



STATEMENT BY

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DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE 62ND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr President, Mr Secretary General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, I offer my congratulations to you on your election to the Presidency of this august assembly. Let me assure you of the Kingdom of Tonga's cooperation, and every confidence that the 62nd Session of the General Assembly will be productive and successful under your very able leadership. I wish to also commend Her Excellency Sheikha Rashed Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain for her dedication in guiding the work of the 61st Session of the General Assembly.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate the new Secretary General, HE Mr Ban Ki-moon and re-assure him of Tonga's support during his tenure in office.

Mr President, as the United Nations advances well into its 62nd year, we can ask ourselves how we have fared in the stewardship of our world. As we are weighed in the balances, have we passed or found wanting. The plethora of outstanding issues, unfulfilled commitments, new and evolving global challenges however reaffirms the relevance of the United Nations as the only multilateral institution that can appropriately deal with these complex global issues.

Mr President, the year 2007 marks the half-way mark towards the Millennium Development Goals which world Leaders endorsed as a roadmap to a better world by the year 2015. You rightly observed that "Achieving the MDGs is not solely a test of our ability to deliver on our promises: it is above all a test of our moral obligations, and the values that are enshrined in the Charter."

The process of annual Ministerial review of the progress in the implementation of development goals and targets which commenced this year provides us with a tool to gauge progress at a national level, and bring to focus outstanding issues to be addressed, as well as highlighting positive experiences and best practice which can be replicated by the member States. In addition your proposal to hold a MDGs Leaders Meeting during the 62nd Session is welcomed.

Mr President, any meaningful discussion of the MDGS cannot be made without also referring to the "financing for development". Since the landmark agreement endorsed in Monterrey in 1992, the scorecard have been mixed. While considerable advances were made in some areas, stagnation or retrogression were experienced in others. One such area is the fulfillment of commitments by developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for Overseas Development Assistance by 2015. Tonga join others in calling on donor countries that have not fulfilled their obligations to recommit to meeting the targets by 2015.

Tonga also looks forward to a positive outcome in the forthcoming High Level Dialogue on Financing for Development later this month, in the lead up to the International Conference in Doha, Qatar in 2008.

Mr President, Tonga has emphasized at other foras that in order to realize the MDGs, it is also imperative that affordable, clean and efficient energy are available to all through improved access to reliable and affordable energy services. Technical and financial support however is required to ensure that the poor derive tangible benefits from public investments in the energy sector.

Mr President, the theme you have selected for the General Debate entitled “Responding to Climate Change” is of particular relevance to small island developing countries including Tonga. Climate change is not regarded just an “environmental issue”, since it has implications for economic growth, sustainable development and the achievement of the MDGs.

Tonga commends the Secretary General for his laudable initiative to hold the recent High Level Dialogue, which has infused political momentum and set the stage for the Bali Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2007.

Tonga supports the view that “negotiations must be advanced towards a global and comprehensive agreement on a post 2010 framework to limit global emissions to avoid dangerous climate change.” It is important that this process must also be completed by 2009.

Tonga further supports the position that the essential parameters of such a global framework should include (i) enhanced leadership by the industrialized countries on emission reductions; (ii) incentives for developing countries to act but without sacrificing economic growth, poverty reduction, and fully consistent with the principle of common but differential responsibilities; (iii) significantly increased support for adaptation in developing countries especially LDCs and SIDS; and (iv) strengthened technology development and dissemination and with new approaches for financing, including better use of market based approaches.

Mr President, The threat of terrorism continues to be real and a complex global issue. Following the adoption of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in September 2006, its test of success will only be guaranteed if it is fully implemented.

Tonga looks forward to the positive progress leading to the finalization of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism during the 62nd Session of the General Assembly.

Mr President, in regards to peacekeeping operations, we are all witnessing a surge in the demand for peace operations with over 100,000 personnel currently serving in the field. It is also projected that there will be further increase in numbers as new and expanded missions are approved. This development will certainly provide a major operational challenge to the institution. Tonga remains committed to support international and regional peacekeeping efforts, and commends the contributions of the United Nations peacekeepers in fulfilling its role in helping parties to end hostilities.

Mr President, Tonga supports ongoing work on the reform agenda of the United Nations, and commends the commitment by the Secretary General to “breathe new life and inject renewed confidence into a strengthened UN firmly anchored in the 21st century, and which is effective, efficient, coherent and accountable.”

