



TUVALU

Statement

Presented by

The Tuvalu Ambassador and Permanent Representative

To the United Nations

His Excellency Mr. Afelee Falema Pita

at

The Sixty-Fifth Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Open Debate

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Mr. President
Distinguished Heads of State and Government
Secretary General of the United Nations
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. At the dawn of the new millennium ten years ago, Tuvalu raised its flag among those of the members of the United Nations here in New York as a new Member State of this august body. Our admission is a testimony of hope and opportunity for our nation's destiny in the resolve of humankind through the noble pillars of the United Nations as enshrined in its charter. I am therefore greatly honoured and privileged to speak at this august body on behalf of the people and Government of Tuvalu and to convey to this Session of the United Nations General Assembly our warmest greetings.

2. At the outset we share the high commendations expressed by previous speakers on your election as President of the 65th session of the General Assembly, and also to your predecessor for his leadership and dedication during his presidency over the last session. Let me reassure Your Excellency of our support during your presidency.

3. As we celebrate our 32nd anniversary of independence later this week, let me take this opportunity to acknowledge and convey our sincerest thanks and gratitude to the international community, especially our traditional development partners and close and new friends, for their continued support and co-operation in the pursuit of our development goals. Without their gesture of understanding, friendship and co-operation, Tuvalu could not have achieved the progress it has made to date.

Mr. President,

4. We welcome and support the key priority issues such as the Millennium Development Goals especially poverty eradication, global governance, and the promotion of sustainable development, which you, Mr President, have clearly highlighted in your opening address of the 65th session. However, we would like to focus on the following issues: the review of the MDGs and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, UN reforms, climate change, Tuvalu's LDC status, and Taiwan's participation in the UN specialised agencies.

5. Last week the General Assembly convened a high-level plenary on the review of the Millennium Development Goals. In the context of achieving these MDGs, Tuvalu has been reasonably successful. Our population does not suffer from extreme poverty and hunger. We have very high participation rates in primary education. The participation of women in Tuvalu society is prominent, although representation in parliament remains an issue. Progress in reducing child mortality is somewhat slow, and access to adequate health care also remains an issue.

6. During the review of the MDGs there is one very clear lesson that we have learnt. This relates to the fact that while we have made progress in achieving the MDGs, these successes can be easily and very quickly reversed by our particular economic and environmental vulnerability.

7. In the context of economic vulnerability, the recent global financial and economic crisis continues to have an enormous adverse effect on Tuvalu's economy. For a small island economy like Tuvalu, which is highly reliant and dependent on the import of products from overseas, the severe impact and consequences of such crisis also continues to be encountered by our people. One element of such effect was the increase cost of importing fossil fuel. The cost of fossil fuel dependency is having a crippling effect on our national budget. We are in desperate need of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies that are appropriate for the unique conditions of Tuvalu.

Mr. President,

8. Last week we also undertook a review of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation. During the discussions we proposed three key outcomes. First, we need support to help regulate and police illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Second, we need to ensure that our economies are able to recover after severe weather events. This means that we need a climate risk insurance mechanism which needs to draw on public international finance to underwrite the cost of premiums and pay outs. Third, we are seeking proper acknowledgement of SIDS' concerns in the UN process and their recognition as a discrete group within the UN system.

Mr. President,

9. Much has been said and well documented on the importance and seriousness of climate change especially its adverse impact on the small island developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) like Tuvalu. At the recent Pacific Island Forum meeting, Leaders highlighted climate change as the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific. Our Leaders further iterated that unsustainable development and climate change threaten not only the livelihoods of Pacific peoples but also the islands themselves and the cultures they nurture.

10. However, despite our high expectations for concrete and timely support from the international community, we were deeply concerned and disappointed at the outcomes of the climate change conference in Copenhagen last December. We sincerely hope that the forthcoming Conference of Parties to be held in Cancun later this year will lead to concrete results and not shallow promises.

11. In view of the slow progress in the on-going negotiations under the UNFCCC process coupled with the lack of concrete commitments shown by key greenhouse gas emitting countries, Tuvalu would like to see three key political commitments coming out of the meeting in Cancun: First, we would like to see all the amendments and rules for the Kyoto Protocol agreed, so that such amendments are ready for ratification to avoid a gap in the commitment periods. Second, we should decide on a mandate to start negotiations on a new legally binding agreement based on all elements of the Bali Action Plan. And third, we should agree on a set of decisions that will provide interim steps to implement measures to be incorporated in the new legally binding agreement.

12. This should be the bare minimum we anticipate to agree upon in Cancun. For Tuvalu, addressing climate change in a substantial way is fundamental for our sustainable development and livelihood. We cannot allow the next conference in Cancun to be another failure like Copenhagen.

Mr President,

13. Despite the fact that Tuvalu is one of the SIDS and LDCs most vulnerable to a wide range of global events as alluded to earlier, the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have not recognised and taken such vulnerability into

consideration seriously when addressing the question of graduation from the Least Developed Country category.

14. We strongly believe that Tuvalu's economic and environmental vulnerability cannot be over-emphasised and totally ignored especially with the on-going consequences of climate change and the recent global crisis. In this regard, we continue to call upon the United Nations and our development partners to recognise our vulnerability as an LDC in the review of the criteria and the graduation rule for LDCs' graduation.

Mr President,

15. We cannot agree more to the need and importance for the General Assembly and Security Council to be revitalized and reformed respectively to enable them to fulfil their mandates and roles in a more transparent, coherent, efficient and timely manner. The on-going reform processes are fully supported and we believe that SIDS should be allocated a seat in the Security Council.

Mr President,

16. Whilst we applaud and strongly support the on-going significant role played by the United Nations as the major peacekeeping body in the international community, the efforts and progress made by Taiwan in pursuing peace on both sides of the Straits needs special recognition and encouragement by the United Nations.

17. In addition, Tuvalu strongly believes that with Taiwan's active involvement and contributions to international trade, investment, air transport, finance, telecommunication technology and environmental protection, it deserves to participate more fully as a member of the World Health Organisation and other UN specialised agencies such as the International Civil Aviation Organisation and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Tuvalu therefore urges these UN specialised agencies to accommodate Taiwan's meaningful participation in their respective systems and activities.

Mr President,

18. In conclusion, let me reiterate and underscore the importance and seriousness of climate change as a cross-cutting issue and its adverse impacts, especially that of sea level rise, on a small island developing State like Tuvalu. Although we do acknowledge with profound appreciation the commitments and generous pledges

offered by the international community and the establishment of international trust funds specifically earmarked for climate change, to access such sources of funds let alone their timely disbursement is extremely difficult and time consuming for small countries like Tuvalu. Therefore, such commitments without timely actions to deliver concrete results on the ground may well leave the small and poor countries like Tuvalu continue to shoulder the burden.

May God Bless the United Nations. Tuvalu mo te Atua.

I thank you.
