



NATIONAL STATEMENT (Draft)

Delivered by

Prime Minister

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at

The 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

General Debate

[27 September 2024, New York]

UNGA79 Theme:

**“Leaving no one behind: acting together for the advancement of peace,
sustainable development and human dignity for present and future
generations.”**

Mr. President.

Excellencies.

1. I am humbled and indeed honored to stand before you today, at this august assembly for the first time as the Prime Minister of Tuvalu.
2. I bring to the General Assembly and the related high-level summitries, the best wishes of my people and the government of Tuvalu.
3. I congratulate you, Your Excellency President Philemon Yang, for assuming the role of the President for the 79th UNGA.
4. Tuvalu wishes you a very successful presidency.
5. I also congratulate the outgoing President HE Dennis Francis for a job well done and for his exceptional leadership during his presidency.

UNGA79 Theme

Mr. President.

6. I applaud your insightful vision for this session namely - “Leaving no one behind: acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations”.
7. The theme challenges us to work in unison to advance peace and security, sustainable development and human dignity.
8. Considering how off-track the progress of the SDGs, it is a timely and pragmatic call.
9. We must therefore advance in unity as a family of nations.
10. However, it is imperative to recognize the inherent disparity in our respective developmental capacities.

11. The LDCs and SIDS, trailing on the lower end of the global economic scale, face persistent and significant financial challenges in their development efforts.
12. For Tuvalu, a purely import oriented economy, our economic fragility is further compounded by poor natural endowment, geographical isolation from major markets and environmental vulnerability to climatic crisis.

Mr President.

13. Your vision to promote human dignity at this critical moment is highly commendable.
14. Ensuring that all individuals have access to resources and opportunities to participate in international decision-making processes is crucial for a just and effective response to these global challenges.
15. In that regard, Mr President, it is regrettable that the Republic of China (Taiwan) continues to be excluded from the United Nations system, despite its significant contributions and partnerships across various development sectors.
16. The UNGA Resolution 2758 does not preclude Taiwan's meaningful participation in the UN system and therefore must include Taiwan, so that no one is left behind.
17. As a vibrant democracy that has made remarkable progress on the SDGs, Taiwan is well-positioned to make meaningful contributions to global efforts in achieving those goals.
18. It is also regrettable to observe that the people of Cuba continue to bear the economic burden of long-standing unilateral economic blockades.
19. With such measures, Cuba is denied crucial international development assistance and partnerships necessary for its recovery and rebuilding efforts.

20. Tuvalu aligns itself with Member States that supports the lifting of those blockades and join other Member States' call for the removal of Cuba from the list of states sponsor of terrorism.

Mr. President.

21. Tuvalu applauds the Secretary General and his team for their tireless efforts in the organization of several important High-level meetings this week.
22. Tuvalu also commends the commitments and constructive contributions by all member states that enabled the success of those meetings.

The Pact for the Future

Mr President

23. Tuvalu welcomes and supports the Pact for the Future, adopted earlier this week at the Summit of the Future, together with the Declaration on Future Generations and the Global Digital Compact.
24. What is needed now is robust political will and unwavering commitment to implement the provisions of the Pact.
25. We are heartened by the Pact's call for a bold and comprehensive outcome document on addressing climate change at the upcoming COP29 in Azerbaijan.
26. While climate change affects every nation, its impacts are disproportionately felt more by small island developing states like Tuvalu.
27. Despite our insignificant contribution to climate change we face the most severe consequences when climate-induced disasters do occur.
28. We therefore urge all member states to honor their commitments to increase support for climate finance and technology transfer to help nations like Tuvalu develop and enhance their adaptative resilience.

29. The science is very clear - atmospheric temperatures continue to rise due to the increasing emissions of greenhouse gases from burning fossil fuels.
30. Therefore, phasing out fossil fuels is crucial to global efforts to reduce carbon emissions and curb global warming.
31. Towards that objective, Tuvalu and several other likeminded nations are leading the promotion for the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT) Initiative.
32. The initiative is to garner international support on a binding treaty arrangement that regulates and limits the use of fossil fuel with the ultimate objective of total phase out.
33. I express the sincere hope that the commitments in the Pact provide the much-needed reboot to the global multilateralism architecture and the UN systems generally.
34. Tuvalu supports and look forward to the effective implementation of the Pact for the Future to build a more equitable global system where no nation and no community is left behind.

Sea Level rise.

Mr President.

35. Climate change-induced sea-level rise is and will always be a top priority for Tuvalu.
36. Sea level rise is not only a top development priority but also a top survivability priority for Tuvalu.
37. The Pacific Ocean that used to define would soon engulf us and determine our future existence, if sea level rise is not halted and the Tuvalu coastlines are not suitably fortified and reinforced.

