



STATEMENT BY

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THE KINGDOM OF TONGA

On the occasion of the

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) and 11th Meeting of the Parties to the
Kyoto Protocol (CMP11)

December 7, 2015
Paris, France

Mr. President

Ministers

Excellencies

Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It is indeed a great honor and pleasure to address this most High-Level event.

MR. PRESIDENT

2. On behalf of the Government and People of Tonga I would first like to commend the Government and the people of France for their outstanding effort in preparation for this event, even in the wake of the recent terrorist acts in the 'City of Lights' which has profound impacts not only in France but around the world.
3. Today, the Climate change phenomenon is and will continue to be at the forefront of global issues should we walk away from Paris without having endorsed a legally binding global agreement that ensures the survival of our planet.
4. And as leaders, we have all been mandated to arrive here in the beautiful city and country that is Paris, France, to voice and action the cry and pleas of all our peoples, to be liberated from the ominous impacts of climate change.
5. Impacts that are no-where else more evident than in the small island developing states of the Pacific including Tonga. Tonga averages 6.4mm in rising sea level per year, which is 3 times that of the global average. The four most destructive tropical cyclones to have impacted Tonga have occurred in the past twenty years.

MR. PRESIDENT

6. According to the World Risk Report, Tonga is ranked as the third most 'At Risk' country to disasters, which is further compounded by the effects of climate change. Our development achievements can be destroyed overnight and even our very existence as a nation is under threat.
7. With the best science available projecting an increase in intensity of extreme weather and climate events including tropical cyclones, elevated sea levels, increased acidity of the ocean, and drastic changes in precipitation and temperature patterns, an ever-growing burden is being placed on small islands like Tonga.

8. The current regime on global greenhouse gas reductions is set on a path toward 2.7°C or more, a rise that is almost double and far beyond our call for a below 1.5° world.

MR. PRESIDENT

9. Tonga considers Climate Change to be the greatest single threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of her people
10. Tonga is one of the smallest contributors to GHG, but is already facing the severe adverse impact of climate change. Tonga is spending about 30% of its ODA on climate change related projects and initiatives. This is a testimony to Tonga prioritizing the need to build our climate resilience that we are already facing severe adverse effect of Climate Change. We have now Category 5 Tropical Cyclones, and extensive coastal erosion due to sea level rising. Imagine what we have to face if we reach 1.5 degree Celsius. Image the devastation if we let warming to be close to 2 degree!
11. Despite the fact Tonga is one of the smallest contributors of GHG, we want to contribute what we can to help with this fight against climate change. The submission of our INDC reflects our commitment to this global partnership, and highlights the need to respond urgently and adequately, so that we collectively endeavor to ensure that Tonga and the world can progress toward a future in which our children will view our fight against climate change as a distant memory of the past. Tonga is committed to this fight and we;
 - a. will reduce our reliance on fossil fuel for power generation by 50% by 2020 and 70% by 2030.
 - b. will double our marine protected areas by 2030 and increased our efforts in reforestation.
12. The other key issue apart from emission is finance. Obviously Tonga together with fellow developing countries want assurances that scaling up pledges will be met by 2020 and beyond. It is important for climate finance to understand and reach out to the capacity realities of parties in particular the Pacific and its small island states. Options for climate finance administrators to establish strong relationships in the Pacific will be useful to include engaging in key regional events and support national readiness workshops to address the need for funding modality to be responsive.
13. Tonga wish to acknowledge the innovation of climate risk insurance as the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative (PCRAFI) supported the World Bank, with initial funding by the Government of Japan. The launching of 'InsuResilience' initiative last week by the Government of Germany on behalf of G7 and pledged assistance to support PCRAFI own establishment is an example of a helpful and worthy climate finance instrument effort.

14. As world leaders we have the power and the moral duty to bring about change, and as a citizen of an island kingdom on the frontline of this fight, I implore you that together we take a moral stand, and position ourselves on the moral high ground and endeavors to save the world from a bleak future.
15. We are at a cross road right here in Paris, this critical turning point in world history, and in this light, let it would be remembered that at COP21, 2015, Paris, France, we the leaders of the world came together in unison and saved not just Tonga, not just the Pacific, but we came together and saved our planet.
16. Let us return from Paris to our homes, and our people with the knowledge that together we have delivered a credible and robust new Global agreement that will guarantee our survival, an agreement that safeguards the most vulnerable countries, an agreement that ensures a truly shared and sustainable global vision and investment for our present and future generations.

Thank you, and Malo 'aupito

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