



TUVALU

Statement

Presented by

The Tuvalu Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade, Tourism,

Environment and Labor

Honourable Apisai Ielemia

at

The 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

General Debate

29 September 2012

New York

Please check against delivery

Mr. President
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It is my great honour and pleasure to participate in the General Debate of this august body on behalf of the people and Government of Tuvalu. As Tuvalu will commemorate its 34th independence anniversary on Monday next week (1st of October 2012), let me take this opportunity to acknowledge with profound appreciation the continued assistance and support rendered by the United Nations, the international community, and in particular our traditional development partners, to the pursuit of our development goals
2. Mr. President, the overarching theme - *"Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means"*, together with a myriad of core issues that you have chosen for the 67th session of the General Assembly, will be fully supported by Tuvalu. In view of the current circumstances facing the world today, there is certainly an urgent and critical need for the United Nations and in particular for each member State to address these issues, individually or cooperatively.
3. As a small and peace-loving nation, Tuvalu welcomes and fully supports the important services provided by the United Nations and other organizations in the maintenance of peace and security around the world, especially in conflict regions. We firmly believe that the use of force through military and violent actions as a means for settlement of disputes and conflicts should be avoided at all costs. It is also important that countries involved in such disputes should be encouraged and supported to discuss the root causes of their differences among themselves in a non-confrontational manner.
4. Mr. President, we concur fully with your vision that we cannot be defeated by terrorists and extremists, and the sponsors and supporters who back them. The world we will give our future generations is not one of terrorism and fanaticism, nor the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, maritime piracy, organized crime and drugs and narcotic smuggling, child labor trafficking, slavery, and religious intolerance. In the UN, we strive for international peace and security; that is the world we give to all generations
5. We know that any global threat be it naturally caused or proliferated by our human actions, transcends countries borders and cause conflicts and disputes among them. With such realities, the United Nations with its universal mandate enshrined in the Charter, must remain firm as the legitimate body to deal with these conflicts. The United Nations must be innovative and creative to ensure that its actions remains timely and decisive; its discourse responsive and deliberate.

6. Faced with globalized agendas, the UN must cooperate and seek engagements with other organizations and its memberships for partnerships on development activities. The UN should also seek to ensure participatory planning in the designs of any engagement so that we coopt and work together with the existing diverse fabric of our societies on whose issues for which we are trying to address and assist. The UN should also align its programs and activities with those of the host country's needs and action frameworks; and heeding the distinctiveness of our membership.

7. Mr President, when Tuvalu became the 189th member of the United Nations in September 2000, we were conscious of the complexity and breadth of the UN agenda in comparison with our relatively modest capacity. Yet there was one issue on which we were confidently determined to bring to the fore. Does the UN hear the plea of small island developing States (SIDS) for a fair treatment by the international community?

8. Today, twelve years later, we consider this lasting concern almost totally unanswered. This may sound surprising to some delegates as we all tend to be under the impression that much work, time and energy was spent over the last two decades for the benefit of SIDS. Without going into details on the state of the SIDS agenda, I would like to make three observations on the subject, and outline Tuvalu's intentions in the same vein.

9. First, as much as we appreciate the work of various UN departments and programmes on SIDS, we observe that this work has been almost entirely focused on stating, and indefinitely reiterating the challenges and problems SIDS are facing. We have seen nearly 20 General Assembly resolutions on SIDS since the Barbados conference, and numerous reports of the Secretary-General on the subject. Two UN conferences on SIDS were organized, and now, a new momentum toward a third conference in 2014 is taking place.

10. Second, there is no part of the SIDS work in the UN ever generated international support measures specially reserved for SIDS. In other words, the UN, in 20 years, has not been able to hear and answer the pleas, our island States have been making for a special treatment of these countries. SIDS status and SIDS-specific treatment is truly what our small island States are in need of, just like Least Developed Countries need the special treatment extended to them by the international community.

11. Third, is to reply to those, within and outside the UN, who have been arguing that the case for a special treatment of SIDS is not, and should not be on the UN agenda, because a special treatment of SIDS would imply the existence of a SIDS category, and apparently, we are told, SIDS cannot be considered and dealt with as a special category. Therefore, SIDS are only an abstract notion deliberately kept undefined, because any clarity or any debate on who they are, and what precisely could be done for them would be too challenging or disturbing.

12. Mr. President, this seemingly accepted sense of SIDS work in the UN, does not match Tuvalu's vision of what the United Nations ought to be doing in support of these countries. We believe that the time has come for us to "spell it out": the third decade of UN work on SIDS should not be another round of lip service. This implies that a number of needed special international measures for SIDS be identified, and naturally also, that some order be put in the definition of SIDS, a necessary condition for making SIDS a genuine, internationally accepted special category of countries.

13. Mr. President, Tuvalu greatly appreciates the decision taken by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, to note the recommendation by the Committee for Development Policy to graduate Tuvalu from the least developed country category, and to consider this issue at its next substantive session in 2013. This will allow the Council the opportunity for full consideration of the particular challenges Tuvalu faces. In this regard, despite the fact that Tuvalu has met two of the three criteria for graduation of LDCs, there is an urgent need for the UN to revisit such criteria to reflect and capture the real situation of economies of countries eligible for graduation.

