



**STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF SAMOA, HONOURABLE
TOELUPE POUMULINUKU ONESEMO: GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 80th
SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, NEW YORK,
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President,

I wish to congratulate Her Excellency, Ms. Annalena Baerbock, on her election as President of the 80th Session of the General Assembly. The theme you have chosen resonates deeply with Samoa, particularly as we celebrate 80 years of our United Nations. It is a timely call for collective action towards a more peaceful, sustainable, and resilient future for our peoples and planet. You can be assured of Samoa's full support throughout your mandate.

Excellencies,

We live in times of global turbulence and uncertainty. Profound and transformative change is not only necessary, but also inevitable. We must prepare ourselves to face the challenges ahead with resolve and use the opportunity to herald in much needed reforms for the benefit of all and leaving no one behind. At the core of our success lies our unwavering commitment to the principles upon which the United Nations was built: multilateralism and international law.

Samoa reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the United Nations as the premier forum to address global challenges. Multilateralism for Samoa is a practical necessity and not just an abstract ideal. Only through genuine cooperation and mutual trust can we craft solutions that no single nation could achieve alone.

We welcome the Secretary-General's UN80 initiative. Any reform must strengthen delivery on the ground, especially for Small Islands Developing States, by eliminating duplication, improving coherence, and accelerating

impact. Critically, such reforms must not weaken the operations of the UN Multi-Country Offices or the Resident Coordinator system. Likewise the reforms at MCO level should clearly define the roles and functions of the UN country teams working in close coordination with parish countries to avoid duplication, competition for resources and proliferation of projects that small administrations cannot manage efficiently.

At the regional level, the UN must deliver with the region through the region and aligned with the principles agreed to by Pacific leaders as articulated in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific continent. The UN80 initiative is the opportunity to jointly realise regional delivery of ongoing initiatives through regional mechanisms.

Excellencies

Land and the ocean are central to Samoan culture and are also the bases of peoples sense of belonging (faasinomaga) and inheritance (tofi). Village boundaries were marked by the age old banyan trees on the mountain ridges and extend to the protruding reef.

Such are the values that make us a distinct people where our history, traditions, identity, livelihoods and everyday lives are intimately connected to our precious island ecosystem, underpinned by our unique communal faa-Samoa culture and traditions.

Our geographical isolation and insularity no longer shields or protects us from the increasingly complex and dynamic security challenges – transnational crime especially drug trafficking, nuclear proliferation, challenges to sovereignty, growing geopolitical tensions in our region and humanitarian crises. The rules based international system is being bent out of shape. Gone were the days when we took only what we needed from our environment; when we were a lot more conscious of the importance of the continuity of our cultures and values unadulterated by the infringing, impinging world around us.

Unfortunately, this important connection makes us particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. Over the past decades, we have witnessed more frequent and intense storms and cyclones, such as which left a trail of destruction in their wake—homes flattened, food crops destroyed, lives lost, constant threat of relocation.

The reality of climate change and increased severity of disasters mean many communities are at risk of losing traditional homelands as rising sea levels, king tides and storm surges wash away the shoreline; and inland communities experience landslides leaving communities devoid of safer and more disaster resilient land.

Regrettably, continuous inaction, means detrimental effects on all aspects of Samoan life. Climate change remains the greatest existential threat to Samoa and other Pacific SIDS. Its impacts are more extensively felt by SIDS due to our special circumstances, and the lack of capacity to respond quickly and effectively.

We commend the International Court of Justice’s advisory opinion, which rightly recognizes climate change not merely as an environmental concern, but as “an existential problem of planetary proportions” that requires urgent global action.

Unless we invest now in climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilient economies, we risk compounding both environmental and financial crises. We must do more to turn the tide, to honour our commitments and obligations, and to take urgent and ambitious climate action now.

As we approach COP30 in Brazil, we urge that new NDCs, reflect maximum ambition, including a 50% reduction in global emissions by 2030. The 35 countries responsible for 86% of global emissions must be part of the solution, not just the problem. One can continue to question whether climate change is real. But for Samoa and the Pacific, the impacts of climate change, confront us on a daily basis. It is our lived reality.

Samoa will be launching its third Nationally Determined Contribution ahead of COP30. This updated plan, developed through inclusive consultations, captures both the realities and aspirations of all Samoans. But we cannot do it alone.

Excellencies

Now is the time for the world to witness firsthand the consequences of climate change in our region. You can only truly appreciate our challenges, if you visit us. There is no better place to discuss climate ambition and solutions, than in the Pacific where climate change impacts, is a lived reality. This is why Samoa supports Australia's bid to host COP 31 on behalf of the Blue Pacific continent.

We also strongly endorse the recent AOSIS Declaration on the Special Circumstances of SIDS, and we call on all States, international organizations, and treaty bodies to recognize and reflect these unique vulnerabilities in the design, interpretation, and implementation of multilateral agreements.

