



ON THE OCCASION
OF THE
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
RIO+20

Statement by

His Excellency Sonatane Tu'akinamolahi Taumoepeau Tupou

Chairman of Delegation

KINGDOM OF TONGA

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Madam President of the Conference
Secretary General Ban ki Moon
Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Our Rio dreams have come full circle. In 1992 we gathered here from all parts of the globe to give direction to an ambitious vision for a better, more sustainable world. Twenty years on, we return to Rio to assess how much of those daring dreams has become a meaningful reality for our peoples, how many of those aspirations has been genuinely met, and also to collectively plot a new global course of sustainable development to navigate a world beset with increasing economic and financial uncertainties, swiftly sweeping political challenges and ever intensifying environmental and climatic stresses on our shared planet.

We gratefully acknowledge the pivotal role of our Brazilian hosts in the organization and dynamic arrangements for this Conference.

Madam President

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Like other Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Rio+20 represents a return home of sorts as it was here that the special and particular vulnerabilities that make States like Tonga unique were initially recognized by the international community. It lay the foundation for a SIDS 'blueprint' - the Barbados Plan of Action (BPOA) - and later the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI), so we are pleased that agreement has been reached for a Third International Conference for the Sustainable Development of SIDS to take place in 2014. The 'BPOA+20' will be a critical milestone as an early measure of implemented outcomes from our Conference this week and of the on-going work towards achieving the 'MDGs'. It adds impetus to our national activities within the context of the Tonga Strategic Development Framework - its 9 priority objectives for 2011 to 2014 - and beyond. Within that process, a strengthened UN system responsive to the needs of SIDS remains imperative to such implementation.

Madam President

The pervading adverse impact of climate change continues to threaten the existence and viability of SIDS in particular low lying islands and atolls. Sea level rise and the loss of territorial integrity for such States presents all Leaders here with an overwhelming challenge .. take the bold measures necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to levels that ensure a viable future for SIDS like Tonga - for to safeguard the survival of the most vulnerable people amongst us is to safeguard a viable future for all peoples. We must take the momentum of our collective political will here and that which was secured most recently in Durban to advance the next UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting in Qatar. It must involve improving the means of implementation for countries like Tonga including accessible finance, technology transfer and capacity building. We will continue to join others on this issue to advocate actively at every level, at international fora and within the UN system including the UN Security Council.

Madam President

Tonga's connection with the ocean and its marine environment, like all Pacific SIDS, is an ancient one but one which over time continues to evolve. Whilst many spoke to the green economy we joined others in speaking to the 'blue economy' – one which, in our view, reaches from the seabed depths of 'deep ocean blue' and encompasses all within to the heights of what one might call 'zenith blue'. A healthy ocean has always been a staple source of sustenance for island communities and so we welcome the timely focus on sustainable fisheries and developing national capacity, on the importance of access and the role of small scale and artisanal fishers and women, and on the need for concerted action to address the vulnerability of coral reefs and mangroves. As a party to UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), we welcome the highlight on the Convention's role to advance sustainable development whether it be through its provisions governing marine scientific research or living and non living marine resources, implementing agreements such as the 1995 Agreement for the

Implementation of the Provisions of UNCLOS relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, or the potential development of further legal instruments within its framework to reflect new realities.

Madam President

As a member of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Council, Tonga looks not only to advocating the interests of fellow developing States and the Pacific region but also to building on its domestic efforts through its Tonga Energy Road Map (TERM). With the provision of the requisite financial resources, on-going capacity building, appropriate technology transfer and a genuine partnership with a number of willing development partners and agencies, TERM represents a vibrant voluntary commitment to reducing Tonga's greenhouse gas emissions and improving energy security through 50% renewable energy mix by 2020. Tonga will host with IRENA a high level IRENA donor coordination and high level dialogue with other Pacific Island States to engage real financing for renewable energy implementation, before the next IRENA Council. SIDS cannot afford to be idle in developing and sharing their national or regional efforts and initiatives to address common energy concerns. In this the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All, we are pleased that the outcome of the Ministerial Conference in Barbados last month was one such worthy effort.

I thank you for your kind attention and May God bless you all.