangkok, THAILAND

Please check against delivery

Your Excellency, General Prayuth Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of Thailand

Your Excellencies My Fellow Pacific Leaders

Your Excellency, Mr. Ly Tach of Cambodia, outgoing Chair of the 70th Commission

Dr Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me through you, Mr Chairman and Prime Minister, to convey to the government and the people of the Kingdom of Thailand, my delegation's sincere appreciation and gratitude for the courtesies and warm hospitality extended to us.

Congratulations and thanks are also due to the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Dr Shamshad Akhtar, for ESCAP's work in the Pacific, particularly through the Pacific Office in Suva.

Tuvalu calls on ESCAP and the international community for their continuous support to assist in the many challenges the region is facing as it moves towards the post 2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals.

Excellencies, the experience from the MDGs suggests that the more we are able to integrate SDGs into our national development plans the more likely our success. We are reviewing our national development plan later this year and we look forward to ESCAP and other orgs and entities to partner with us in this exercise.

We've also learned that we cannot do it alone and that sustainable development is a people-centered approach and every one's business. Multi-stakeholder partnerships is critical and we intend to have as wide a consultation process as possible with all our outer islands in the process of reviewing and developing our national plans to incorporate SDGs and implement the SAMOA Pathway.

In this regard, we thank the Draft Resolutions Working Group for endorsing the SAMOA Pathway resolution. We also thank the Working Group for endorsing the resolution on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which among other things, extends the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness to cover the Pacific as well.

For as we well know from our recent experience of unprecedented damages caused by cyclone Pam, climate related natural disasters are only going to increase in intensity. We were not as badly damaged as our fellow Pacific neighbour Vanuatu but it was unprecedented damaging and very threatening.

In building back better after natural disasters, we need to use the innovative tools we have to make better use of available and promised resources. Our positive experience with our Tuvalu Trust Fund has given us the confidence that this can be a viable mechanism for accessing and utilising climate financing

We also need to have better returns on our fisheries resources, on which we are quite dependent, and from which we are getting only a fraction of the value, as was highlighted by the Marshall Islands President yesterday. This will help reduce our dependence on aid. But we must also manage it sustainably for long term benefits and here again climate change and ocean acidification pose critical threats.

We also need to look at different ways of building, or rebuilding our cultural resilience and there is much we can learn from the experiences of those of you in Thailand and in Bhutan who have experience in alternative pathways to development.

Mr Chairman and Excellencies, while we look with anticipation to the SDGs, we also know that unless we succeed in Paris during the Climate Change negotiations, we stand little chance of succeeding with sustainable development in low lying atoll countries like mine. I hope I can count on the support of the ESCAP membership in this endeavour to arrest climate change and ocean acidification before it is too late.

In conclusion and returning to the overall theme of the 71st Commission, we know that with the 17 “tentative” SDGs and the 169 targets proposed, that it will be a challenge to do the necessary work of contextualizing them into our national efforts. But localize and contextualize we must if we are to have ownership over the post-2015 development agenda and turn these goals into real change. This is our short-term priority as we look at better ways to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development.