14. We believe, treating the case of Tuvalu the same way one deals with other countries is a denial of what decades of UN advocacy have set in place, something akin to the principle of "equal treatment", namely, the principle of special treatment, which precisely is the foundation of the very existence of LDC status. If geographical limitations and extreme vulnerabilities of Tuvalu do not justify special consideration, what is the purpose of special and differential treatment, the cornerstone of international cooperation? Obviously countries are unique and treating them on a "one-size-fits-all" paradigm, would simply be amiss. Tuvalu looks forward to the continued understanding and support from members of the ECOSOC on the question of its graduation from the LDC category.

15. Mr. President, Tuvalu also accords the highest priority to the attainment of the MDGs. Tuvalu has passionately pursued these goals and we sincerely thank the donor community for their invaluable support be it in-kind or financially. As we progress to the end of the MDGs in 2015, we continue to seek such partnerships so as to ensure that the MDGs are achieved fully and effectively as we anticipate the transition to the Sustainable Development Goals. Mr. President we are also fully committed to the strategic implementation of essential dictates of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA), the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI), and the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPOA), and seek the cooperation of the development partners to provide, in a timely and predictable manner, financial and technical support to ensure their successful implementation.

16. Mr. President, we have repeatedly called on developed and emerging countries and their partners to take a leadership role in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, and to help small and poor countries like Tuvalu in their mitigation and adaptation activities. Tuvalu's security

and nationhood is continuously being threatened by the adverse impact of climate change especially with sea level rise. Much has been said and documented on the root causes of climate change and its negative consequences to many countries, not just the most vulnerable small island States like Tuvalu. Yet the on-going global efforts to address such ensuing consequences have so far fallen on ignorant if not deaf ears.

17. Mr. President, our smallness and lack of natural endowments and being only four meters above sea level, pronounces us as extremely vulnerable to natural shocks, particularly to the effects of climate change and sea-level rise. As is well known, sea-level rise and flooding threatens Tuvalu's limited agricultural production, undermining food security and increases our vulnerability to supply disruptions. We therefore support advances and urge perseverance with the UNFCCC and the Kyoto protocol as the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change in order to gain substance to international agreements

18. Mr. President as a sea-locked country, we have offered the resources of our vast oceans in the Pacific to be utilized by developed countries – we ask the partner countries to be more responsible and to reward us as guardians with the appropriate compensations that is conducive to our development needs as well as environmentally recompensing. Domestically Tuvalu is pursuing energy efficiencies and development strategies and goals that are both green or blue and sustainable. We have challenged ourselves to be 100% renewable in 2020, in our energy sector. We could miss the mark but we will not be comforted by remaining inactive be it in our vision or in our action. We have asked for the developed countries reduction in carbon emissions; we will do the same at home regardless of scale contrasts.

19. With the advent of technology Tuvalu seeks the donors' assistance in realizing their pledges in establishing early warning systems pertaining to tsunamis or tropical cyclones to mitigate any risk and subsequent cost to Tuvalu. Tuvalu wishes also to offer its established Trust Fund protocols to the United Nations and development partners funding mechanisms for climate change adaptation, as an innovative financing instruments and architecture for channeling such resources to Tuvalu. Our Trust Funds are governed by International Agreements, renowned world-wide as transparent and accountable mechanisms with high international standards of accounting and governance.

20. Mr. President many suggestions for enhancing the role of the UN have been documented. We also continue to hear from the experts and technical advisors of the development of alternative energy drives and technologies, be it solar, wind or wave. In our region and I believe in many other remote areas we ask – how can we get these new technologies to be readily available and price effective to the membership of the UN especially LDCs and SIDS? We therefore urge the UN and the secretariat to act as facilitator of such developments and expedite technology transfer where appropriate to put our many words and resolutions to fruition.

21. Mr. President, our collective and global efforts to have peace and security as prerequisite for the stability needed for global economic growth, sustainable development, and social progress, will be meaningless if the United Nations continue not to recognise and acknowledge Taiwan's significant contribution and efforts toward the East China Sea peace initiative for regional stability and peace. Further, Taiwan's continued contribution to the international community as one of the committed development partners and responsible stakeholders in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) should be recognised and accepted by the UN system as a valuable contributor to our collective efforts. In this regard, Tuvalu calls upon the UN subsidiary bodies especially, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to recognise and accept Taiwan to participate and contribute meaningfully in their meetings and activities without any reservations.

22. Incidentally Mr President, any legitimate claim for new nationhood or independence be it in the Pacific or the world over should be supported, as colonialism in any form, is contradictory to the UN charter, just like any form of discrimination by race, gender, belief is not accepted in a civilised modern and free world.

23. Mr. President I conclude by asking that the UN must continue to cooperate in an unprecedented way; the UN must work together more enterprisingly, and reform our strategies to conform to new developments, contemporary innovations and issues. Holding and hosting meetings after meetings is a good engagement strategy, and directs our activities; however delaying activation of resolutions is detrimental, as resolution after resolution is shelved or deferred until they are redundant. The UN Charter I honestly believe is premised on timely actions and achievements to gauge whether we are effective and sustainable or merely validating our inactivity.

24. Mr. President I wish you and our Secretary General, and all our membership every success in this 67th General Assembly year.

I thank you.