Excellencies

The Pacific ocean is our greatest asset that must be sustainably managed for the benefit of our present and future generations. It unites our islands in common purpose - it is our home, and our key to a future of infinite promise. Therefore we continue to call for urgent global action to implement SDG14. The Third UN Ocean Conference in Nice marked a pivotal moment in our global ocean journey, but much more needs to be done.

The ocean crisis is a direct result of our choices. The pursuit of economic growth has come at a grave cost to our marine ecosystems. Coupled with the unchecked exploitation of deep seabed mineral resources, our oceans face a crisis of limitless proportions. We must take a careful approach that balances economic growth while ensuring environmental sustainability.

Samoa hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2024 at which its Leaders adopted the Apia Commonwealth Ocean Declaration. It reaffirms the Commonwealth family's commitment to SDG14 and calls for

action on key ocean issues, including safeguarding our coastlines and homes against the unprecedented impacts of sea level rise.

The Apia Commonwealth Ocean Declaration was acknowledged and recognized for action as part of the recently issued ICJ advisory opinion. We remain actively engaged in negotiations towards a global treaty on plastic pollution, particularly to protect our marine environment. For Samoa, – plastic pollution is a daily battle impacting livelihoods, food security, and public health.

We are pleased that we have reached the required 60 ratifications for the BBNJ to enter into force. We are moving closer to the most important part, its effective implementation.

At the national level, through the Samoa Ocean Strategy, we have completed and legally adopted a Marine Spatial Plan which helps implement our commitment to protect 30% and manage 100% of our ocean by 2030. We understand we must sustain that which sustains us now and into the future.

Excellencies

Climate finance is the bridge from ambition to action. It must be scaled up, easily accessible, devoid of burdensome conditions, and responsive to the needs of small islands states. This way, the climate funds end up in the villages and communities, that need it the most.

The Financing for Development Conference in Sevilla was, regrettably, a missed opportunity. Since the Rio Conference in 1992, we have made countless pledges and commitments to the development agenda. But too often, we simply rebrand and recycle old ideas while failing to deliver tangible progress. Meanwhile multilateralism is under siege, and international financial commitments are being eroded. Overseas development assistance is being cut significantly and the global financing gap for the SDGs stands at over \$4 trillion. Yet when it comes to war, funding is never in short supply. The stark contrast should give us pause.

We must also address and confront the deep systemic inequities embedded in our global economic and financial architecture. Yesterday's solutions are no match for today's crises. A modern, just and inclusive financial system must be created – one that recognizes small islands states, understands them and works in the interests of SIDS.

Debt forgiveness must be linked to measurable progress on resilience-building. Samoa supports the incorporation of state-contingent clauses in debt instruments, allowing for suspension during crises. We look forward to the timely implementation of the Sevilla Commitments.

Excellencies

Non-communicable diseases are now the dominant health burden in Samoa and in the Pacific region. We welcome the High-Level Meeting on NCDs and call for targeted integrated action for SIDS, especially in prevention, healthy food environments, and sustainable financing.

Samoa has also developed the region's first National Action Plan for Health Security, aligning public health systems with climate adaptation and strengthening surveillance and response capacity.

Excellencies

Energy is both a driver and accelerator for Samoa's sustainable development ambition. The digital transformation – including AI and data analytics – offer real opportunities to drive an inclusive, just energy transition, particularly through off-grid solutions and smarter energy planning.

However, Samoa's level of indebtedness, often worsened by natural disasters, remains a pressing challenge. As disasters increase in intensity and frequency due to climate change, tools such as the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership and the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index are critical. We urge swift appointments of members to the MVI Independent Expert Advisory Panel.

Excellencies,

Samoa remains a peaceful country, steadfast in our commitment to human rights and justice. We remain concerned by the ongoing wars including in Ukraine and Gaza. The terrible loss of civilian lives, displacement of people as well as the destruction of infrastructure and the environment is something we do not condone. The continued supply of weapons to fuel conflicts must end. Due consideration must be given to the long overdue reforms of the Security Council.

Excellencies,

The tools of a bygone era can no longer ensure our collective future. At the regional level, our Blue Pacific has undertaken a review of its regional architecture to ensure it is well aligned to the ambition of its 2050 Strategy. As we pursue the UN80 initiative, it is important to recognize the regional strategy and find alignment. This can help increase the relevance and effectiveness of the UN. Eighty years on, we call on the UN and the global community, to work with Samoa, to ensure our true resilience; where we can confidently engage as a global citizen but be able to rely on our own national and regional efforts to pave a peaceful and prosperous future, for Samoa the Pacific and the world.

We must choose courage over caution, cooperation over indifference, and delivery over delay. Guided by our Charter and anchored in our pillars of peace and security, human rights, and development for all, let us steer our global canoe with confidence fueled by trust, cooperation, partnerships and our humanity.

Thank you and God Bless