

**Statement by Secretary General for the COP21 High-Level Segment**  
*Tuesday 8 December, 2015*

**[Salutation]**

Mr President,

Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen.

It is an honour to address you today, not only as Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum but also as the Pacific Ocean Commissioner.

2. The ocean is the heart of the Pacific. We rely on the ocean for food, livelihoods, culture, recreation and transport. Our economies are largely based on the ocean and its resources. The ocean and climate are inextricably linked. By changing the climate you will irrevocably change the ocean and change our lives.

3. Never before has it been so important to amplify the Pacific voice, regarding the adverse challenges of climate change that we collectively face. This alarm and call is clearly identified in the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Declaration on Climate Change Action. The decisions made here today will impact on our region tomorrow. Action is required now.

4. As reiterated by the Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum and other Pacific Leaders who have spoken here last week, we must have an ambitious and legally binding agreement that will address issues that are necessary for their survival. We need a temperature goal with a ceiling of well below 1.5 degrees Celsius. We need loss and damage as a critical and stand-alone element, and we need simplified and scaled-up access to climate change finance.

5. As the SAMOA Pathway states, climate change compounds existing challenges to ensuring sustainable development. Inaction will undermine our development aspirations and could result in the loss of our unique and diverse cultures and the failure of the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. Our Leaders see a secure future for Pacific island people based on the sustainable development, management and conservation of our ocean and lands. We look to the future and hope our children know what it means to be a Pacific Islander in a region rich with diversity. But this future is at extreme risk from climate change unless we take action now.

7. I urge you to take action. Help our people and our region by concluding the negotiations at this COP and, by adopting an agreement that is legally binding, ambitious and durable. Pacific lives, Pacific cultures, Pacific futures, are in your hands.

Thank you.