



Statement
by
Honourable Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi
Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa
at the
United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 22 June 2012.

Mr. President,

The Government and people of Brazil had been gracious and generous hosts to my delegation, and for this we are deeply grateful.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Samoa celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence on the first (1st) of this month. As a small island developing state, our national journey to where we are today, and where we will be in the future are symbolic of the spirit and the foundational values that underpinned the Rio Declaration of two decades ago.

Rio holds special significance for small island developing states like mine. It is where our unique and specific vulnerabilities deserving of special case treatment, were given due recognition by the international community.

But Rio means much more than that. It is a multilateral framework for hopeful beginnings, where development in all its dimensions can be sustained in a balanced manner, where the achievement of this goal is dependent on visionary leaders that rise

above the dictates of national interests, where global partnership and burden sharing are the underpinnings of the new relationship, and where every contribution matters, even from the smallest state.

For Samoa, Rio stands for bold and caring leadership, ably supported by strong partnerships where responsibilities are shared, based on one's capacity and ability, and where all efforts are valued and none insignificant.

Mr. President,

Today we will approve the RIO+20 Outcome Document.

It is a stock-take to see whether the aspirations and hopes captured in the Rio Declaration had been realized. The verdict is already out. The scorecard is uneven. And the stakeholders' reactions are varied. Some feel satisfied, while others feel betrayed. Critics see the Document as lacking in ambitions and selective in its coverage, while supporters hail it as an important breakthrough in tune with today's challenges and realities. Still, some lament it, as yet another missed opportunity.

Mr. President,

There is never a perfect outcome, and our document was not going to be the first one. Trying to satisfy everyone's wish is an elusive goal and an exercise in futility.

Despite its perceived shortcomings, our Outcome Document gives Samoa a level of comfort to lend its support for its adoption today. In endorsing the document, we are not naïve nor insensitive to those who hold differing views.

For my Government, the real success of our meeting should not be measured in the Outcome Document we will adopt, but rather on how we localize these goals, and implement them with the support and assistance of our development partners. That is the only pathway we can possibly provide the "Future We Want" for our people. Because no matter how ambitious or comprehensive our Outcome document is, if we,

the elected leaders, are not committed to lead and drive our own sustainable development, we risk losing the trust and confidence of our partners, and our own credibility will suffer as a consequence.

Mr. President,

Samoa's economy is agriculturally-based. From experience, uncontrolled farming and agricultural practices not only harm soil quality, but also lagoon fisheries from chemicals and fertilizer residues, that wash down to the coast. Moreover, the clearing of natural vegetation and forestry contributes to the diminishing of carbon sinks, accelerating climate change.

To try and redress the balance in these practices, Samoa is focusing greater attention on organic farming and production, which have the advantages of cultivation in small farm units, low cost, and above all environmentally friendly and economically sustainable.

Organic farming is gaining a strong following in Samoa and across the Pacific. In my country, our Women in Business organization now supplies organic oils to internationally recognized cosmetic brands and outlets. Amongst our women who have championed organics development in Samoa and the region, one of them was the recipient in a ceremony in Washington DC a few weeks ago, of the 2012 Economic Empowerment Award of the International Vital Voices founded by US Secretary of State, The Honourable Hilary Clinton, that recognizes the pivotal contributions of women leaders from around the world. I congratulate the Secretary of State for her farsighted vision.

I have and continue to be privileged to contribute to the development of organic production in Samoa and the Pacific, as Head of Samoa's Organic Steering Committee and Chairman of the High Level Regional Group in Organic Production.

Excellencies,

Energy is the lifeblood that fuels sustainable development. Our dependence on imported fossil fuel is ultimately unsustainable. This is why Samoa is committed to an ambitious renewable energy programme. Samoa is committed to be carbon neutral in its energy sector by 2020, an ambitious ask under prevailing economic circumstances, but one that we are determined to achieve.

Samoa has already taken steps to capitalize on the natural resources we are richly endowed with all year round. The challenges of initial set up costs inevitably require support from development partners for funding. We have also engaged with the private sector in acquiring and application of proven renewable energy technologies.

Mr. President,

The Pacific Ocean covers a third of the earth's surface. It provides our islands with opportunities and challenges and is one natural asset that we have in common. Oceans should therefore be an integral component of any roadmap on the islands sustainable development, as the marine resources and ecosystems are a source of livelihoods and income for our communities, industries and governments.

The prospects of mineral resources in the ocean seabed within EEZs, and in the adjacent high seas offer new prospects in terms of expanded economic resource base for Pacific SIDS.

From our perspective, the conservation and sustainable management of marine and ocean resources should be conditional on our members receiving greater economic returns from the utilization of their marine resources than at present.

It is why we need a stronger global commitment to its sustainable management and development through a "Green Economy in a Blue World".

In closing Mr. President,

Samoa would like to thank our development partners and the United Nations membership for believing and agreeing in the need to review in 2014 the Barbados Programme of Action, and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation; the United Nations frameworks of critical importance to the sustainable development of Small Island developing states.

Coincidentally, 2014 is a significant year for my own Government. It is when we graduate from the category of Least Developed Countries and the first from the Pacific region to do so. While hosting a UN meeting, and especially a global review meeting is a privilege and an honour, and there will be no shortage of capable and interested countries to do so, Samoa has nevertheless made known within AOSIS and our Pacific sub-region, its interest to host this event if given the opportunity.

For us, it is not just hosting a meeting. It will be an honour to share with the rest of the international community a story that can also be replicated elsewhere. It is about the primacy and importance of successful partnerships, which supported Samoa's development progress. Moreover, we want to demonstrate that being a SIDS and an LDC should not discourage poor and vulnerable nations from advancing to achieve economic, social and political progress.

Thank you and Soifua.