



REPUBLIC OF NAURU

Statement by

His Excellency the Honourable Marcus Stephen, M.P.

President of the Republic of Nauru

at the

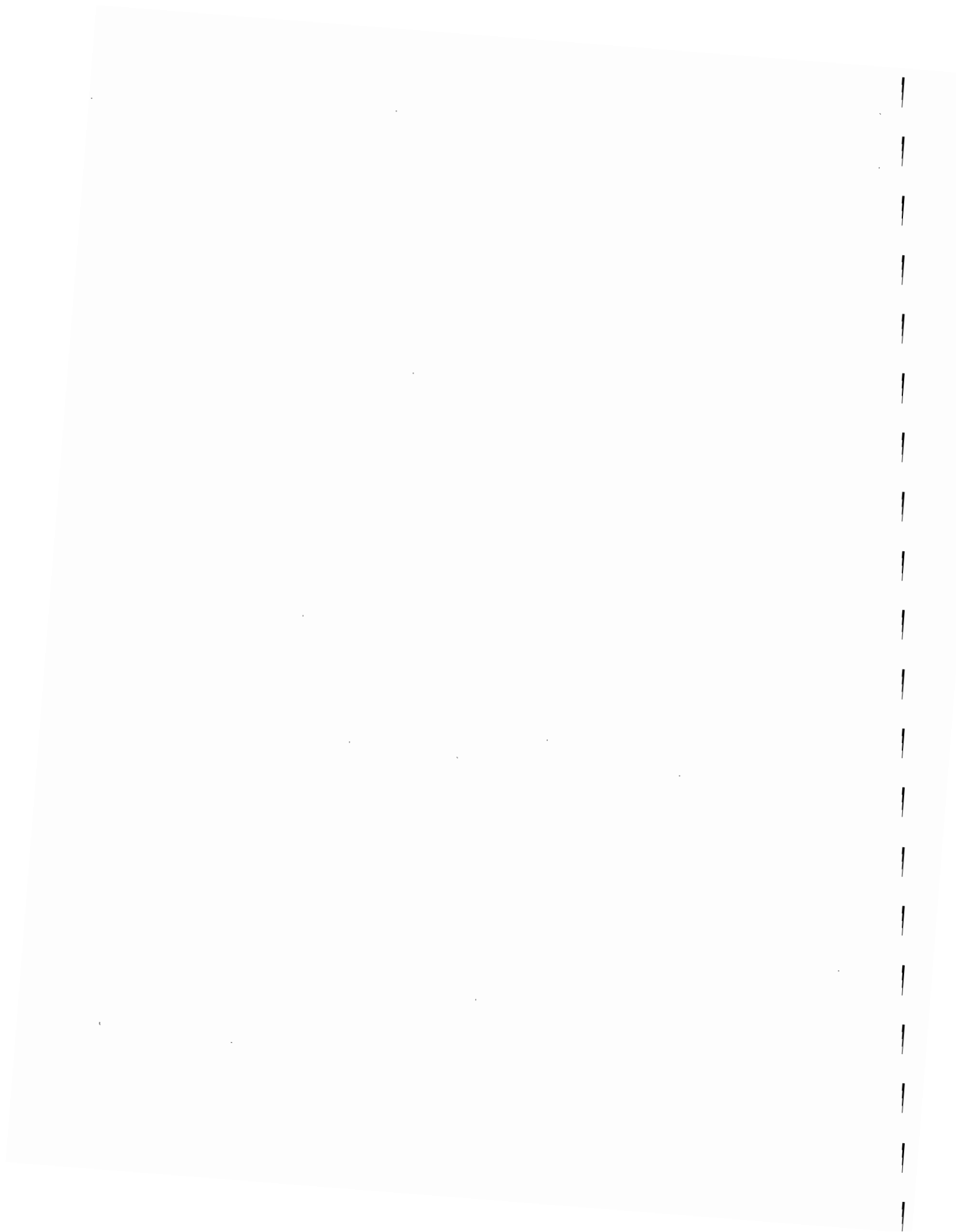
General Debate

of the Sixty-sixth Session

of the

United Nations General Assembly

Friday, 23 September 2011
United Nations, New York



Mr. President,

Allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of this sixty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly. Also, allow me to commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, for his capable leadership during the sixty-fifth session.

