



Statement
by
Hon. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi
Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa
at the
General Debate, 72nd session of the UN General Assembly
22 September 2017, UN HQ, New York.

Mr President,
Fellow delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Samoa warmly welcomes your assumption of the Presidency of the 72nd session of our General Assembly, at a time when our organization is going through unprecedented volatile and difficult times. We look forward to your leadership so that together we can chart a more safe, predictable and humane pathway in our journey through life's uncharted waters. You can count on Samoa's support as we work in partnership to translate into tangible and measurable achievements the overarching theme of your tenure "**Focusing on People – Striving for Peace and a Decent Life for All on a Sustainable Planet.**"

Your predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji demonstrated strong leadership during his successful presidency and we wish him well in his new calling.

Mr. President,

Secretary-General Guterres is passionate and committed to turn the United Nations into an efficient and effective organization that is fit for purpose and readily responsive to the needs of the very people it was established to serve in the first place. In working to make the UN's focus more people-centered than about processes, Samoa assures the Secretary-General of its full support.

Mr President

This week's annual general debate is the twentieth successive general debate of the General Assembly I have attended and addressed. My continuous participation is a measure of my conviction and my Government's unqualified faith in the value of the United Nations and the endless potential it holds to deal successfully with any issue of diversity and gravity that it is confronted with. The United Nations remains our choice of last resort and hope to provide the political will and the necessary commitment to address our challenges – hence why we want it to remain relevant, adaptable to changing circumstances and respond effectively to the current and emerging challenges facing our world.

Mr. President,

We meet this week against the backdrop of a world plagued with uncertainty and a sense of ebbing hope. We are losing the fight to free our world from poverty, instability and conflict abounds and we are no longer distanced and disconnected from deadly acts of terrorism and the devastation of natural and human-induced disasters. We are living in an environment of risk. Climate change is an existential threat. Allow me to pause and offer our sincere condolences to the governments and peoples of all the countries that have suffered from the recent devastation of hurricanes and earthquakes.

Mr. President,

We cannot help but watch with trepidation and uneasiness the global dynamics nudging our world perilously close to a potential catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. As small island Pacific countries, we are no longer protected by our isolation – we are bystanders but with the greatest to lose in the unfolding power drama being played out in the Korean Peninsula. We pray for visionary leadership with sound moral judgment on both sides to ensure we give 'peace a chance'

It explains why I signed yesterday on Samoa's behalf the "**Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons**". As a signatory to this historic treaty, we wanted to demonstrate unequivocally our aspiration to have a world without nuclear weapons. The conventional narrative that the possession of nuclear weapons will act as deterrent to make the world a safer place to live, is not borne out by the current realities – otherwise the developments in the Korean peninsula would not have happened at all. We firmly believe that possessing nuclear weapons and adding new nuclear powers only make our world less safe, less secure and less peaceful – hence the need to rid our world completely of all nuclear weapons.

No matter the noble goal for having such arsenals, availing them to the wrong and unprincipled hands is a recipe for doom and mayhem, as people, after all, are human and mere mortals.

But all is not yet lost. The adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants which offers a united approach to address the plight of the world's displaced peoples, the creation of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Office aimed at enhancing the Organization's capability to assist Member States in implementing the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy and the historic, first ever Treaty banning nuclear weapons, are all positive developments moving forward.

Mr President,

Climate change, like other global challenges, cross borders seamlessly. It has no respect for sovereignty and does not discriminate countries between rich or poor. Its dire consequences are real including those who remain in denial.

Climate change is a perpetual priority issue for Samoa and our Pacific region. In our small islands, as witnessed recently, natural catastrophes can decimate an entire country bringing with them great pain and upheaval to peoples' lives as well as set back the national economy for years. And we know this from repeated past experience.

