

Mr. Secretary General, Fellow Pacific Leaders, Ladies and Gentlemen

My intervention this time would focus on the plight and special cases of atoll nations in the Pacific. These are but a few of our Blue Pacific family bearing the full brunt at the frontline due to ongoing damages relating to sea level rise and which continue with greater frequency and intensity on our coast lines, fresh water lens, root crops, and basic infrastructures such as roads, causeways and sea ports.

These are further exacerbated by the resource and capacity constraints facing these atoll nations that would enable them to attend to these damages in a timely manner. We are all aware as well of the complexity around the climate finances and systems provided by the United Nations and other multilateral financing institutions.

Mr. Secretary General, as you have seen during your recent visit to our region and in particular Tuvalu, coral atolls are flat, low with slender topography, infertile soil and very limited supply of fresh water supporting a limited range of terrestrial flora and fauna. Adaptation measures such as “retreating” and moving uphill are therefore meaningless in the context of atolls and which reiterates the fact of why atolls are at the very frontline of climate change.

In this regard I would like to commend Your Excellency’s support in initiating the Peace Building Fund (PBF) in the amount of \$3 million to response to countries’ call for climate action on climate security issues faced by the Pacific atoll nations and which need to be spent within the next 18 months.

However, it is concerning to note that the progress thus far on implementing the project proposal is one that was based on the three (3) key outputs pre-determined by the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office with limited opportunity for the key recipients to provide inputs. I wish to emphasize that in order for the project’s intent to be successful, it must respond to urgent priorities and resilience needs of the recipient countries that will strengthen their capacity to address security issues.

Our climate security issues means our coastal protection, water security, food security, maritime boundary, and other assets and resources that we depend on for our security, including security for our Young Children. Accordingly, efforts to address these issues, must be implemented utilizing our existing systems and data at the national and regional level to ensure that work on the ground is effective for its intended recipients.

I do hope that the United Nations and all our multilateral partners fully acknowledge the special case of the atoll nations and treat their adaptation needs with a greater sense of priority and urgency. But at the same time address the consultation gap with the intended recipients.