



**Statement by His Majesty King Tupou VI
King of the Kingdom of Tonga**

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
27th Session of the Conference of the Parties

Sharm El-Sheik, Egypt

7 November 2022

His Excellency Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Please accept my most sincere congratulations and best wishes on your Presidency of the 27th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The opportunity is also taken to commend the UNFCCC Secretariat and staff for the tireless effort and impeccable preparation to facilitate this conference.

I would like to thank the Government of Egypt and the city of Sharm El-Sheikh for your warm hospitality since our arrival in the beautiful “city of Peace”.

Mr. President,

30 years ago, the United Nations charted a course in adopting the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and in 2015 we gave this journey a new “raison d’etre” in the Paris Agreement. At COP26, in Glasgow, parties increased ambition and kept the hope of 1.5 degrees alive.

We acknowledge and commend the outcomes from COP26 and note that we will only be a step closer to our goals if every country delivers on their pledge. We are here to make progress from where we stood with the Glasgow Climate Pact and more importantly, with the commitments we made at the adoption of the Paris Agreement.

The theme chosen for the 27th Session of the Conference of the Parties, “Delivering for people and the planet” is both a timely and an essential reminder of the urgency of the task at hand for the survival of the Earth and for us its inhabitants.

Our task in delivering for Our People and for Our Planet is to agree to goals with the highest ambition possible and act together and before the impacts become irreversible for us all.

We no longer have the luxury of time.

Mr. President,

The inherent physical attributes of our islands in the Pacific Ocean make climate change the single greatest threat that will determine the future of Small Island Developing States like the Kingdom of Tonga. My Kingdom is the third most vulnerable country in the world to the adverse effects of climate change.

As a people, we share a deep connection to the Ocean. As with many other Pacific Island Countries, Tonga is heavily dependent on its fisheries and ocean resources for food, transport, economic development and culture. Historically the Tongan people have always shown resilience in the face of such natural disasters.

However, with record rates of increased coastal erosion, ocean acidification, loss of coral reefs coupled with the ever-present rising of sea-levels, three times higher than the global average, our ability to respond to the increasing multiplicity of disasters and the increasing severity and intensity of extreme weather patterns is now undermined.

On 15th of January, Tonga experienced a volcanic explosion equal to none in our living history. Homes were destroyed; lives were lost and entire communities are deeply traumatized by the sonic explosions and resulting tsunami waves.

Population displacement has now become permanent feature for my people.

In the aftermath of the explosion, we experienced the care, compassion and support of the global community, and our neighboring countries in the response and recovery efforts. Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone of you who have made a contribution to the recovery efforts of my people. I acknowledge your kindness and the compassion shown towards the people of the Kingdom of Tonga.

Please allow me to highlight 2 key future challenges resulting from this unprecedented volcanic explosion.

The first is our access to clean safe drinking water. The pollution of rainwater water in the aftermath of the Volcanic explosion highlighted the vulnerability of the water storage sites in the outer islands. This urgent reality places greater importance on the access to available water desalination technologies that can operate on renewable energy.

The second challenge as an Ocean State is to offer affordable transportation that does not add to our Green House Gas Emissions. Our culture and history as people of the ocean has taught us to live in harmony with our environment. In the near future, we will need to re-acquaint our people with such livelihoods and use cutting edge technologies that promote wind- powered, low carbon emitting modes of transport.

Mr. President,

As Small Island Developing States, we cannot face the challenges presented to all of us alone. We are firmly committed to international goals. In 2020, the Government of Tonga submitted its second Nationally Determine Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement, setting ambitious mitigation and adaptation goals.

In addition, Tonga's Long Term Low Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS) sets targets in sectors including energy, transport, waste management and the resettlement of communities.

Global objectives must be directly translated into our mission and journey, charting a pathway for a resilient, sustainable and inclusive future for Tonga. Such goals and measures also support the implementation of the Tonga Climate Change Policy from 2016 and uphold the overarching goal of a climate change resilient Tonga by 2035.

For Small Island Developing States like Tonga, adaptation to climate change generates larger benefits when delivered in conjunction with other development activities such as disaster risk reduction and community-based approaches to development.

My Kingdom shares the concerns of the other countries of the Pacific Islands Forum. In solidarity, we endorsed the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent that highlights the challenges that we face as a region and symbolizes our drive to respond to our ever-changing environment.

Mr. President,

As the impacts of climate change are inter-generational and our actions and decisions today will have a major bearing on the future of our people. I am encouraged by the agendas at COP27 over the coming days.

I hope that all of us here present will be inspired, motivated and driven into action on firm commitments, a sense of shared responsibility and connection with the global community.

This will be a testament to genuine partnerships of all Parties, in raising ambitions and actions towards achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement.

May we always keep in mind the impacts of our decisions and actions, here at COP27, as we chart our course towards a successful, prosperous and sustainable future.

A future where the well-being, survival and peace of future generations – are their inheritance.

Thank you.