Our islands limited resources and the lack of adaptive capacity makes the burden of rehabilitation a mammoth undertaking. While we applaud the resilience of our people to bounce back from any major natural disaster, the scars of these natural phenomena take years to heal and recover from. And if it's any consolation to our island states, even some of the well-resourced developed countries are still trying to recover and rehabilitate from the impacts of catastrophes which devastated their economies.

Mr President,

Samoa remains committed to ongoing efforts to pursue respect for human rights and rule of law and does its part to contribute to this global effort.

A first ever United Nations human rights council expert group at Samoa's invitation visited last month to carry out a fact-finding mission to assess the progress made towards eliminating discrimination against women and the protection and promotion of women's rights in the country. Samoa is the first Pacific country to open its doors to this independent mechanism.

Mr President,

We continue to place great faith in the rule of law and the vital protection it offers to all States, especially to weak and small countries like mine with no armed force and not affiliated to any military grouping. The International Criminal Court is an important part of the architecture of world peace based on the rule of law and we call for the early activation of the Kampala Amendments. The ICC was represented at the recent Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting earlier this month in Samoa.

Mr President

Terrorism is an offence to humanity and against the core values of the United Nations. For Samoa, I reaffirm our strong support for the relevant Security Council resolutions against terrorism which provide a clear signal of our determination to suppress terrorist activities, including training, international movement and financing. Samoa continues to align its domestic policies and legislation to meet its international obligations to help fight terrorism as well as participate actively in the Pacific regional security initiatives.

In the context of peacekeeping, Samoa's unwavering support for the United Nations Peacekeeping work is underscored by seventeen years of uninterrupted police deployment to serve in missions in Liberia, Sudan, Timor-Leste and South Sudan, Darfur. Small as we are, Samoan police continue to serve side by side with officers from other countries in places that require the intervention of the United Nations. Our commitment is rooted in our firm belief in the role United Nations peacekeeping plays in helping to eliminate the causes of conflict and in bringing about peace and stability. We fully endorse and condemn sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping and this is why we signed the international compact initiative of the Secretary-General to

committing countries to eliminating these heinous acts in peacekeeping.

Mr President,

The 2030 Agenda is our framework to put the world onto a path towards a sustainable and resilient future, for people, planet and prosperity. While the 2030 agenda remains high priority on the global agenda, and we see signs of momentum in terms of implementation, much work still needs to be done. The need to accelerate global action and awareness on the SDGs still remains. The adoption of the Pacific regional roadmap for SDGs complements Samoa's roadmap based on an integrated approach for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Samoa Pathway, Paris Agreement and Pacific Framework for Regionalism which are aligned to our national development strategy.

For Small Island Developing States, the SAMOA Pathway is their sustainable development roadmap which highlights their key tasks and priorities and links closely with the 2030 agenda. As we approach the 5 year review of the SAMOA Pathway in 2019, it is important to ensure that the comprehensive review of the UN support to SIDS is properly addressed and implemented. We need to study closely lessons learnt from the Partnerships registered for SIDS and encourage proactive follow up as well as pursue new partnerships for the group's sustainable development.

Several partnerships and Voluntary commitments specific to SIDS were launched during the Ocean Conference since the last annual SIDS Partnership dialogue. Prior to the mid-term review of the SIDS outcome document it is important to look at ways to improve implementation and addressing the gaps and emerging issues.

The success of the Ocean Conference was crucial to building momentum of SDG implementation given that the Ocean is the lifeblood of the planet. Addressing the targets of SDG14 for SIDS is catalytic to implementing several, if not all of the 17 Goals.

With the new Blue Pacific concept for the Pacific region, and the concrete outcomes from the Conference, emphasis is to be placed on implementation. Samoa at the Ocean's Conference pledged 13 Voluntary Commitments that showcased national efforts towards the conservation management and sustainable use of the Ocean and its resources and engagement of communities.

