

Tuvalu National Statement for the World Leaders Summit
Honourable Prime Minister Kausea Natano

Mr. President,
Heads of Government,
Leaders,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I first wish to express my profound gratitude to the Government and People of the United Kingdom for the kind hospitality accorded to my delegation.

We are gathered here at the beginning of negotiations for COP26—a COP marked not only by clear evidence of the increasingly dire impacts of climate change and sea level rise but also by a far-flung pandemic that has again and again demonstrated the interconnected nature of our global community. What we do at home reverberates around the world, reminding us of our collective responsibility to address climate change for the well-being of humanity.

This COP must be a COP of action! We must act now to ensure that all States recognize their shared responsibility to protect the global community and to ensure that all States are held accountable for this responsibility. We must lead the charge to develop global norms, practices, and meaningful changes to avoid the most devastating impacts of climate change and sea level rise.

Tuvalu wishes to reaffirm the critical urgency of the climate change crisis facing Pacific SIDS despite our negligible contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. We urge World Leaders to similarly affirm the critical urgency of this crisis. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, declining marine resources, rising food insecurity—these are the alarming and detrimental consequences of climate change—the single greatest threat to our Pacific livelihoods, security, and welfare.

Mr. President,

Despite the call made by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in 2019 through the *Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Action Now* to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, I want to make it plainly clear that, even if all GHG emissions ceased tomorrow, Tuvalu, and other low-lying atoll nations, are sinking and our land is fast disappearing.

Under all current emissions scenarios considered, global surface temperatures will continue to increase until at least the mid-century. Global warming of 1.5°C and 2°C will be exceeded during

the 21st century unless deep reductions in emissions occur today. Right now, 40% of the central district of Tuvalu's capital Funafuti is already below sea level at highest tide measures. These are not predicted, future measures; this is the reality we are living with today. We cannot wait; we must make bold decisions and take firm action to secure our future.

Mr. President,

We must conclude negotiations on the Paris Rulebook and safeguard the integrity of the Paris Agreement by stopping measures that will stall progress on its objectives.

We therefore urge global major emitters to commit to stronger climate action and to formulate mid-century long-term low emissions development strategies. The success of this COP depends entirely on the commitment of you, the global major emitters, and your readiness to help. The least developed countries and small island developing states are looking to you for you have the means to help and the moral responsibility to do so. Furthermore, you have the technology and the resources to save us.

Mr. President,

I travelled thousands of miles and through many transit points over 4 days to be here because I trust and have faith in international cooperation and multilateralism. For losing faith and trust is to accept the total demise of my country to sea level rise.

My country has an average land elevation of 1.9 meters above sea level. The science is predicting our total submersion due to sea level rise within this century. This is a fate not unique to Tuvalu but similar to that predicted for other atoll nations and low-lying coastal areas supporting millions of lives and livelihoods.

Mr. President,

I have faith in our collective humanity and our ability to achieve global solidarity to undertake urgent climate change action NOW so that my country, Tuvalu, can have time to adapt and save ourselves. I am not asking for anything new. What I am asking for is what the Paris Agreement is demanding from the international community, and particularly, from those of us who have the capacity and the resources to contribute to global efforts to curb climate change.

Mr. President,

Global solidarity is central to addressing the climate crisis for the climate crisis is a global problem. Climate change is the greatest challenge of our time. It is wreaking havoc everywhere. Places that were once considered safe are no longer so. But climate impacts are only increasing in frequency and severity. Are we content to create for our children and their children a future of constant fear

and uncertainty? A future replete with conflict as climate impacts exacerbate social tensions? None of us, as responsible leaders, would want that for our youth and our future generations.

Mr. President,

Let us bring ourselves closer to the problem. As a global family, it is time that we own the problem. So together, let us take a human right-centered approach to the climate crisis. Let us focus on saving lives and livelihoods while we still have the slightest bit of time on our side. We can always recover from financial crises, including those caused by pandemics, and we have demonstrated that. But these are nothing compared to the economic costs we face when the social fabric of societies is torn asunder as lands become uninhabitable resulting in uncontrolled migration and widespread forced climate displacement.

In Tuvalu, we are already living the future impacts of climate change now. Consequently, soft adaptation approaches, such as nature-based solutions, help, but, at 1.9 meters above sea level, they will not save Tuvalu from sea level rise. Tuvalu urgently needs adaptation measures based on building physical infrastructure to save ourselves. We are investing in building raised reclamation lands to preserve our physical existence as a viable state. This is our utmost priority now. There is no point in investing in soft and piecemeal adaptation measures when we are losing our land territory at an alarming rate.

