



Statement by His Excellency President Baron Divavesi Waqa
72nd United Nations General Assembly
Wednesday 20th September 2017

Thank you, Mr. President,

It is an honor to be here for the opening of 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly. On behalf of the Republic of Nauru, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák his recent assumption of the Presidency of the General Assembly. Please be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you steer the work of this august body during this critical session.

I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Peter Thompson for his exceptional work as our outgoing President.

At this juncture, I would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest sorrows and condolences to our brothers and sisters who have suffered so much by the series of hurricanes, in the Caribbean and the United States, and to our brothers and sisters in Mexico for the devastating earthquakes. Your suffering and grief is shared by us all and we pray that God will be your strength and great provider during your recovery efforts.

Mr. President,

The Government of Nauru shares your view that the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals must be at the center of our work in the coming year. The 2030 Agenda is a universal agreement, representing our collective priorities, from the largest to the smallest nations among us. Bringing that same approach to our implementation effort is the only way to ensure that no country is left behind.

You will recall the five words that guided our work on the SDGs: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership, which I am sure gave inspiration to your theme for this new session of the General Assembly. These five words are broad enough to encompass our collectively held ideals, while accommodating our tremendous diversity. In the case of Nauru, our status as a Small Island Developing State underlies every aspect of the lives of my people.

Mr. President,

The global economic system was not created with small islands in mind. Small size and population, geographic isolation, few natural resources, and a high level of vulnerability to economic and environmental shocks are among the characteristics that make small islands a special case for development. Our people crave prosperity just the same as anyone else, however, the well tread pathways to development are simply not available to us.

More than most, our prospects depend on a stable Planet, including a safe climate and healthy oceans. That is why Nauru was among the first countries in the world to ratify the Paris Agreement, and why we have made implementation of our national contribution our top priority. Nearly every country has made this solemn commitment, and we are now two years closer to the time when we will be held to account.

With regard to climate action in developing countries, implementation is a collective responsibility. As developing countries, we have demonstrated our political will to be part of the global effort, but most of us lack the resources to fully implement our contributions alone. In this regard, we call on our friends and development partners to step up their assistance programmes. Nauru's climate priorities fall into four categories: renewable energy, land rehabilitation, water security, and infrastructure proofing, and we are looking to build genuine and durable partnerships to achieve our objectives.

While the Paris Agreement was a historic diplomatic achievement, we must remember that we remain well off track from achieving its central goal of stopping warming below 1.5 degrees. Failure would be devastating for small islands, though we should not pretend that any additional warming is safe. Negative impacts in the form of super-storms, irregular rain patterns, and heat waves are here with us now and will continue to get worse for the foreseeable future. As I said at last year's World Humanitarian Summit, all of us must face up some very difficult questions:

- How will we feed a planet of nine billion people when crop yields are projected to fall?
- How will we share declining freshwater resources as the glaciers disappear and drought in many regions becomes commonplace?
- How will we protect the millions who are rendered homeless when low-lying coastal areas are inundated?
- And can these and many other challenges be managed effectively so that we avoid breakdowns in governance and a proliferation of failed states?

It is difficult to see how we realize our vision for a Peaceful Planet without the answers.

Climate change will be the defining security challenge of the century, and we are simply not prepared for life on a hotter planet. For this reason, Nauru supports the proposal by the Pacific Small Island Developing States to appoint a UN Special Representative on Climate & Security, whose work must begin with an assessment of the United Nation's capacity to respond to climate disasters.

Mr. President,

In addition to a safe climate, the prosperity of Nauru's people depends on a healthy ocean. In this regard, we must show ambition in tackling the mounting threats to the health of our ocean. The special case of SIDS needs to be enshrined in our work in all ocean sectors and in the new implementing agreements under UNCLOS on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. Urgently launching and concluding an intergovernmental conference to draft a new implementing agreement in line with the Common Heritage of Mankind and which will allow for the protection and preservation of the Oceans, need to be a priority in this work.

