



TUVALU

Statement
Presented by
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Honourable Vete Palakua Sakaio

at

The 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

General Debate

28 September 2013

New York

Please check against delivery

Mr. President
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It is a great honor and pleasure to participate in this 68th General Assembly of this august body, on behalf of the people and Government of Tuvalu. At the outset, may I congratulate you Mr President on your new leadership responsibilities; you have all the blessings and support of Tuvalu. I also wish to thank and acknowledge with profound appreciation the exiting President, the continued assistance and support rendered by the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, the specialized organizations and respective heads and staff, and in particular our UN membership for a successful 67th year.

2. The new Government of Tuvalu of whom I am honoured to be Deputy Prime Minister, was recently elected into authority two month ago. Just last week, the Government, in cooperation with development partners, launched a roadmap committing mutual partnerships to deliver and make a difference for the people of Tuvalu. The roadmap focuses on improving the provision of vital basic services, strengthening good governance, and enhancing local capacity to address Tuvalu's unique vulnerabilities and to respond effectively to impacts of climate change.

3. Mr. President, it is very visionary and timely to focus our debate on "Post 2015 Agenda: Setting the Stage" for this year's theme, as we approach the end of a named journey, the MDGs, and we are already charting the new named path, the SDGs and Post 2015 agenda. And as in every fall (autumn), we gather to reaffirm our spirits and commitments for renewed multilateralism and genuine collective action to reflect, assess, address and plan ahead our Chartered principles of peace, justice, human rights and social progress and equal opportunity for all.

4. However, our global efforts cannot be fully universal until the UN gives pragmatic recognition to the international contribution and responsibility that the Republic of China (ROC/Taiwan) on Taiwan has made to the achievement of the UN noble goals, and the MDGs and SDGs, thus improving the standards of living of millions world-over. ROC's significant international participation in the UN specialized agencies including in the WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF, ICAO, IMO, and UNFCCC, is critical, as we collectively move forwards towards the post-MDGs and the era of Sustainable Development Goals. Tuvalu also fully supports the lifting of the embargos against Cuba. This will allow the Republic of Cuba to further consolidate and enhance its corporation with Small Islands Developing States like Tuvalu.

5. Looking back at our MDG journey, we have come across the myriad of crisis and challenges, natural or man-made. We know where we have come from, we know our capacities and constraints in facing them, we know the direction we are heading to, we certainly talk a lot about how to address many persistent and ongoing issues, in their entirety and in their many forms, as we approach the finish line for the MDGs.

6. As we transition to the SDG stage and Post 2015 agenda, we take heed of the intrinsic lessons from the MDGs. Firstly the UN continues to be a beacon of hope and through strategic advocacy, and awareness-campaigns, brings the real issues and current events into the consciousness of the public and membership to propel action and redress. Secondly partnerships is key to the success of this truly universal organization. Working together, cooperating, delivers much more that we can muster on our own. Cooperation and collaborating with the communities, the business houses, think tanks, the churches, the philanthropist, regional groupings and not least each UN member, bodes a true union that is sustainable and should be the way forward for the SDGs.

7. Mr. President, the United Nations Charter should be mirrored in our national goals and priorities. Our visions for the new SDGs and POST 2015 must reflect a membership that needs the same goals: a world that needs peace not conflicts and terrorism; hope not despair; opportunities, jobs and prospects of decent life, not unemployment and welfare dependence; a world that needs security and freedom, not insecurity and totalitarianism; a world of equality not autocracy; unity not divisiveness; good governance and leadership not dictatorial; a world of sufficiency not poverty; a world of progress and not setbacks and regression; a world that is empowering not constraining.

8. Mr. President, let me reflect on Tuvalu's MDGs as the deadline 2015 draws near. I am pleased to report that Tuvalu has made significant progress towards the achievement of its MDGs, despite the impact of the various global financial and economic crises on its small vulnerable economy. In the 2012 MDG progress report, Tuvalu has been assessed to be "on track" on four of its MDGs (primary education, child mortality, maternal health, and global partnerships), with three MDGs having the "potential" to achieve the targets (gender, HIV/ AIDS, and environment) and one MDG on poverty being "unlikely" to be achieved.

9. The attainment of the poverty MDG is a formidable challenge for the fourth smallest country in the world. Tuvalu is poorly endowed with natural resources and have almost no productive capacity. Tuvalu is highly dependent on aid, leasing gratuities and rental incomes of its national assets (air, sea, its domain) and remittances. We will continue to seek the UN and donor community for their invaluable support and cooperation in our pursuit of the MDG on poverty as we approach 2015.

10. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and youth is pursued in all levels of decision making. Tuvalu has formulated in 2012 a “Family Protection Bill” that aims at safeguarding our women and girls against sexual and gender based violence, domestic violence and rape. The Bill also facilitates access to justice and improved provision of services to women and girls who experience discrimination and violence in private and public spheres.

