



STATEMENT KINGDOM OF TONGA

Hon. Hu'akavameiliku
(Prime Minister of Tonga)

at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
29th Session of the Conference of the Parties also serving as the
19th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol,
and the 6th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris
Agreement.

Baku, Azerbaijan, 13 November 2024.

Mr. President
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen.

MALO-E-LELEI !

Warm greetings to you all from the Friendly Islands of the Kingdom of Tonga.

Mr. President, I congratulate you for assuming the Presidency of the 29th COP. My delegation assures you of our unwavering support as you lead us during this vital global climate summit.

I also extend our heartfelt thanks to the Government and citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan for their gracious hospitality. We are honored to be in your beautiful country.

I thank the UNFCCC Secretariat for their tireless efforts in organizing this vital climate conference.

Climate change has been, is and will be the most existential threat to Pacific Island nations, including Tonga.

We have alerted the global community to this for decades.

The recent findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and national climate assessments once more underscore this fact.

Climate change threatens our environment, land, ocean, and marine resources. All resources that are fundamental to the livelihoods, survival, and future sustainability of Tonga's people.

Tonga witnesses a concerning increase in the intensity of tropical cyclones over the past decade. We lived through three Category 5 systems, Tropical Cyclone Ian (2014), Gita (2018), and Harold (2020).

Our sea levels have risen at an alarming rate of 7.3mm per year. This surpasses by far the global average.

In turn, this has led to severe coastal erosion, frequent flooding, and the loss of crucial infrastructure, assets, and habitats in coastal regions.

The incursion of saltwater into lands has damaged groundwater quality. This results in higher soil salinity levels and the corresponding drop in agricultural output. Rising ocean temperatures have caused widespread coral bleaching and a decline in marine biodiversity.

The devastating Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami of January 15, 2022, inflicted further significant damage equivalent to 36% of our GDP.

All these successive events mean high levels of vulnerabilities for our people and our country.

The scientific consensus is that human activities have led to a significant increase in greenhouse gas concentrations.

Data show that global surface temperatures have risen by 1.1 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels (1850-1900) between 2011 and 2020.

It is of great concern that greenhouse gas emissions continue to climb.

Despite our best efforts and unwavering commitment, the latest NDC Synthesis Report and the UNEP Emissions Gap Report, both released in October 2022, paint a sobering picture.

The reports are clear. We are not on track to meet the Paris Climate Goal and keep the 1.5-degree temperature limit within reach.

Again we call with urgency on all parties, particularly major polluters and emitters, to reduce their emissions drastically by 50% by 2030. We call on all parties to implement their commitments aligned with the 1.5-degree Celsius target.

We must accelerate the phase-down of unabated coal use and phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. We strongly reiterate the critical importance of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. We cannot afford to miss this threshold as this will have catastrophic consequences for Small Island Developing States like Tonga and the entire planet.

Tonga has a negligible contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions, but we are steadfast in our commitment to implementing the necessary climate actions and targets outlined in our:

1. Second Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) 2020,
2. Tonga Energy Roadmap (TERM Plus) 2022-2035, and
3. Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS) 2021-2050.

My country's Second NDC commits to a 13% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector by 2030 when compared to 2006.

We will achieve this by moving to 70% renewable electricity generation and through energy efficiency measures.

In the agriculture, forestry, and other land use sectors, we had committed to plant one million trees by 2023, to establish a forest inventory as foundation to meet our greenhouse gas emission target for our Third NDC in 2025.

With great pride, I announce that Tonga has achieved its ambitious goal of planting one million trees target, ahead of COP28 last year.

This significant milestone is a crucial step in enhancing our resilience to climate change. It demonstrates our commitment to environmental sustainability.

We fully support and implement climate adaptation actions to safeguard our communities and natural ecosystems.

