



Tuvalu Statement

Delivered by the Hon Enele S Sopoaga, Prime Minister,

at the High Level Segment of COP19,

Thursday 21, Warsaw, Poland.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr President,
Distinguished Heads of State and Ministers,
Madame Executive Secretary,
Colleagues,

I first wish to express my gratitude to the Government and people of Poland for the warm hospitality they have shown the Tuvalu Delegation and me since our arrival.

I also wish to associate myself with the speech made by my close neighbour, His Excellency Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of Nauru, speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

I led the Tuvalu delegation at the climate change COP in Cancun three years ago. Now, I have come to Warsaw, as I did in Posnan for COP14, with high expectations for more clarity and commitment on real actions by humanity to save my people in Tuvalu, to save the people of the world against climate change. I am deeply saddened by what I hear, of the slow and backtracking progress in the climate change negotiations.

It's a sad fact that this year represents the year when humanity produced the most amount of carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels than any year in human history. Instead of saving our survival on planet earth, humanity is actually and shamelessly destroying our very existence. This is an absolute tragedy. We cannot continue to steal the future from our children and our children's children. We cannot continue to burn up the Earth with little regard for the consequences. We need a revolution in our thinking, otherwise climate change will destroy us all.

Mr President

The devastating typhoon in the Philippines should have been a wake-up call to all of us. But I am told by my delegation that this stark reminder of humanity's impact on the

climate has had little effect on the negotiation process. Progress is slow. The first chapter of the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report is a clear reminder that we have little time left to take decisive action to reverse our use of fossil fuels.

Which strongly suggests that unless negotiations to advance for a legally binding agreement GHG reduction and adaptation actions against climate change are done urgently, the children of Tuvalu and the children of the world will have no future. We must save Tuvalu and SIDS like it in order to save the world.

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's speech at the opening of this high level segment was a stark reminder that we have a lot to do and there certainly is a steep road ahead. It is a road that we all must travel. We all must make an effort to reduce our emissions and create a renewable energy and energy efficient future for all citizens of this Earth. We cannot afford to let some stand by the roadside and let others do all the work. Everyone must take action. I look forward to the Secretary-General's Climate Summit next year, but we must learn from the Summit that preceded Copenhagen. We cannot afford shallow or false promises. We cannot afford rhetoric. We cannot afford blindness to our future. We all must set aside our narrow self-interests and work towards future for all. We must build a collective plan that ensures that countries like Tuvalu have a future.

Importantly, as we have heard in the last few days, we must clearly listen to the youth and women of this world. We must seek their guidance on how to mould their future. We all must listen.

Mr President, at this meeting we have seen some progress in putting forward a framework for a new agreement in 2015. Sadly, much of what is being proposed now was already proposed by Tuvalu back in 2009 with our draft Protocol on climate change. I urge everyone here to look at our 2009 proposal and see if this can direct us towards a strong outcome in 2015. We cannot afford to keep ignoring the efforts that we made in the past.

Mr President, I am saddened by the poor progress on the issue of a Loss and Damage Mechanism. For low income, highly vulnerable countries, like Tuvalu, a Loss and Damage Mechanism is critical. The costs of the impacts of climate change are starting to build up. We need insurance mechanisms funded by the international community to help us rebuild from the impacts of climate change. Within this Loss and Damage Mechanism we need a clear approach to compensation. It deeply saddens me that some of our close Pacific neighbours have been so unhelpful in this discussion. We seem to be witnessing a turn back in time to the days of climate change denial.

We must establish a rational approach to Loss and Damage and be bound by the polluter pays principle. We need to ensure that we are properly compensated for the damage caused by the polluters. If we cannot agree on a rational system within the UNFCCC where costs for compensation can be fairly distributed, we will be forced to go to the courts. We will seek damages and we will seek full reparations. So we have a choice, agree on a rational system under the UNFCCC, or seek compensation through the courts.

Mr President, some have suggested that the people of Tuvalu can move elsewhere. Let me say in direct terms. We do not want to move. Such suggestions are offensive to the people of Tuvalu. Our lives and culture are based on our continued existence on the islands of Tuvalu. We will survive.

But humanity, the polluters, must save Tuvalu in order to save the world.

I thank you.