



TUVALU

Keynote Statement

Delivered by

The Prime Minister of Tuvalu, the Honourable Enele S. Sopoaga

At the Leaders Events for Heads of State and Government at the

Opening of the COP21, 30th November 2015.

Mr President,
Heads of Government,
Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, may I join with others in offering our condolences to the people of France for the tragic losses they have endured at the hands of terrorists.

Coming from a peaceful Small Island State of Tuvalu, I make a strong plea that our response to these acts must be thoughtful, considerate and not based on revenge. We must remain tolerant and respectful of all faiths and religions and not treat acts of violence with other acts of violence. We must find peaceful solutions through careful and respectful dialogue and peaceful resolution, targeting at the root causes of these barbaric acts, the lack of opportunity to do good.

Today, we stand here facing one of the greatest challenges of humankind, - climate change. We are at a critical point of history. While we condemn in the strongest sense the barbaric acts inflicted by terrorists on the French people and others, we must seize the opportunity of COP21 to exert the strongest leadership to protect and save human beings from the catastrophic impacts of climate change. We must have the greatest possible political will here in Paris.

For a country like Tuvalu, our survival depends on the decisions we take at this Conference. Let me emphasize this point. Our survival as a nation depends on the decisions we take at this Conference. This is not a simply stepping-stone to a better future. We stand on a cliff edge. Either we stand united and agree to combat climate change or we all stumble and fall and condemn humanity to a tragic future.

The plight of refugees we see today, and dare I add of increasing terrorism and radicalism, represents a small measure of what the world will face if we do not tackle climate change. We must urgently cut GHG, and dramatically transform the global economy to a fossil fuel free future.

Let me repeat once more our appeal. Tuvalu's future at current warming, is already bleak, any further temperature increase will spell the total demise of Tuvalu. No leader around this room carries such a level of worry and responsibility. Just imagine you are in my shoes, what would you do. We want to be assured that our children and our grandchildren have a future.

We face many political challenges at this meeting. Critically we must agree that the Paris Agreement is a legally binding treaty or protocol under the Convention. It must anchor firmly on its objective and principles. Anything less would signal to the world that we are not serious about climate change. I strongly encourage some of our negotiating partners to put aside your domestic challenges and unite with the rest of the world for a legally binding treaty. Anything less would be shameful.

We must all commit to take substantial action on mitigation. We must be obliged to implement our Nationally Determined Commitments and not just communicate them. The Paris treaty must be clear in how it sets a goal for the future. For Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries and many others, setting a global temperature goal of below 1.5 degrees Celsius relative to pre-industrial levels is critical. I call on the people of Europe to think carefully about their obsession with 2 degrees. Surely, we must aim for the best future we can deliver and not a weak compromise.

Tuvalu is already suffering the impacts of climate change. Cyclone Pam earlier this year had a devastating effect on our economy. While we were grateful for the assistance we received from the relief community, this ad hoc response to the impacts of climate change cannot continue. We need a permanent mechanism for Loss and Damage anchored in the Paris Treaty to give us the assurance that the necessary response to climate change impacts will be forthcoming.

The Paris treaty must also deliver, new and predictable finance, technology transfer and capacity building. With respect to finance we must be assured that the most vulnerable are at the top of the list for funding. This means we need easy access and less bureaucracy. Unfortunately, this is not happening.

Mr. President,

Let me round off by saying that the Paris treaty must have clear objective that protect human rights, it must promote gender equality, respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and ensure that all actions under the treaty are environmentally sound and do not adversely affect the natural environment.

Mr. President

This is the time. We must all stand together and reshape our future. A new, comprehensive treaty on climate change is in our reach. Lets do it now. Let's do it for the future of humanity.

Let's do it for Tuvalu. For if we save Tuvalu we save the world.

I thank you.