During the Ocean Conference in June, I was appointed the Special Ambassador of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development by UN World Tourism Organization. 2017 is a crucial year for sustainable tourism and given the reliance of many of our small economies on tourism, and the role it can play in SDG implementation; we will continue to promote the role of Tourism in support of peaceful societies and sustainable development

Mr President,

Let me now turn to the regional context and share with you some of the decisions taken by the Leaders of our Pacific Islands Forum at their Summit which my country was privileged to host at the beginning of this month. We chose as the theme for our year-long chairmanship **"The Blue Pacific: Our sea of islands: Our security through sustainable development, management and conservation"**.

In Samoa, we re-affirmed the **Framework for Pacific Regionalism** to drive our region's policy agenda towards the realization of our vision for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and

prosperity so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy and productive lives.

We also endorsed **The Blue Pacific identity** as the core driver of collective action for advancing the Leaders vision under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. This new narrative calls for inspired leadership and a long-term Pacific Islands Forum foreign policy commitment to act as one for the good of all, rather than a few. The Blue Pacific identity reinforces the potential of our shared stewardship of the Pacific Ocean, based on the explicit recognition of our shared ocean identity, ocean geography, and ocean resources. It aims to strengthen collective action by putting The Blue Pacific at the centre of regional policy making and united action for advancing the Forum Leaders' Vision for the Region.

With other Pacific Leaders, we discussed the key priorities for our region; a few of which I will highlight as their implementation requires collective and urgent action from this august gathering of the United Nations.

Mr President,

Firstly, climate change remains a priority challenge for the Pacific region because of its existential nature and its security implications. Climate change is already happening; it cannot be washed away by the rising tides. It has significant security implications and its impact threatens the continued existence and viability as sovereign states of some of our low lying atolls. Even those countries, which have been in self-denial to date of the climate change phenomenon must surely now accept the weight of scientific evidence.

The implementation of the Paris Agreement is of high priority requiring collective action to address this existential threat. We are confident that Fiji's presidency of the November COP23 will focus the spotlight

challenges and the need for genuine partnerships to help us deliver on our “nationally determined contributions” as part of the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The Pacific has also endorsed its Framework for Resilience Development as well as its institutional arrangements to support the elaboration and implementation of the Paris agreement

Secondly, the ocean and its resources continue to be critical to the livelihoods of our people and region. The impacts of Climate Change, Illegal Unregulated Unreported fishing and overfishing are threatening the sustainability of this crucial resource of our region. The Pacific Forum members will continue to be actively engaged on all Ocean related issues of the 72nd session of the GA including the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction process

Thirdly, we adopted the “**Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development**” and its implementation strategy. This demonstrates the seriousness our region places on implementing the 17 SDGs and the importance of a regional approach to meeting these international commitments. We continue to count on the important role of the UN and our partners to support regional and national efforts for SDG implementation particularly the building of our capabilities. We look forward to the Secretary General’s reform and how the Forum can engage to ensure its priorities in terms of its SDG roadmap and the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, Paris Agreement and other regional needs are considered in the reform.

And finally in the context of security, the Pacific Islands Forum remains committed to collective arrangements and mechanisms to assist regional governments recover from national conflicts and crises. The success of these arrangements together with the support of the UN, are already evident in the positive results of the Regional Assistance

Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). I am honoured to acknowledge the successful conclusion of the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) which brought together peacekeepers from all members countries of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Leaders acknowledged the successful conclusion of RAMSI and recognized it as a success story of regionalism and a workable example of regional cooperation and diplomacy, embodying more than a decade of partnership and cooperation amongst Forum members.

Leaders agreed to build on the Biketawa Declaration and other Forum security related declarations to expand the concept of security, inclusive of human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritising environmental security, and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change.

The Pacific over the years continues to call for advancing the cause of nuclear non-proliferation. Issues such as radioactive contaminants in the Republic of the Marshall Islands are of great concern to RMI and the region. We count on the promised support of the relevant UN entities to respond accordingly to requests for assistance including working closely with the regional technical agencies. The US is also encouraged to take urgent action to address the issue.

Thank you.