Easy access to adequate and predictable climate finance is critical and we urge developed economies to raise their commitments under the Paris Agreement to mobilize US\$100 billion for climate finance and constructively discuss a new finance goal for post 2025 that takes its floor at US\$100 billion and that is based on science. Beyond this, we must also strive to bring climate finance into the development paradigm. We must recognize that the finance needs of developing countries are much higher than what is being provided and mobilized and ensure that climate finance is clearly defined to guarantee that it is effective and meets the needs of all LDCs and Pacific SIDS.

Tuvalu appreciates the funding assistance it has received to mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis and sincerely hopes to strengthen genuine and durable partnerships with our development partners. However, we must dismantle our current thinking about climate finance and rebuild our approach. Adaptation must be country led, efficient, and unencumbered. We can no longer adhere to strict rules and controls that leave climate finance beyond our reach and that stop us from pursuing bold, long-term adaptation priorities.

Targeted and appropriate capacity building and enhanced access to and transfer of the most viable and applicable technology is also critical for SIDS, and more attention must be paid to the technology and capacity needs of these countries.

Too often, medium and long-term adaptation finance and implementation have been left to the private sector to handle. Private sector support is critical and should be enhanced, but it should not overshadow the important resources that can be offered through international public finance. We must mobilize large-scale adaptation financing now—financing that is not delayed by COVID-19; that prioritizes the most vulnerable; and that is sourced through the Markets Mechanism and delivered through public and grant-based financing, rather than loans. Our success as Pacific SIDS depends on this. We must cooperate to conclude Article 6 negotiations and finalize an Article 6 that delivers substantial overall mitigation in global emissions, as well as substantial financial resources to assist vulnerable developing countries in meeting the costs of adaptation.

Mr. President,

However we adapt to cope with the increasing devastation of climate change and sea level rise, for some of us, the capacity to adapt is waning, for technical and financial reasons. Consequently, we will bear the burden of significant costs due to loss and damage even at safer temperature levels. Therefore, we call on all parties to cooperate and conclude the Warsaw International Mechanism and the work of the Santiago Network.

We cannot allow the reallocation of adaptation funding to address loss and damage. We require stronger guidance on loss and damage financing, and we must develop new financing mechanisms or funding windows for loss and damage. This would include consideration of the impacts of climate change on fisheries as part of loss and damage under slow onset events.

Mr. President,

The existential threat of climate change and sea level rise has strengthened our resolve to preserve our statehood and sovereignty. In this respect, we have embarked on international discussion on legal mechanisms that can recognize our maritime boundaries and assets as permanent despite the impacts of sea level rise. We must also ensure that legal mechanisms are in place to protect the cultures, languages, and heritages of nations like Tuvalu, including through digitization and building mobile digital nations.

We must uphold domestic, regional, and international endeavors to this effect, such as the *Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea-Level Rise*. This regional declaration was endorsed by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders this year and seeks to ensure that Forum Members' maritime zones cannot be challenged or reduced as a result of climate change-related sea-level rise.

In the midst of COP26, we signed an agreement with the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda to establish a Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law. The Commission is authorized to request advisory opinions from the International Tribunal for the Law

of the Sea (ITLOS) on the legal responsibility of States for carbon emissions, marine pollution, and rising sea levels. We must support initiatives of this nature to develop and implement fair and just global and environmental norms and practices, including compensation for loss and damage.

Mr. President,

The impacts of climate change are affecting the entire world including the Republic of China (Taiwan), and Taiwan continues to effectively contribute to global efforts in combating the impacts of climate change through renewable energy innovations, national policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and providing support for countries like Tuvalu that are at the forefront of climate change. To truly and fully address the impacts of climate change, we must welcome the meaningful participation of Taiwan in the activities of the UNFCCC.

For atoll nations, the ravages of sea level rise will defeat all of our efforts and development gains with regard to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Current global mitigation commitments and promises will not save us. For atoll nations like Tuvalu, we urgently require the means to build raised reclamation land to save ourselves. All other adaptation measures are secondary and should come only after we have secured the continued physical existence of our land territory despite the effects of sea level rise.

Before I leave COP26, I was honored to be given this scarf just yesterday – a gift from the Aboriginal people of Australia. It displays the colors of global warming with the strong message to “stay safe in the blue areas” and I wear it today for Them and our People as well.

Thank you, Fakafetai Lasi, and may God Bless Us All.