



PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
United Nations Member States

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Nauru to the United Nations
800 Second Avenue, Suite 400A, New York, N.Y. 10017

Phone: 212-937-0074
Fax: 212-937-0079
E-mail: nauru@un.int

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Statement by

H.E. The Hon. Sprent Dabwido M.P.
President of the Republic of Nauru

on behalf of the
Pacific Small Island Developing States (Pacific SIDS)

United Nations Framework Climate Change Convention
Seventeenth Conference of Parties

Durban, South Africa
Tuesday, 6 December 2011

His Excellency Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa,
His Excellency, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the great honor to speak on behalf of the fourteen Pacific Small Island Developing States, namely Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and my own country, Nauru.

Let me express our deep appreciation to you, President Zuma, and the people of Durban for your warm hospitality.

Mr. President,

Our conversation about climate change, and the challenge that addressing this growing crisis entails, has entered its third decade.

This audience is certainly aware of the worst consequences of inaction, though they are still worth repeating, so that we do not forget the magnitude of the task before us.

I am from the Pacific, and the fourteen island nations in our group are often said to be on the “frontlines” of this struggle. The combat metaphor is apt, because it is not an exaggeration to say that climate change is, for us, a matter of life and death.

Already, communities in our islands have been forced to flee their homes to escape rising seas, and unless bold action is taken, much of my region could be rendered uninhabitable within our grandchildren’s lifetimes.

On a recent trip to our region, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said it was not until a young girl from Kiribati described her fear that the sea might wash her away while she slept that he fully appreciated the gravity of the situation we face.

It should not come as a surprise that, this past July, the United Nations Security Council recognized that the impacts of climate change are a threat to international peace and security. This crisis could not be more real.

Mr. President,

As members of AOSIS, we have consistently offered proposals based on the latest scientific and economic understandings of climate change and guided by the principle of fairness. But the time for small, incremental steps ended long ago, and great strides must be made in a very short amount of time. This effort must begin here, in Durban, and three outcomes are absolutely essential:

First, we must refocus the negotiations on mitigation and immediately begin a process to ratchet up the ambition of our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to a level that ensures the viability and survival of all nations.

Next, we must have a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol with an enhanced set of rules to strengthen its environmental integrity. Some may think we have the luxury of waiting until we build a new regime. We do not. The Pacific *most certainly* does not.

And finally, we must have a “Durban Mandate” for a new, legally binding protocol to complement Kyoto, with binding mitigation commitments for non-Kyoto Parties and mitigation actions for developing countries, as well as the conclusion of all other elements of the Bali Action Plan.

Along side these three key priorities, we must complete the work begun in Cancun, notably the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Committee, and the work programme on loss and damage.

Mr. President,

We may be the vanguard of climate change, but we are by no means the only ones suffering. The past year alone has witnessed unprecedented extreme weather on nearly every continent and, according to scientific projections, provides only a glimpse at what the future may hold.

Climate change is an international crisis too big for any country to tackle alone. We will succeed together, or we will fail together. So also at stake here in Durban is our confidence that, together, we can resolve the global problems that characterize our era.

If the United Nations was created for anything, it was to respond to a challenge such as this. The drafters of its charter, still reeling from the devastation of the Second World War and fearful that civilization could not afford another, recognized that multilateralism was our best hope for addressing the challenges of an increasingly interconnected world.

The stated purpose of the UN Charter is to facilitate cooperation in international law, international security, economic development, social progress, human rights, and the achievement of world peace.

Our present challenge involves all those things. But our collective goals will be impossible to achieve unless we come to see that our own health and prosperity is closely connected to that of our neighbors.

This is a difficult lesson for all of us. The temptation is great to focus on our perceived national interests and turn inward. To see the world as no more than a finite stockpile of resources that must be locked away for the benefit of the few.

We reject this conception of the world, because history has shown that it leads us to tragedy.

Mr. President,

The Pacific is taking the lead and putting our words into action. Tuvalu is aiming to provide 100% of its energy from renewable sources by the year 2020, and Tonga expects to reach 50% by next year. Green Energy Micronesia, a plan for Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau, is well underway. And my own country of Nauru has set a target of 50% renewable energy by 2015.

And as members of the Alliance of Small Island States, we have joined other highly vulnerable countries to consistently offer fair and ambitious proposals at these negotiations, always guided by science.

However, delay has left us short on time and vanishingly little to compromise.

Mr. President,

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the untimely death of Dag Hammarskjöld, the U.N.'s second Secretary General and one of its most dynamic leaders. He described the Charter's fundamental principles as, and I quote, "expressions of universally shared ideals which cannot fail us, though, alas, we often fail them." End quote.

The Pacific Nations did not come to Durban to fail.

Thank you.