



KINGDOM OF TONGA

STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OF THE

KINGDOM OF TONGA

AT THE

**59th SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 28th 2004

Check against delivery

Mr. President,

I congratulate you on your presidency of the 59th session of the General Assembly and know that with your vast experience we are in excellent hands. I should also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, for his excellent stewardship of the 58th session of the General Assembly. He called for a proactive Assembly and ably steered us on this course from the outset.

The 10 Year Review of the Barbados Plan of Action (BPOA+10)

Mr. President,

We are enthusiastic at the forthcoming ten year review of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA+10) as an extension and implementation of the commitments agreed to in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation - in particular – its Chapter VII. Whilst the developmental path to Mauritius in January 2005 has been fraught with its own challenges, it is critical to Small Island Developing States that the impetus for this important global review is not lost in its own rhetoric. It is paramount that the outcome(s) from Mauritius be refined and focused on translating the oft quoted "special case" of SIDS into firm and timely support and global implementation. As such, participation by all Member States in both the forthcoming preparatory process next month and in the substantive International Meeting in Mauritius next year is essential to realizing our developmental aspirations.

While the Bahamas Strategy document contains a range of SIDS priorities as endorsed by the Alliance of Small Island States and by the G77 and China, it is worth noting that the geographical make up of Small Island States puts some of our islands at a disadvantage. This is because economic development has focused on larger islands with a large population and so they enjoy a higher per capita than do other islands of the country. That is true of Tonga where the main focus of development has been devoted to the larger islands of the three main island groups but within each of these three groups other islands need further economic development. Three remote islands to the north, known as the Nivas, are disadvantaged by the "tyranny of distance" and are in fact in closer proximity to Samoa than they are to the main island of Tongatapu; the outlying islands of the Vava'u and Ha'apai groups are less developed than their main islands; while to the south of Tongatapu the Island of `Eua has potential but needs targeted inputs. Australia, the EU, Japan, New Zealand are the designated core donors to these islands but to develop them further they will need additional or new resources. So it is my hope, Mr. President, that in the review of the BPOA some thought is given to the lot of those living on these disadvantaged islands that vary from low atolls to volcanic islands, disadvantaged by remoteness, susceptible to the whims of hurricanes and to the climate change phenomenon.

Oceans and Law of the Sea

Mr. President,

All Pacific Island States take a keen interest in the preservation of the living and non-living resources of the Pacific Ocean. It is altogether right that the Pacific should be concerned about the proper conservation and management of its resources so as to avoid their over-exploitation.

As a developing ocean State, we are vigilant about progress in oceans affairs and the law of the sea issues. We consider the valuable contribution by the meeting of States Parties to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its subsidiary bodies – in particular – the achievements of the International Seabed Authority to whose mandate should be added a research function and the work of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf worthy of mention. Together with the important role of the UN Informal Consultative Process (UNICPOLOS) this sets a firm and practical platform for our work during this session.

I am happy to note that the third informal meeting of States Parties to the UN Fish Stock Agreement has seen firm commitments by certain States Parties to enable the implementation and concrete operation of elements of Part VII of the Agreement with special emphasis and relevance to SIDS. We continue to encourage other Member States to become a party to the Agreement.

From a regional perspective, we are particularly pleased that the Convention for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean has entered into force earlier this year. We consider this special milestone worthy of note in the Assembly's work.

Terrorism

Wanton acts of terrorism continue to test our fortitude as members of the international community. We must remain collectively resolute in our resolve to prevent and vigorously combat the proponents of this evil. And we must be innovative and versatile in our pursuit of meaningful counter measures and lasting solutions.

We continue to strongly support the work of the Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC) and applaud the recent revitalization of the CTC and its work. Security Council resolution 1373 remains the basis of domestic measures implemented by my Government including the submission of country and where appropriate, regional reports. It is useful to identify areas where financial and technical assistance is necessary to enable stronger compliance by all States in meeting their international obligations. Reporting requirements of the CTC and of other organs of the UN is an onerous responsibility on Small Island States and so the option of regional reporting by regional organization might give these Small Island administrations some respite.

World Trade Organization

Mr. President,

After eight years of negotiations, Tonga's accession to the WTO is at the final stages. Bilateral Market Access Agreements on Goods and Services has been concluded with key WTO members such as Australia, Canada, the EU, Japan, New Zealand, and Panama. Agreement with the United States is outstanding as it has requested that Tonga become a party to the Chemical Harmonization Agreement as well as the Information Technology Agreement. Although we consider the request an additional burden on us we do understand that the United States is requesting the same commitments from every acceding country irrespective of its size and stage of development. The Working Group Report has been discussed at informal working parties and so it gives rise to cautious optimism that we could conclude the process before the 2005 Ministerial meeting.