38. Sea level rise is a global and a multi-dimensional phenomenon that requires immediate global actions.
39. For Tuvalu, sea-level rise poses the greatest existential threat to our economies, to our culture and heritage and to the land that nourished our ancestors for centuries.
40. Current predictions on the rate of sea level rise are frighteningly disturbing.
41. The predictions are that in 26 years' time (2050) more than 50% of Tuvalu's land territory will be regularly flooded by regular tidal surges.
42. 50 years afterward in 2100, more than 90% of Tuvalu's land territory will suffer the same fate.
43. The predictions do not account for severe climatic conditions like cyclones and hurricanes which would exponentially accelerate the reaching of those thresholds.
44. Tuvalu, therefore, commend the President for the timely and successful organization of the high-level meeting on sea level rise on Wednesday.
45. Tuvalu is heartened by the commitment of all member states to strengthen international cooperation and partnerships for more comprehensive and effective responses to sea-level rise.
46. We are committed to providing the Secretary-General with our national report on this issue within the suggested timeframe and look forward to contributing to a concise, action-oriented, and inter-governmentally negotiated declaration.
47. The high-level meeting marks the take-off for our global effort to shape an ambitious Declaration by the General Assembly in September 2026.
48. The Declaration, in my considered view must be a strong pronouncement in support of the expectations of the 1 billion people affected by sea level rise.
49. The Declaration shall be an unwavering commitment to our sovereignty, dignity, prosperity and rights.

50. The Declaration must be action-oriented and comprehensive.
51. And towards those objectives, we expect the Declaration to include the following principles.
52. Firstly, the Declaration shall ascertain the principle of statehood continuity as a tenet of international law and international cooperation. And to affirm that statehood cannot be challenged under any circumstances of sea-level rise.
53. Secondly, the Declaration shall reaffirm the permanency of maritime zones established in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
54. Thirdly, the Declaration shall call on the international community and regional institutions to enable human mobility pathways that facilitate movement safely, orderly and with dignity.
55. Fourthly, the Declaration shall devise concrete programs for the international community to support our efforts to safeguard our unique culture and heritage, both tangible and intangible.
56. Fifthly, the Declaration shall establish dedicated and innovative financing mechanisms to support the positive adaptation journeys of the most vulnerable communities.
57. Finally, the Declaration shall underscore the importance of knowledge, data and science to anticipate and plan for the impacts of sea-level rise.

Mr President.

58. I reiterate the commitment of Tuvalu to address the effects of climate change through identified science-based transformative adaptive solutions.
59. These solutions are designed to reclaim and elevate land, enhance our resilience against sea level rise, and ensure our sovereign right to our land and cultural identity are safe and protected for our future generation.

60. I acknowledge the efforts of the Pacific people in addressing the pressing issue of sea-level rise.
61. The Pacific Leaders in their annual meeting in Tonga last month reiterated the importance of the 2021 Declaration on maritime boundaries preservation and the 2023 Declaration on Statehood Continuity and Climate Change-related Sea-Level Rise Protection.
62. The Pacific Leaders also called for sea level rise to be a standalone agenda item in the UNGA and other related UN processes like the COP of the UNFCCC.
63. Furthermore, in 2021, Tuvalu, in collaboration with Antigua and Barbuda, established the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS).
64. The said Commission successfully secured in May this year an advisory opinion from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), which clarifies that greenhouse gas emissions pollute the marine environment, and that States have the legal responsibilities to take all necessary measures to prevent, reduce and control them.
65. This advisory opinion is a significant development as it shifts the conversation from political commitments to binding legal obligations.

Mr President

66. The science on climate change is comprehensive and clear that the climate is changing and is significantly impacting small islands through rising sea levels.
67. Nationalized scientific data and information has allowed my government to create a 3D model that specifically demonstrate the impacts of climate change and sea level rise in Tuvalu.
68. We showcased this 3D model here in New York during the high-level week.

69. I must admit, it is alarming and disturbing to see how quickly Tuvalu's entire land territory would be engulfed by rising seas as greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase.

The Falepili Union Treaty

Mr President.

70. I am pleased to share with the general assembly a watershed treaty between Tuvalu and Australia titled the 'Falepili Union Treaty'.
71. The Treaty carries the title of a treasured Tuvalu value of the "Falepili" which connotes 'good neighborliness, care and share, and mutual respect'.
72. The Treaty is firmly grounded on mutual respect of each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.
73. The Treaty prioritizes three key areas namely climate cooperation; mobility with dignity; and shared security.
74. For the first time, there is a country (Australia) that has committed legally to come to the aid of Tuvalu, upon request, when Tuvalu encounters a major natural disaster, when Tuvalu is experiencing a major public health pandemic or when Tuvalu is subjected to some form of military aggression.
75. For the first time also, another country (Australia) is legally committed to recognize the permanency of the future statehood and sovereignty of Tuvalu despite the impacts of climate change, particularly sea level rise.
76. The Treaty also provide for a mobility pathway for citizens of Tuvalu who so choses to live, work and study in Australia.
77. I look forward to the full operationalization of the Falepili Union Treaty next year in 2025.

Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS)

Mr President.

78. Let me reiterate Tuvalu's unwavering support for the Antigua and Barbuda's Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) that was adopted in May this year.
79. ABAS addresses the unique challenges faced by small island developing states through a multifaceted approach that include climate action, economic diversification, and social development.

Ocean and Plastic Pollution

Mr President

80. Tuvalu is one of the smallest states in the world in terms of its land territory and population.
81. But it is a very large ocean state considering the extent of its exclusive economic zone.
82. So, Tuvalu has a very close affinity with the Pacific Ocean.
83. The Pacific Ocean sustains our daily lives and economic prosperity.
84. The impacts of climate change on fish stocks migration and declining marine resources together with illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU Fishing), and marine pollution pose a major challenge to Tuvalu's progress towards sustainable economic development.
85. As a signatory to the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, Tuvalu is committed to the sustainable utilization and equitable distribution of marine resources.
86. Tuvalu is also committed to the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, which aims to protect the ocean.

87. This commitment is reinforced by UNEA resolution 5/14, to develop an ambitious international legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastic, including its production, design and disposal.

LDC Status

Mr President

88. Tuvalu expresses its sincere gratitude to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for their consideration of deferring Tuvalu's graduation from the least developed countries (LDCs) category earlier this year.
89. It is important to reiterate that while Tuvalu has met the graduation thresholds for some time, Tuvalu continues to have serious reservations about leaving this group.
90. As one of the last remaining Pacific Island countries in the LDC category Tuvalu is exceptionally vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and rising sea levels.
91. Even, the Committee for Development Policy has recognized that Tuvalu's vulnerability to climate change is not only severe but permanent.
92. For this reason, Tuvalu applauds the newly developed multi-dimensional vulnerability index that could complement the traditional gross national income indicator, as the basis for development and climate finance access.

International day of the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

Mr. President.

93. Tuvalu commends the commemoration and promotion of the international day of the total elimination of nuclear weapons this year.

94. The event serves as a powerful reminder of the catastrophic consequences nuclear testing and warfare, as well as the ongoing threat posed by these weapons.
95. By observing this event annually, as agreed to in Resolution 78/27, reinforces our commitment to nuclear disarmament.
96. Tuvalu is a party the Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapon.
97. I am, also, please to announce that in June of this year, Tuvalu became one of the few remaining states to accede to the Biological Weapons Convention, further solidifying our steadfast commitment to creating a world safe from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Antimicrobial resistance.

Mr. President,

98. Twelve months ago, we adopted a declaration on universal health coverage following the review of implementation of the 2019 universal health coverage titled “Moving together to build a healthy world”.
99. This year’s adoption of the political declaration on antimicrobial resistance has once again unified us in a concerted global effort to build a healthier world.
100. As unified as we ought to be, achieving equitable and adequate essential health care services for all must remained a common priority.
101. International cooperation remains appropriate to the effort of improving and strengthening health care systems, particularly those that are lagging.

Commemoration of Sovereignty

Mr President.

102. On the 5th of this month (September) this year, Tuvalu celebrated its twenty-fourth anniversary of membership in the United Nations.
103. It has been over two decades since Tuvalu joined this august body as the one hundred and eighty-ninth (189) member state.
104. Tuvalu remains grateful for the privilege to engage with other member states in our common pursuit for the advancement of peace and security, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations.
105. Next week on the 1st of October will be Tuvalu's forty-sixth (46) independence anniversary.
106. As I prepare to celebrate this momentous occasion for the first time as Prime Minister of Tuvalu, I wish to express my special appreciation and gratitude to the United Nations and its member states in particular Tuvalu's generous traditional and emerging partners for all the support and assistance afforded to my country.

Conclusion

Mr. President,

107. In conclusion, I render Tuvalu's unwavering support to the Pact for the Future and the accompanying declaration and compact, adopted during the Summit of the Future earlier in the week.
108. I express the sincere and genuine hope that the commitments in the Pact provide the much-needed reboot to the global multilateralism architecture and the UN systems generally.
109. The global community must seize this opportunity to reaffirm and recommit to multilateralism and international cooperation, to the SDGs and to the principles of the United Nations Charter.

110. Tuvalu calls on the global community to rally behind the Pact for the Future and to build a more equitable global system where no nation and no community is left behind, particularly those frontline nations to the devastating impacts of climate change and climate changed-induced sea level rise, like my country Tuvalu.
111. I thank you, Mr President.
112. Fakafetai lasi.
113. Tuvalu mote Atua, Tuvalu for God.

END