On the outstanding issue of the reform of the Security Council, we need to remind ourselves of our commitment in the 2005 World Summit Outcome for an early reform of the Security Council. Tonga looks forward to the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations in

anticipation that this process will provide the necessary impetus for decisive action to bring closure on this issue.

Mr President, on the question of Taiwan, Tonga is of the view that maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States and non-interference in internal affairs of Member States is one of the cardinal principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Tonga continues to observe the one China policy that recognizes Taiwan as an integral part of China.

Mr President, Regional integration and cooperation is vital for small island developing countries of the Pacific in view of their remoteness, small size, and narrow economic base. The Pacific Plan which is currently in its second year of implementation focuses on four overlapping pillars including economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security. Coordination of activities at a national, regional and international level will ensure that scarce resources will be deployed efficiently and effectively. In this regard, Tonga commends the Secretary General for attaching importance to strengthening United Nations Cooperation with regional organizations.

Tonga continues to give support for the process of regional cooperation, and looks forward to hosting the 38th Annual Pacific Leaders Forum in Nuku'alofa later this month.

Mr President, after ten years of negotiations, the World Trade Organisation welcomed Tonga on the 27th July 2007 as the 151st member of the organization. As a small island developing nation, there are many challenges and obstacles to gaining full benefit from the global trading system including productive capacity and infrastructure. It is therefore imperative that the DOHA development Round negotiations are concluded expeditiously, with a meaningful development package including the elimination of all export subsidies, improved market access and enhancing special and differentiated treatment.

Last year, we urged the donor community to move forward with the delivery of "aid for trade" independent of the Doha Round. In this regard, we wish to commend our donor partners for the effort to improve the delivery of "aid for trade" in Asia and the Pacific to ensure that countries take full advantage of open global markets, in the lead up to the WTO Global Aid for Trade Review which will be held later this year.

Mr President, Tonga continues to advocate for "Labour Mobility" as a vehicle for achieving its pro-poor strategies. Earlier this year the New Zealand Government instituted a "seasonal labour program" for agricultural workers from "five kick start countries" in the Pacific including Tonga. We view this as an important and positive first step towards wider acceptance of this type of model by developed countries as an option to resolving seasonal labour shortage.

The Legislative Assembly this year passed a law which allows dual citizenship. The new laws gives due recognition to the large number of Tongans residing overseas, and their significant contribution to the economy, as well as their desire to still have links with their homeland,

Mr President, last year at this podium, we provided a brief synopsis of the state of play in the “process leading to greater democratization of Tonga’s political system.” Regrettably while the report of the “National Committee on Political Reform” was being deliberated upon by the Legislative Assembly, the supporters for one of the three models of reform rioted, burned and destroyed 80% of the central business district which resulted in the loss of eight lives. In a matter of a few hours, the tally of the damage incurred equated to a loss of 20% of the GDP. A state of emergency was subsequently declared by Government initially for a one month period, but has by necessity been continuously extended to prevent any further civil disturbance.

In our hour of need, Tonga sought the support of her neighbours, New Zealand and Australia to assist local police establish order. Our neighbours responded promptly and appropriately with the deployment of military and police personnel. Within a period of two weeks, the role played by our friendly neighbours was successfully concluded and the Tonga Defence Services and the Tonga Police Force continued to provide security for the country.

A reconstruction committee under my chairmanship is coordinating the Reconstruction of the Nuku’alofa Township. Government is fully committed to bring all of the perpetrators of this horrendous event to full accountability for their actions, and the court cases are ongoing. At the same time efforts are being progressed on a process of “National Reconciliation.”

A Tripartite Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly was also established to review the political reform agenda. The report of the Tripartite Committee was recently tabled to the Legislative Assembly where a timetable was approved for implementation of the political reform by 2010.

Tonga seeks the understanding and support of the international community as it continues with the healing of the wounds through the national reconciliation process; rebuilding of the central business district, as well as the transitions into a more democratic political system that is relevant to the economic, social and cultural architecture of the nation.

Mr President, it has been emphasized time and again that what is needed in the United Nations is to close the gap between rhetoric and actions. There has been a lot of rhetoric and commitments but the world will not judge us on rhetoric. The world will judge us on outputs, and on what we deliver. Let us face up our responsibility and fulfill our promises so as to equate rhetoric to actions, and show the people whose lives that will be impacted by the decisions we make in this hall that we can be trusted to deal effectively with the global issues that require global solutions.

Thank you and God Bless.