Tonga, through its Second Joint National Adaptation Plan (JNAP 2), continues to prioritize adaptation actions aimed at building a resilient Tonga by 2035. We once more strongly appeal to donors and partners to increase funding for adaptation actions. We wish to encourage all countries to scale up implementation through their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).

It also is of utmost importance to urgently conduct a thorough Technology Needs Assessment, Development, and Deployment to identify the most suitable technologies

for mitigation and adaptation actions in Tonga and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

For the past few years I had the privilege to assume a leading role as Pacific Champion for Climate Finance.

As the current chair of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' meeting, Tonga strongly reiterates the critical importance of commensurate and timely access to climate finance for SIDS. This is a must and needed NOW to implement measures that mitigate and adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.

Securing adequate and timely climate finance remains indeed a top priority for Tonga. Without such financial support, implementing the strategic actions outlined in our national mitigation and adaptation plans within the agreed timeframe will be impossible. Time is of the essence. Further delays in securing funding will hinder our ability to implement agreed-on actions and achieve our targets.

We reiterate our call on developed countries to fulfill their long-standing commitment to mobilize \$100 billion annually in climate finance by 2023.

We fully support ongoing discussions on establishing a new post-2025 climate finance goal.

We urge international financial institutions to play a key role in facilitating greater access to both private and public sector finance, essential for achieving global net-zero emissions by 2050.

We welcome the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund at COP27 and emphasize the urgent need to operationalize this fund to address the needs and priorities of Tonga effectively.

We call upon the Green Climate Fund to recognize the robust procedures of multinational organizations like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for accessing climate finance. We encourage innovative approaches and partnerships, such as the 'Save the Children' initiative, in which Tonga is a pilot country.

Tonga supports the Pacific Partnerships for Prosperity, endorsed by Pacific Leaders, to speed up resource mobilization and empower our people to drive transformative change through national and regional development. My country, in collaboration with the Republic of Palau and the Bezos Earth Fund, is at the forefront of this initiative.

In addition, our Pacific Leaders recognize that we need timely, predictable and scaled up access to climate finance to complement our communities.

We established a Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF). This is a Pacific led, member owned and managed climate and disaster resilience financing facility.

We thank our development partners and friends of the Pacific for their commitments and contributions to date. We urge global partners to continue their support for this crucial regional facility.

At a national level, Tonga established the Tonga climate Fund to accelerate the implementation of our climate actions and achieve our vision of a Resilient Tonga by 2035. We invite donors and partners to contribute generously to the Tonga Climate Change Fund to accelerate the implementation of our climate actions and achieve our vision of a Resilient Tonga by 2035.

Managing the ocean-climate nexus is of paramount importance to Pacific Island Countries.

The ocean representing beyond seventy per cent of our planet's surface, is critical in mitigating global greenhouse gas emissions. Oceans absorb nearly a quarter of annual emissions and regulate the Earth's climate.

We must prioritize sustainable ocean preservation and management. Oceans are a fundamental source of life and fundamental to our future. We need urgent global collaboration and commitments to safeguard our ocean for generations to come.

We echo the call of Pacific Leaders for states and regions to support the 2021 Landmark Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones. This declaration reaffirms our commitment to safeguarding our maritime zones from the adverse impacts of sea-level rise.

The recent Global Stocktake synthesis report, released by the UNFCCC ahead of COP28, underscores the world's failure to meet the Paris Agreement goals. We urge the

international community to honor their pledges and translate commitments into swift action.

We emphasize the importance of synergizing actions under the Paris Agreement with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Sustainable Development Goals, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, and the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol to ensure effective implementation.

Mr President,

Tonga fully supports the bid from Australia to host COP31, as it will be known as the Pacific COP.

In closing, I express our deep hope that COP29 will foster genuine partnerships and collaboration among all parties. We must honor our respective responsibilities and we must ensure that all voices are heard as we strive to achieve the Paris Agreement goals.

People everywhere are watching our deliberations here in Baku.

The decisions we make today will shape the future of our country, our generation, and generations to come.

I thank you.