Tonga needs the understanding and the support of the WTO members as we seek commitments commensurate with the size of our economy and the stage of our development. To be sure, Tonga is not seeking greater market access but desires security for its trade, under a rule based multilateral trading system.

Asia

Mr. President,

Tonga adheres strictly to the "one China" policy and recognizes that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. We welcome the shared principle of non-interference in each others internal affairs and, as such, we consider that delicate and sensitive issues are best dealt with in an Across the Strait dialogue rather than at international forums.

We welcome the expanding cooperation with China and recognize that her huge market provides trade, commercial, investment, tourism and other possibilities for us and, to that end, Tonga has adopted a "Look East" policy. To give effect to its interests in China, Tonga will soon establish a diplomatic presence in Beijing to explore further these interests.

It also takes account of established trade ties which we have with Japan. For a decade now, we have exported our squash produce to Japan and more recently we are exporting specially cultivated seaweed to their markets. It is proper that we now explore further forms of cooperation with Japan in the field of fishery, trade in other produce, financial and investment possibilities as well as education and training. To pursue these interests, we are giving thought to the possibility of a presence in Tokyo although such a presence will necessarily be determined by the financial resources available to us.

The policy does not supplant the long existing warm ties of friendship we enjoy with Australia, New Zealand, France and the United States in the Pacific region as these friendly ties and broad range of cooperation is firmly rooted in our policy.

Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI)

Mr. President,

My Government has recently approved the fourth deployment later in the year of Police Officers and non-commissioned officers to the Solomon Islands under the auspices of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands. In like terms, our Defence Board has also approved the deployment of a contingent from the Tonga Defence Services for the second half of next year in concert with the agreed rotation formula under RAMSI. That would then be the third deployment by the Tonga Defence Services under the RAMSI programme.

Security Council Reform

Mr. President,

We all look forward to the report of the High Level Panel established by the Secretary General to examine and "to recommend clear and practical measures for ensuring effective action based on their analysis of future threats to peace and security." Judging from the makeup of the High Level Panel and their formidable credentials, I should think the report itself and their recommendations will set the tone for the constructive engagement of the Assembly.

As we have stated previously, we believe that the membership of the Security Council ought to be expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent seats in a manner and form commensurate with the needs of today and tomorrow, and also in keeping with the principle of equitable geographical distribution. We believe that Japan ought to have permanent seat from the Asian Group and that a permanent seat should be allocated to Africa and another to Latin America. The expansion of non-permanent seats should take into account the interest and composition of the regional groupings and also the aspirations of Small Islands Developing States.

UN Peacekeeping Operations

Mr. President,

Five years ago Tonga was admitted to the United Nations and although we have actively participated in the activities of the United Nations, it is only recently that we have given serious thought to contributing to the peacekeeping efforts of the organization. Consequently, my Government has approved a proposal to deploy military and police personnel to the United Nations peacekeeping efforts. The precise arrangement for their deployment will soon be subject to discussion between

our senior Defence and Police Officers with the appropriate officers in the Department of Peacekeeping of the United Nations. Needless to say, the size of our deployment will be fashioned by our available manpower and financial capacity.

The Middle East

Mr. President,

Although violence renders an enduring peace elusive, we continue to harbour hopes that a lasting peace can soon be concluded so that a Palestinian State can be established living side by side with the State of Israel in internationally recognized border and in peace and security.

Donor Partners

Mr. President,

Our development has been made possible through domestic resources and also through bilateral and multilateral programmes of assistance and all of which have been highly appreciated. Our major donor partners have been Australia, China, the EU (with some member States such as Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Ireland, Italy and the United Kingdom providing additional assistance), Japan, and New Zealand. The United States provides assistance through its Fishery Treaty with the Pacific region and through other avenues. In recent times, India, Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia have provided technical assistance. The UNDP, GEF, UNEP, UNAIDS, WHO, the Global Fund, the World Bank and other financial institutions have also provided various forms of assistance and technical expertise. Much of the technical assistance is channeled to combating diabetes, tuberculosis and preventing the spread of the HIV/AIDS scourge, other assistance has been directed at meeting our MDGs and for small community programmes and projects.

I thank you Mr. President.