



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE
KINGDOM OF TONGA MISSION
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

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OF THE

KINGDOM OF TONGA

AT THE

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Check Against Delivery

Mr President,
Mr Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

May I firstly take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the General Assembly. Let me also reassure you of Tonga's support and every confidence that the 60th Session of the General Assembly will be fruitful and successful under your very able leadership.

I would also like to give due recognition to the sterling work of your predecessor, HE Mr Jean Ping, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation of Gabon during the 59th Session of the General Assembly.

I join others in also commending the Secretary General of the United Nations, HE Mr Kofi Anan for his leadership of our Organisation.

Mr President

As we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of our Institution, we can pause and reflect on where we are, and on the basis of our experience in the past and the opportunities available for us in the future, chart a roadmap that will ensure that we the Member States of the United Nations deliver on our commitments to the purposes and principles of the Charter and international law, which are indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous, and just world. Tonga joins the concerns voiced by several other delegations that business cannot proceed as usual, as this will continue to defray the role and relevancy of our Organisation and the important place of multilateralism in accomplishing its aims.

Mr President

The Secretary General's High Level Panel indeed delivered the landmark report expected of it. The Panel's far reaching findings and recommendations laid a firm foundation for what our Foreign Minister described last year, as "constructive engagement." Tonga remains optimistic that the level and intensity of engagement between Member States can still produce a lasting legacy of improvement and necessary changes for our organization and its important work.

Mr President

Last Friday, Heads of States and Heads of Government at the conclusion of the historical High Level Summit, adopted the Outcomes Document which provides multilateral solutions to the problems in development; peace and collective security, human rights and the rule of law and strengthening of the United Nations. The baton has now been passed on to us to begin the implementation phase of the outcome of the Summit, and we need to rise up to the challenge to make good on our promises.

Mr President

The development Agenda remains as the first priority for small island developing countries including Tonga. We have accumulated over three decades of experience in national and integrated regional development planning and have therefore fully embraced our primary responsibility for our own development. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals has been incorporated as a component of our wider development efforts.

The financing of these development programmes however continues to be dependent on overseas development assistance at bilateral and multilateral level as well as through concessionary loans from regional and international financial institutions.

In this regard, we welcome the proposed increased resources that will become available as a result of the establishment of timetables by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for ODA by 2015. By the same token, we must congratulate those countries who have already fulfilled their commitment in meeting the required target. The recent efforts and initiatives to enhance the quality of aid and to increase its impact including the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness are also a welcomed step.

Overseas Development Assistance while necessary, will not be sufficient on its own, and would have to be complemented by the active promotion of Foreign Direct Investment, improving trade access and effective development partnership.

Mr President

The Outcomes Document highlights that one of the critical challenges to economic growth is to ensure the necessary internal conditions are put in place for mobilizing domestic savings.

Tonga has since 2002 embarked on a Public Sector and Economic Reform Programme. To date several important pieces of legislation have been enacted through the Legislative Assembly including the Public Finance Act 2002 to modernize the way Government manages its finances and includes more transparency; the Public Service Act 2002 to modernize employment and remuneration methods and the Public Enterprise Act 2002 to provide for increased accountability by Public Enterprises. A programme of reform of Tonga's system of taxation is also underway to bring it into conformity with international norms and bilateral and multilateral obligations.

Mr President

Tonga welcomes the recognition in the Outcomes Document of the Special needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing states and the commitment to addressing these needs and vulnerabilities through the full and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy adopted by the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and the Barbados Programme of action.

Energy continues to play a crucial role in Tonga's sustainable development strategies and maintaining a fine balance between energy, environment and the economy is a national priority.

Tonga's increasing reliance on imported petroleum products to satisfy its energy needs means that it is particularly vulnerable to external events that affect the price and availability of petroleum products. In this regard, Tonga reiterates its concern on the continuing escalation in the price of oil and its negative impact on the economy. Concerted efforts will have to focus on research and development into alternative sources of energy.

Mr President

Tonga recognizes the need to promote gender equity with the implementation of the National Policy on Gender and Development which was approved in 2001.

Mr President

Remittances are a welcome source of foreign exchange, and Tonga is recorded as one the countries most dependent on remittances where they amount to 39% of GDP. We therefore acknowledge the important nexus between international migration and development and the need to deal with the challenge and opportunities that migration presents to countries of origin, destination and transit. We also look forward to the General Assembly's high level dialogue on international migration and development to be held in 2006.

Mr President

We join others who have voiced their regret at the failure of the 2005 Nuclear Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, and reiterate the importance of implementation of the three pillars of the Non Proliferation Treaty.

Mr President

Tonga support the call to establish the mandate, modalities, functions, size, composition, membership, working methods and procedures for the new Human Rights Council as soon as possible during the 60th Session of the General Assembly.

We fully recognize that Post Conflict Peace building is vital to achieving sustainable peace, and support the establishment of a Peace Building Commission by the end of 2005.

We strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purpose, as it constitutes one of the most serious threats of international peace and security. We also look forward to the successful conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism during the 60th Session of the General Assembly.

Tonga continues to support the work of the Counter Terrorism Committee and has progressed well into the drafting of legislation to put into domestic effect all of the 12 counter terrorism Conventions to which we have acceded to.

Mr President

We applaud the efforts and proposal for a comprehensive package of reforms to revitalize the General Assembly as well as the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council in order to fulfill mandate as envisaged by the Charter. We also support the ongoing work of the Secretary General to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Secretariat.

Perhaps one of the more intense engagements amongst our membership has been that surrounding the reform of the Security Council. Tonga maintains its support of Japan's proper and permanent place on any enhanced Council. The emergence, in particular, of prospective permanent members and novel ideas on criteria has made the continued engagement on this issue one that is all the more deserving of further patience, poise and pragmatism. However, momentum and advances on readily agreeable aspects of our reform agenda should proceed to fruition.

Mr President

The ever changing landscape of the Middle East continues, in recent times, to inspire glimpses of hopeful signs that suggest an enduring peace is possible. Genuine gestures, like that in Gaza, by Israel and the Palestinian Authority offer a platform upon which mutual borders, side by side, might be secured, on the one hand, and upon which statehood might flourish, on the other.

Mr President

Regional Organizations play an important role in supporting and complementing the interests of member countries in various fields, and Tonga acknowledges the role of the Pacific Island Forum in this regard.

At a regional level, Tonga is fully committed to its obligations in ensuring peace in the region, and continues to support the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands with the third deployment by the Tonga Defence Services currently in operation in the Solomon Islands.

The Pacific Plan which was articulated by our Pacific Forum Leaders for the realization of their vision through deeper and stronger regional cooperation and integration in the areas of economic growth, social development, security and environmental protection will be tabled for consideration by Leaders in October of this year.

Tonga therefore welcomes the call for support of a stronger relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations.

Mr President

The Kingdom continues to observe a "one China" policy that recognizes Taiwan as an integral and inalienable part of China. An essential component of that policy properly acknowledges that common and mutual issues are ideally left to the "Across the Strait" dialogue framework as opposed to any multilateral for a (however well inclined).

Tonga further continues to develop and strengthen its "Look East" policy in particular with China. Earlier this year, the Kingdom established a diplomatic presence in Beijing to give strong voice to its interests and impetus to its exploration and pursuit of mutually relevant and beneficial ventures including tourism, trade, aviation and security.

Mr President

The world is watching us, let us not renege on our commitments and push forward the reforms that are essential to ensure that multilateralism is the most efficient and effective way through which global problems and issues can be addressed.

Thank you and God Bless.