



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE KINGDOM OF TONGA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

ON THE OCCASION OF THE
GENERAL DEBATE
AT THE
SIXTY FIFTH SESSION
OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY SONATANE TU'AKINAMOLAHU TAUMOEPEAU TUPOU
CHAIRMAN OF DELEGATION

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**250 EAST 51 STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10022
TEL - (917) 369 1025 FAX - (917) 369 1024 EMAIL - tongaunmission@gmail.com**

Thank you Mr. President,
Secretary General,
Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I too, offer you Mr. President my warmest congratulations upon your election to the Presidency of the General Assembly for this our 65th session.

Let me, as always, assure you of the cooperation and support of the Tongan delegation.

I also express my gratitude to your predecessor His Excellency Dr. Ali Treki for his recently concluded term as President of our Sixty Fourth Session.

I wish to also thank the tireless Secretary General, Ban ki Moon, for his resolute leadership of the Organisation during these times of unprecedented and challenging global events. We also acknowledge the enduring work of the Organisation's Secretariat and its agencies and those in particular who made the ultimate sacrifice in the furtherance of that work.

Mr. President,

Testament to the Secretary General's leadership on global issues of concern to all of us has been his role in the convening this past week of the High Level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the High Level Review of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI+5).

A decade on, the MDGs continue to reflect our firm global resolve to ensure an improved and lasting quality of life for all of our peoples – a global 'pursuit of happiness' if you will. It is no surprise then that the MDGs are now a core component of our national development planning.

Tonga has recently produced a second national MDGs report which has highlighted positive results across the 8 Goals that would appear to suggest:

* with regards to MDG1 on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, it is acknowledged by the international community that Tonga does not suffer from extreme poverty or hunger but that there are some households that do suffer hardship, and their needs are being addressed,

* with regards to MDG2, the net enrolment ratio in primary education for 2008 was 93% indicating that Tonga has almost achieved universal basic education,

* with regards to achieving MDG3 on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, Tonga's GDI value for 2009 was 0.765 compared to its HDI value of 0.768. Out of the 155 countries with both HDI and GDI values, Tonga is ranked 39th, placing it amongst the countries with the highest gender equality!

* that with continuing solid support from the Government there is an expectation for further progress on MDG4 on reducing child mortality, MDG5 on improving maternal health, and MDG7 on ensuring environmental sustainability,

* MDG6 as it relates to halting and reversing by 2015 the incidence of non communicable diseases (NCDs) and MDG5 as it relates to universal access to reproductive health remain a challenge, and

* that achieving MDG8 on developing a global partnership for development Tonga is well advanced with medium term development strategies with all major bilateral and multi-lateral partners and has a world first in sectoral development with the Tonga Energy Road Map which has been signed up to by more than 20 development partners.

Yet despite the continuing uncertain global economic and financial climate, Tonga remains committed, in the remaining 5 years to 2015 and beyond, to making further strides on achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We look forward to one such stride on MDG6 next year in 2011 with the timely convening of a high level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of NCDs.

The MDGs, in our view, mark as much the advent of the 21st Century as much as they do reflect the aspirational goals of this Millennium beyond 2015. Much of any future progress for Tonga will be contingent on our determination and ability to be reliant on our own domestic efforts and complemented by the actions of our development partners and the international community.

Mr. President,

The High Level Review of the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI+5) held in concert with the High Level Meeting on MDGs this year offers Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as Tonga a fresh opportunity to take stock of progress made and the areas for improvement across a broad spectrum.

At the annual meeting of Pacific Islands Forum Leaders held in Port Vila last month, Leaders adopted a "Port Vila Declaration on Accelerating Progress on the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals" where they drew linkages between the attainment of the MDGs and the state of progress of the 19 focal areas of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI).

If the landmark Barbados Programme of Action placed SIDS firmly on the global agenda then the linkages between the MDGs and MSI+5 represent an accurate compass of the direction that SIDS, its development partners and the international community need to take to ensure progress. We join others in thanking the good Ambassadors of Luxembourg and Singapore respectively for brokering the consensus outcome of the MSI+5.

Like others, Tonga calls for the creation of a formal 'SIDS' category within the United Nations system that not only improves the internal linkages and infrastructure within the system but ultimately improves the ability of the UN system to better relate to and respond to the needs of SIDS. Without some measure of adjustments to the manner in which the UN system addresses SIDS and SIDS issues, progress will always remain stilted.

Mr. President,

Climate change continues to properly dominate the prevailing number of statements we have heard this week and the last. Whilst our collective ability as States in the end could not adequately meet the burden of global expectation in Copenhagen, it left many States like Tonga to look for what little positive outcome the Copenhagen Accord represents. Therein lies the potential for all of us at Cancun to reach beyond our narrow national and regional interests and embrace our collective responsibility and duty to each other as nation states and to those States in particular who are most vulnerable, least responsible for this situation and least able to address the capricious whims of climate change.

We are encouraged by those States who have stood by their declared commitments to the so called 'fast start' financing and reiterate our call for a dedicated stream of readily accessible financing from such sources for SIDS and those States who are most vulnerable.

