

**4th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries
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Addressing vulnerability to climate change in LDCs

**Statement by His Excellency Hon. Willy Telavi,
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Honourable Ministers,
High Representatives,
Senior Representative from UNFCCC,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Good morning and Talofa to you all

It is my great pleasure and honour to speak at this very important side event during the 4th United Nation Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

My statement will focus on the vulnerability of the least developed countries to climate change.

We all know, and are witnesses that LDCs are acutely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. I do not need to remind you that Small Island Developing States like my own country, Tuvalu, are facing the existential threat of inundation due to progressive sea level rise as most of the lands are closer to sea level. Furthermore, rising sea level, growing salination of their fresh water, depletion of seaborne resources and damage to coastal infrastructure and livelihoods challenges are real and imminent. Other LDCs in Asia and Africa region, experience recurrent crop failure due to increased frequency and intensity of droughts. Extreme events such as tropical storms, not only

claim human lives but also wipe out the ‘only’ hard earned physical infrastructure on these poor nations.

The impacts I am mentioning here are just a few but they are not new, in fact they have become the daily highlights of our news. In addition, whereas these impacts can be felt anywhere in the globe, for us the LDCs, the impacts are more worrying than elsewhere because of the lack of the key elements of adaptive capacity to respond to climate change. We lack stable and prosperous economies to respond promptly and effectively to the climate change impacts, we neither possess nor have access to technology to waive the impacts, we lack robust information dissemination systems and equitable access to resources. Additionally, we do not possess adequate human and institutional capacities, as well as the necessary infrastructure to deal with climate change impacts. In the absence of significant adaptation efforts, the economy and food security of LDCs is already being adversely affected.

In Tuvalu, for example, the growing impacts of climate change threaten to undo all our development gains over past years. Rising sea levels already undermine the productivity of our limited local agriculture and will eventually threaten the very existence and survival of our people and our country. Adapting to the impacts of climate change will also continue to compete with other vital spending priorities, like health and education, therefore making the situation more complex.

Support to LDCs to strengthen their adaptive capacity and reduce vulnerability has been weak. The LDCs continue to be disproportionately exposed to the adverse effects of climate change. The frequency and intensity of extreme weather events in LDCs (e.g. droughts, cyclones, extreme temperatures and floods) have been increasing at an alarming rate. The LDCs have the largest existing burdens of climate-sensitive diseases and the least effective public-health systems.

Efforts to support the LDCs in addressing vulnerability to climate change from now and into the future need to recognize the full scope of constraints that leave LDCs exposed to the impacts of climate change. They should be focused on enhancing the necessary elements of adaptive capacity including safeguarding social and economic development that embrace reorienting their economies towards more climate-resilient and ecological sustainable growth paths. It is improbable to think that LDCs will be able to meet the financial costs of climate change adaptation and mitigation without dedicated and substantial external contribution from development partners and the international community as a whole. The challenge then is to establish and at the same time strengthen such mechanisms required by LDCs, and ensure their sustainability.

The 4th UN Conference on LDC should therefore garner and re-enforce the political will and momentum to support LDCs in truly addressing vulnerability to climate change. It should build on the provisions and mechanisms set up under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to assist LDCs in addressing challenges posed by climate change. The Istanbul Program of Actions should provide a stage for opportunities to enhance sustained economic growth, human and social development regarding key drivers of economic and social livelihoods in LDCs.

I sincerely hope that deliberations of this event today will give due consideration to all these aspects of vulnerability in a concrete yet in a holistic manner. I expect that substantive and deliverable policy measures will come out of this event to contribute to the outcome of the Fourth United Nation LDC Conference.

Let me also plead to all of you who are here that we need to take urgent actions now to save Tuvalu, other LDCs and the world. Our existence and survival cannot be compromised.

Thank you

Tuvalu mo te Atua (Tuvalu for God)