Mr. President,

I would like to begin my statement by thanking Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for his historic visit to Kiribati and Solomon Islands earlier this month. It was the first time that a sitting Secretary-General has visited a Pacific Island country, and demonstrates his commitment to addressing the needs of all countries, no matter how small or remote. From my conversations with the Secretary-General, I know he left the region with a much clearer understanding of the special challenges we face as small island nations. I look forward to working with the Secretary-General on finding ways for the United Nations system to be more responsive to the unique and particular needs of SIDS.

While on his tour of the Pacific, the Secretary-General observed that – and I quote – “Next month, the seven billionth citizen of our world will be born. For that child, and for all of us, we must keep working to fight poverty, create decent jobs, and provide a dignified life while preserving the planet that sustains us. That is why the sustainable development agenda is the agenda for the 21st century,” – end quote.

Sustainable development and poverty alleviation have been the overriding priorities of my presidency since I assumed office in 2007. We have made great strides domestically, but we will still fall short of our ambitious goals until the international community chooses to create an environment in which all countries have the opportunity to realize their sustainable development aspirations.

Mr. President

Nauru's culture and economy, like those of most Pacific SIDS, are heavily dependent on a healthy and productive marine environment. The ocean is the foundation of our food security and is a major source of government revenue. It is for this reason that the Pacific SIDS are calling for the next Earth Summit in Rio to recognize the importance of the “Blue Economy” to small island and coastal states. I would like to thank Maldives, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as the Secretary-General for standing with the Pacific SIDS on this issue.

We have identified three priority areas for the Rio plus 20 outcome. First, we must enable SIDS to enjoy a greater share of the economic benefits derived from their marine and coastal resources. Second, we must reduce, and eventually eliminate overfishing and destructive fishing practices. It is imperative that we ensure our fisheries are sustainable. And finally, we must build the resilience of coral reef ecosystems to the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification.

Adopting our proposals would begin to create the space needed for small islands to thrive.

Mr. President,

My government is not sitting still, while it waits for the international community to act. This past summer Nauru's application to the International Seabed Authority was granted, which will enable my country to engage in new and innovative ways to generate economic growth and move towards aid independence.

Nauru is not endowed with terrestrial resources, and therefore has chosen to look to the oceans to expand its opportunities for economic and social development. The proceeds from our exploration and development of copper, nickel, and manganese resources will go to two fully Nauruan owned funds: one that supports education and training, and the other, health and environment. This Nauru controlled, domestically driven initiative will adhere to the highest international environmental standards.

The sustainable development challenges of SIDS are widely recognized by the international community; however, our success in addressing them has been mixed at best. At last year's high-level review of the Millennium Development Goals, it was determined that progress for most Pacific islands has been lagging in many areas. Targeted assistance to address the unique and particular vulnerabilities of SIDS is urgently needed. It is Nauru's position that the most effective way to accomplish this objective is for the UN to recognize a formal SIDS category, with dedicated support mechanisms.

Mr. President,

Unfortunately, all of our best efforts will be for naught if we do not take immediate action to address climate change. As Pacific Island leaders recognized earlier this month, climate change represents the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific.

The 17th Conference of Parties in Durban must make significant progress towards a comprehensive, legally binding agreement that can ensure the survival of all nations. Parties must agree to a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol so that new commitments are in place by 2013. Parties must also operationalize the Cancun Agreements, including more ambitious mitigation commitments and actions, operationalization of the new Green Climate Fund, and a mandate to conclude a new legally binding agreement based on the work of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action.

