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GOVERNMENT OF TUVALU

**Tuvalu Statement at the High Level Segment of the COP17/CMP7
Delivered by
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Durban, South Africa
7 December 2011**

Excellency President of South Africa
Excellency Heads of States and Heads of Governments
Honourable Secretary General of the United Nations
Honourable Madame President of COP17/CMP7
Esteemed Ministers and Head of Delegations
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honour to speak on behalf of my delegation, the people and government of Tuvalu. For those not familiar with Tuvalu, it is a tiny island nation in the middle of the South Pacific Ocean. Tuvalu is undoubtedly one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the impacts of climate change.

Madam President

Allow me first to congratulate the people and government of South Africa for the massive effort you undertake in organising this important conference. In particular, let me offer my sincere thanks to all the volunteers who have helped make this meeting

run so smoothly. It is so nice to see so many people dressing in their green uniforms and greeting us with their smiling faces and warm words of welcome.

Madam President

Small island nations, particularly low-lying atolls like Tuvalu who are surrounded by sea have always had great hope that the ocean brings prosperity and life. Soon, this will no longer be the case. The ocean is now bringing destruction and is threatening our very existence. Sea level rise could engulf our entire nation and therefore erase our right as a sovereign state.

But sea level rise is not our only concern. Just before I left to come to this conference my government had declared a state of emergency because we were suffering the worst drought in recorded history. We got to the stage where we had to import freshwater and to bring in emergency desalination plants. This was a clear warning that we are already suffering from the adverse impacts of climate change.

Madam President

It is vitally important that the international community take immediate and decisive action to address climate change now. Not tomorrow. Not in 2015. And definitely not in 2020. Urgency must be the theme of this conference. We have no time to wait. We are only a few inches from the Point of No Return.

I came with my delegation to this conference with the expectation that we will achieve a number of milestones. These include:

First, we must agree on amendments and rules to the Kyoto Protocol to establish a second commitment period. This means that we have ratifiable amendments with provisional entry into force so that there is no gap in the second commitment period.

Second, we should agree on a mandate to commence negotiations of a new protocol that will run in parallel with the Kyoto Protocol. We should commence negotiating this agreement immediately and complete our work within twelve months. We cannot agree to delay this process. The basis of this new protocol should be the Bali Action Plan. We have already done considerable work to bring this new agreement into action. This work has been done by the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action. We should now convert all this work into a new protocol to secure commitments by all major emitting countries to reduce their emissions and to secure long term action on adaptation.

Our third aim for this conference was to ensure a substantial work programme on Loss and Damage. This is important as highly vulnerable countries such as Tuvalu need an international financial mechanism to help us rebuild after the devastating effects of climate change events. Regrettably, we have seen our negotiating partners trying to weaken this outcome and make it meaningless.

Madam President

In 2009 Tuvalu submitted a proposal for a new protocol under the Climate Convention. We had called this new agreement the Copenhagen Protocol in the hope that it would be agreed upon at the Conference of Parties in Copenhagen. We stand by this proposal as it provided a sound framework for a good agreement for all countries. Sadly we did not agree on this new protocol. Instead we were asked to sign on to a worthless Accord. Tuvalu did not agree to this Accord for very good reasons.

Madam President

The United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change is theoretically a convention for all nations of this world. Unfortunately it is not open to all nations. The people of the Republic of China – Taiwan are not able to join this important

conference because they do not enjoy the status of a nation under the United Nations. This is a sad denial of the rights of a country to its own nationhood. We make an appeal to you Madam President to seek a mean to allow Taiwan to participate as a full national member of this important convention.

I want to impress upon you, Madame President, the importance of the need for urgency and a concrete outcome in Durban. We want Durban to be a watershed and a pinnacle of the climate change process. We want to be proud of our visit to South Africa, so that we can tell our children – it was Durban that saved Tuvalu.

Finally, let us give all nations and future generations a Christmas gift by all agreeing to save our children's world.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.

I thank you.

Tuvalu mo te Atua