

ADDRESS IN THE 49TH PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM
4 September 2018

Your Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I'd like to thank our dear friend President Waqa, and through him, I also want to thank the authorities and people of Nauru for the wonderful welcome extended to us upon our arrival in Yaren.

I also wish to extend my acknowledgment to Mrs. Meg Taylor and her whole team in the Forum General Secretariat for their excellent organization work and the great hospitality that as usual has been offered to us during this important meeting.

I am delighted to represent Cuba in the most important annual meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum. I feel obliged to express my country's support to the slogan that you have chosen for this outstanding event ("Building a strong Pacific: Our Islands, Our People, Our Will"). From the distant Caribbean we strongly and unhesitatingly endorse such slogan.

In 2017, the average temperatures registered around the globe kept breaking records. For more than 33 years in a row the planet has been recording temperatures higher than the historic averages registered. And as if that weren't enough, scientists of NASA warn that in 2018 it will be "as hot as in 2017".

Nevertheless, the rise of global temperatures is just a small part of the whole story. In addition to this, or maybe we should rather say as a result of this, extreme weather and atmospheric events are becoming more and more frequent in the whole world.

Many of us that have gathered here today are still suffering and recovering from the past 2017 Cyclone Season, that devastated both the Pacific and the Caribbean regions, but what could the 2018 season hold for us? Only Tawhiri or God know the answer to this question.

Coping with the effects of climate change is a major priority for our countries, since we are Small Island Developing States. It is true that the State's political will and involvement as the governing body of actions are critical. However, this problem is not just ours; hence, the solution is not only in our hands and demands urgent international pledges and measures. Human kind is faced with the danger of disappearing, unless definitive and immediate action is taken as quickly as possible.

The main obstacle for our Small Island Developing States is in fact underdevelopment, which is the legacy bequeathed by an unjust international economic order, and unsustainable consumption and production models. In these circumstances, it is imperative to establish a fair and open international cooperation, and to transfer resources, technologies and knowledge without the imposition of political conditions, for the purpose of complementing and developing each other's domestic efforts and capabilities.

The Paris Agreement, which is the outcome of more than 10 years of negotiations, is not negotiable and its full implementation must be achieved without delay. If one of the major polluters in the planet makes the unilateral decision of withdrawing from the aforementioned agreement, goes contrary to the spirit of the Talanoa Dialogue, proposes the elimination of meteorological satellites, fails to honor its obligations to the Green Climate Fund, and cuts funding for climate change programs, we are doing really bad.

Your Excellences,

I'd like to reiterate my deep-felt appreciation for the Pacific Islands' unanimous support for the Cuban resolution condemning the US blockade against our small island; this is a genocidal practice that violates international law and the universally accepted rules of international trade. Your vote in favor of this resolution, that we will submit once again to the consideration of the 73th UNGA this year, will be another indication of our nations' claim against the extraterritorial

application of unilateral coercive measures, which undoubtedly entail the infringement of a small island state's right to development.

In spite of the enormous impact of the US blockade on practically every area of my country's life, Cuba has maintained its internationalist vocation and keeps sharing everything it has, not only what it has in excess. In this Forum we annually share our experiences and explore new opportunities for exchange and cooperation.

Cuba has regularly maintained cooperation in the health care sector, through the presence of medical brigades in several countries of the region such as Vanuatu and Kiribati; in the meantime, a Cuba Medical Team made up of fifteen specialists is here in Nauru with us, and already have begins to provide their services. More than 200 Medicine scholarships have been awarded to youngsters from the Pacific Islands and the first 153 students that travelled to Cuba to take medicine have already graduated. At present Cuba is proposing to guarantee the continuity of specialized medical care in these countries, promote exchanges on topics related to disaster prevention and climate change and extend sports cooperation in Fiji and Palau by sending five Cuban baseball and volleyball coaches.

These and other Cuban good practices will always be at the service of the countries that need them. Our country is also willing to share with the region its breakthroughs in the development of biotech products, such as Heberprot-P, which could be of interest for the solution of health problems and diseases that are highly prevalent in the Pacific.

Your Excellences,

During the second semester of last year, we finally opened our embassy in Suva, as a token of Cuba's commitment to the South Pacific. We deeply thank the Fijian government for the support we received throughout this process. Our diplomatic mission there is now in charge of Cuba's relations with the other nations represented in this Forum, including the regional integration mechanisms and this Forum Secretariat. Our ambassador in Suva will prioritize the identification of cooperation projects and the routes to be taken for their execution. This is a commitment derived from our status as Dialogue Partner in this forum meeting, as we fully promote the major interests of small island developing states.

Cuba and the small island developing states share common visions and challenges with regards to the major items on the international agenda, with a greater focus on environmental issues. These challenges can only be tackled through solidary cooperation among our countries, on the basis of mutual respect, selfless help and complementarity. Cuba reiterates its unconditional commitment to furthering the strengthening of its links with the Pacific region and its nations.

Thank you.