Security of our Oceans is a problem which must also be tackled by us all. Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing is a great threat and economic loss to our small economy. Coupled with transnational crimes that occurs within our waters and within the waters of our neighbours, these issues require cooperation on a number of fronts through inter-agency and inter-country partnerships. I call on our friends and partners to continue existing programmes such as the shiprider agreement and other ongoing bilateral cooperation with the United States, and the maritime surveillance programmes provided by Australia and New Zealand. We look forward to partnering with other law enforcement agencies throughout the Asia-Pacific and beyond.

For the people of Nauru to benefit from these global efforts to protect our climate and ocean, we will need to build genuine and durable partnerships – partnerships based on mutual respect and a clear understanding of the real needs on the ground. Too often, small countries like mine are excluded from many international programs. Funding mechanisms may be effectively impossible to access because the application and reporting requirements exceed the capacity of our domestic institutions. Private investment is unreliable, and rarely available to support the provision of basic services and construction of critical infrastructure. Meanwhile, the most promising financing models for small developing countries, like direct access and direct budgetary support, are rarely offered by our development partners.

This needs to change. We need our partnerships to meet the needs of small and vulnerable countries.

We know we must become better partners ourselves, which is why my Government has emphasized the importance of capacity building as a critical component of our international cooperation. For our people to prosper, we must invest in building their knowledge and skills. There is no shortage of workshops in the Pacific. What Nauru needs is a sustained capacity building effort backed by real resources, including the long-term, in-country presence of our development partners when appropriate, so that we are left with strong domestic institutions run by a skilled domestic workforce.

The importance of a robust capacity building programme cannot be stressed enough. As a former school teacher, I am passionate about the importance of a quality education for my people. We have our own training programmes for our high school and tertiary students, and for those already in the workforce. We acknowledge the generous support of our friends and partners who provides scholarships and technical workshops which is invaluable to our

long term development, particularly in high priority areas such as the health sector, education, engineering, public administration and good governance.

Mr. President,

Having an healthy economy and a productive people also require international relations to be peaceful and stable, not only in the Pacific, but also throughout the world. Regarding the Pacific region, Nauru calls on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to dialogue with disputing countries on the Korean peninsula. The threats made against the Republic of Korea, Japan, Guam and US cities does not help the situation and it places many of our small countries in the Pacific including Nauru, potentially in the line-of-fire. This is completely unacceptable and DPRK must stop these threats including the launching of rockets into the Pacific Ocean.

Further to the south and in Taiwan, we have a state that is peaceful, prosperous and happy. Taiwan has the technical and financial capacity to contribute towards world peace and world development particularly in areas of its technical prowess and know-how. It wishes to do this and give freely through partnerships and activities of the UN system including the SDGs, the WHO, UNESCO, the UNFCCC and other UN related agencies and activities. To ensure that the Taiwanese people can make positive contributions to societies around the world, they must be given the freedom to travel to where-ever they chose. We are after all, a world that calls for inclusiveness and that no-one is left behind.

In this same spirit, Nauru renews its call for an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba.

Mr. President,

“People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership” elegantly captures the scope of our work over the coming year and beyond. However, there is one other word, which begins with the letter “P” that we must not ignore.

That word is “Power.”

Power will determine whether resources are mobilized for people or for profiteering. Power will determine whether the voices of the marginalized are heard. Power will determine whether we leave a healthy and bountiful planet for future generations.

To ignore the role of power in shaping our future, is to cede what little power you might have. If we are to achieve our ambitious goals for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable planet, then we will need to grapple with power as it actually exists in the world, including all of its inequities and perversities. This, no doubt, will be the most difficult aspect of the task before us.

Mr. President,

To close, I would like to thank the Governments of Australia, Taiwan, New Zealand, Japan, India, the Russian Federation, European Union, Italy, Israel, Cuba, Republic of Korea and the United States, for their continued support and assistance to Nauru. We value your friendship very much and we look forward to your continued cooperation and support.

God bless the Republic of Nauru, God bless the United Nations and God bless you all.

Thank you.