11. Mr President, Tuvalu is also fully committed to the strategic implementation of the outcomes of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA), the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI). As we approach the International Year of the SIDS in 2014, and the third international conference on SIDS in Apia, Samoa, we urge the UN to ensure that SIDS status and SIDS-specific recognition are truly sanctioned in the UN bureaucracy. We have seen enough General Assembly resolutions that are abstract and vague in addressing SIDS issues and yet there is no special treatment of SIDS in the whole UN development agenda. The 2014 conference on SIDS must be decisive on special windows of partnerships on SIDS to ensure not only sustainable development but also long-term security and survival of SIDS.

12. Tuvalu graciously appreciates ECOSOC’s decision to defer consideration of Tuvalu’s graduation from the LDC category as under the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPOA). This said, however, it is the humble submission of Tuvalu that while the threshold criterias of LDC graduation are well-established, including the HDI, GNI Per Capita, and Economic Vulnerability Index, it would be simply irrational and irresponsible if the application of any two of the three criterias was to be the only measure of graduation considerations. Given our extreme vulnerability as a SIDS, Tuvalu believes failure to satisfy EVI carries more weight for us in considering our graduation from the LDC list.

13. Mr. President, the situation due to consequences of climate change and sea level rise in Tuvalu is dire. Our survival and security, and future of our children’s livelihood is seriously compromised by the inaction of the international community on climate change. The International Panel on Climate Change 5th Assessment Report released last week, has further confirmed to the world the stark predictions for SIDS like Tuvalu due to climate change and sea level rise. The challenge to this noble house is, what else are we waiting for. What is the relevance of talking about post-MDGs and SDGs, when the world continues to fail in its duty and obligations to urgently reduce Green House Gas emissions and provide concrete adaptation. Ensuring the long term security of Tuvalu is saving the world.

14. Climate change is no longer an environmental nor political issue. It is a borderless humanity security issue, everybody must act to urgently reduce GHG emissions and

provide adaptation. Distributed amongst the UNGA Papers, is the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Communique in 2013 which contains the Majuro Declaration on Climate Change Leadership to which Tuvalu offers its strongest support. The Majuro Declaration commits full responsibility and leadership of Pacific Islands Leaders to making our own contribution, however miniscule, to global efforts to cut down GHG emissions. If we SIDS in the Pacific can do it, surely others can also do it. The world must save Tuvalu and SIDS in order to save the whole planet.

15. We urge perseverance with the UNFCCC and the Kyoto protocol as the primary international, intergovernmental instruments for negotiating the global response to climate change. We call on all Parties to work diligently to reach a legally binding framework to curb GHG emissions at the upcoming COP19 in Warsaw. The framework must also include loss and damages and insurance mechanisms for SIDS against climate change, and must provide adequate and accessible financing for adaptation support to SIDS like Tuvalu. Tuvalu also applauds and fully supports the commitment and leadership of the UN Secretary General in hosting a climate change summit next year.

16. Mr. President, the climate change issue for Tuvalu is predominantly linked to the ocean. As a sea-locked nation, an Oceans SDG is pertinent, for obvious reasons. Seventy percent of the planet's surface is covered by ocean and it is the cornerstone of Earth's life support system. The uncontrolled and increasing carbonization of our oceans and its biodiversity is a real issue of concerns and this must be addressed as a matter of urgency. At the same time, radio-active spillovers of land-based nuclear wastes into the oceans, especially following recent incidents, must be properly rectified and stopped from happening again. Here, the polluter-pays-principle must be the basis of efforts to clean and to mitigate to immediately stop contamination of oceans.

17. Mr. President Tuvalu is currently heavily dependent on imported fuel and petroleum products for electricity generation and transportation requirements. This will continue in both the short and medium term. Many recommendations for alternative energy drivers and technologies, be it solar, wind or wave have been proposed but not fully implemented. Our energy sector has challenged itself to be 100% renewable in 2020. We appreciate the support of many donors to alternative renewable sources of energy, assistance to energy policy formulation and promoting efficient use of energy. Science and technological capacity in Tuvalu also remain underdeveloped and we need relevant and simple technologies to be made readily available and priced effectively, especially to LDCs and SIDS. The UNs facilitative role through repository of such technologies and practices within the UN networks and websites will prove highly beneficial.

18. In conclusion, Mr. President, as we approach the end point of the MDGs and embrace the SDGs, we must pay attention to the nations with special needs, the most vulnerable and poor to garner every effort to achieve the MDGs and also for a smooth transition to the SDGs. The scale of challenges can only be addressed by reforming ourselves, the UN and each member country. Delivering on the future we need and on our sustainable goals, delivering more and delivering better will require increasing doses of great effort and discipline, perseverance and courage, tolerance and harmonious coexistence, multilateralism and interdependency....we the peoples of the United Nations

19. Mr. President, in two days time, Tuvalu will celebrate its 35th Year of Independence. Can we tell our children and grand-children a story of continued survival on our God given peaceful islands. Or do we have to tell them that the world, under the UN, this noble body, can no longer save their future due to CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA LEVEL RISE.

20. As we will celebrate the continuing vibrancy of democracy and rule of law, and our political independence in Tuvalu with great pride, we also appeal to the world, please save Tuvalu against climate change. SAVE TUVALU IN ORDER TO SAVE YOURSELF, THE WORLD.

TUVALU MO TE ATUA