Climate change threatens to undo all of our recent development gains if the major biggest polluters continue down the path of business as usual. Some Pacific islands may disappear entirely. It is an unfortunate reality that there is so

much carbon in the atmosphere that many negative impacts of climate change may now be unavoidable.

For this reason, Nauru applauds the recent open debate at the Security Council on climate change. While the final Presidential Statement was not as strong as we would have hoped, it clearly recognizes the threat of climate change to international peace and security and lays the foundation for future work by the Council on the issue. Few countries doubt the connection between climate change and security, but there is still disagreement as to the way forward. Allow me to reiterate the proposals of the Pacific SIDS.

First, the Secretary General should appoint a Special Representative on Climate and Security to analyze the projected security impacts of climate change so that the Council and Member States can better understand what lies ahead. Second, the Secretary-General should assess the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to the likely security impacts of climate change, so that vulnerable countries can be assured that it is up to the task. These two proposals are the absolute minimum necessary to prepare for the greatest threat to international peace and security of our generation.

Mr. President,

The Security Council must grapple with the most urgent security threats of our time if it is to remain relevant. Likewise, it should evolve with emerging geopolitical realities and become more representative and inclusive. It is for this reason that Nauru supports an early reform of the Security Council through enlargement in both the permanent and non-permanent categories and improvement on its working methods.

We believe very strongly that new members should be geographically diverse. However, equally important is that aspiring members demonstrate their commitment to addressing the most urgent security issues of all Member States. As an example, I would like to highlight Germany's bold leadership at the Security Council this past July, when they took the politically courageous decision to host the open debate on climate change. As I have already said, climate change is the overriding security threat to the Pacific region, and Germany's efforts will not be forgotten.

In a similar vein, the United Nations should ensure that all citizens of the world have the opportunity to participate in its activities. We cannot continue to ignore the over 23 million people who live in Taiwan, whom have repeatedly demonstrated that they are a nation committed to peace and regional cooperation. We therefore support enabling Taiwan's meaningful engagement at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the International Civil Aviation Organization.

The recent renaming of the Asian Group to the Asia-Pacific Group is a welcome change that exemplifies the inclusivity that should characterize all aspects of the

United Nations system. I commend the Group for taking this symbolic step and recognizing the 20% of the membership that reside in the Pacific Ocean.

However, we must move beyond symbolism to concrete action that addresses the actual concerns of small and vulnerable countries. Once again, I implore you to support the appointment of a Special Representative on Climate and Security for the benefit of the many nations around the world for whom climate change is a grave and, in some cases, existential threat.

Mr. President,

My government is preparing for a new challenge. In 2012, Nauru will assume the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States. I would like to recognize the Government of Grenada, its inspirational leadership and able execution of a supremely difficult task.

I am humbled by the trust placed in us by our fellow AOSIS colleagues and have no illusions regarding the enormity of challenges that lie ahead. We are entering a period of history when countries are turning inward, despite decades of evidence that cooperation is the surest path to prosperity. We must resist the urge to engage in zero sum politics and recommit to principles of multilateralism enshrined in the UN Charter. Durban will be the next opportunity to embark on a more sustainable path and create a world we are proud to leave for future generations. We should not let this opportunity slip away.

Mr. President,

For years, leaders in the Pacific have implored the world: "Come to our islands! See the impacts of climate change for yourself!" The Secretary General answered our call, and now he truly understands the urgency of our situation.

Earlier this week, His Excellency spoke of a little girl named Tamauri he met while in Kiribati. Frightened by the rising tides around her islands, she asked what the United Nations can do to help her people. She is not alone. Cook Islands, Fiji, Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and my own country Nauru – children in all of our countries wonder whether they will have a future. Mr. Secretary-General

, I look forward to working with you to meet the challenge of the climate crisis so that we can tell them they no longer need to be afraid.

Thank you.

May God bless the Republic of Nauru and may God bless the United Nations.