In taking forward the work of Pacific SIDS on the consensus resolution "Climate Change and Its Possible Security Implications", we would join others in strongly encouraging, current and prospective, members of the UN Security Council to seize the moral imperative and momentum by taking positive and pro-active action on this resolution. As the final arbiter of international peace and security, the Council must ensure it positions itself in an active leadership role on this issue.

Mr. President,

Tonga continues to actively follow the course of the ongoing exchanges amongst our membership on the reform of the UN Security Council and the limited progress that has been made to date. Any Organisation such as ours that wishes to retain its broad relevance and global primacy in this day and age has to be open and willing to seriously re-considering those elements that give it a unique and distinctive quality. In our view, such an element is the UN Security Council and its composition.

We maintain our support for its reform and the view that there should be an expansion in both categories of permanent and non permanent membership with certain States worthy of such permanent membership, Japan, Germany, Brazil and India, on an enhanced Council already somewhat self evident. Such permanent membership must also take account of seat(s) in favour of Africa.

Mr. President,

Tonga remains supportive of the substantive efforts for direct talks by President Obama and his Administration, the Quartet and regional neighbours to find an comprehensive, just and enduring peace in the Middle East. Despite the seemingly elusive pursuit of two States living side by side within secure borders and in lasting peace and genuine security including a viable Palestinian state that can realize the true potential of its peoples, we encourage all parties to continue this fresh round of dialogue with a renewed sense of purpose and conviction.

Tonga was one of the 13 Pacific SIDS who participated at a historic Summit between Pacific Leaders and the League of Arab States earlier this year in Abu Dhabi so as to share perspectives on the current and future challenges faced by our respective regions. This historic Summit and its outcome represents the ever expanding development of Tonga's foreign policy interests to countries and regions that had been hitherto unrealized. This development comes firmly on the heels of our active engagement with the International Renewable Energy Agency ('IRENA') and our continuing interest in the potential of renewable energy and the first time visit to Tonga and a number of other Pacific SIDS by His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan to develop relations with the region. In this regard, we acknowledge with appreciation the 'Partnership in the Pacific Programme' and its potential to meet the development aspirations of Pacific peoples.

Mr. President,

Earlier this year, Tonga, in compliance with its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, made its formal presentation of its partial submission to the Commission on the Outer Limits of the Continental Shelf. One issue of concern to arise as a result of our formal presentation to the Commission is the likely lengthy timeframe in which submissions such as Tonga's stand to be considered. We encourage our fellow States Parties to the Convention to thoughtfully consider the adjustments necessary for the Commission to fulfil its mandate to all States Parties in a reasonably timely manner.

As a continuing and significant exercise it has been made possible through our own efforts with the technical and financial assistance of organizations such as the Commonwealth Secretariat and other regional organizations as well as development partners.

Like all other island nations with large maritime spaces, the living and the potential of non living marine resources of our maritime zones remain critical to Tonga's future. We look forward to working constructively with the Commission and its Sub-commission at the appropriate time on this matter.

Mr. President,

Tonga welcomes the successful conclusion of the 2010 Review of the Non Proliferation Treaty ('NPT') and in particular the continuing acknowledgement of the concerns of SIDS over the safe transport of radioactive materials by sea and the announcement by the United States of its intention to pursue ratification of the Protocol(s) to the Treaty of Rarotonga.

Mr. President,

When my Prime Minister addressed this body last year, it marked the tenth anniversary of Tonga's admission as a Member State to the United Nations. Our admission was, at the time, the ultimate culmination of a journey of statehood that began its tentative steps, 135 years ago, in 1875 with the granting of Tonga's Constitution by King George Tupou I.

And after 135 years, there is a realization that our domestic system of governance needs to be strengthened in ways that align itself more readily with the strong and vibrant systems of democratic governance prevalent today. And so as I deliver these remarks, today marks a historic closure of this session of Tonga's Legislative Assembly, the last under the existing system of governance. Elections under the 'new' system are scheduled to take place later this year on 25 November 2010. So whilst the modalities for improving democratic representation have been enhanced, the fundamental values and freedoms guaranteed in the Constitution continue to protect and support all Tongans.

Mr. President,

As any Small Island Developing State appreciates, a presence here in New York represents a significant sacrifice of already scarce resources but is made in the knowledge that despite our size, our remoteness and our geographical isolation we are not immune to the global challenges that beset us all and therefore we have a responsibility to our Government and our people to be more than mere bystanders in the work of our Organization.

As such, Tonga reaffirms the rights and responsibilities bestowed upon us by the United Nations Charter and pledges in our own way to continue to participate actively and constructively to give an enduring Tongan voice to the global issues of concern to us all.

And whilst many sub-groupings and variations of States such as the G20 or the G8 may convene from time to time for a particular purpose or timely nuance whether it be reforming the international financial governance institutions or reinvigorating international environmental governance – the pivotal role of the United Nations as a viable institution remains steadfast in this ever changing backdrop.

Finally Mr. President,

Any other 65 year old might be contemplating retirement but our Organisation's strength rests as much in the principles of the UN Charter as it does in the people it must continue to inspire and remain relevant to - especially our young people. During this the International Year of Youth, the UN and us all must ensure a legacy worthy of passing on to the next generation.

I thank you for your attention.