

SAMOA



STATEMENT BY

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AT THE

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON THE MIDTERM
COMPREHENSIVE GLOBAL REVIEW OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION
FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES
FOR THE DECADE 2001-2010**

New York, 18 September 2006

Please ~~celebrate~~ celebrate against

Madame President

Samoa warmly congratulates you on the assumption of the Presidency of this High Level meeting to review the implementation of the Brussels Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries and of the 61 session of the General Assembly.

I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor President Jan Eliasson for his sterling leadership in the 60th session.

Madame President

Our gathering here today illustrates our collective commitment to address the plight of the Least Developed Countries; to lift them out of poverty, to continue to provide the much needed development assistance and to forge the way forward through the prisms of sustainable global partnerships. The Brussels Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001 to 2010 suitably provides the overarching development framework for this partnership between the LDCs and their development partners.

Five years on, this mid term review provides us the excellent opportunity to comprehensively appraise how far we have progressed in the implementation of the Plan. It is a time to critically reflect on our national, regional and global efforts to shift our countries out of poverty and be active players in this era of globalisation. Also, it is incumbent upon us to identify remaining challenges and to formulate appropriate recommendations to achieve the full, and effective implementation of the Plan.

Madame President

Samoa has consistently been a part of this review process since 2000 through the submission of its annual reports and participation in regional reviews and ministerial high level consultations. I would like to thank at this juncture the Office of the High Representative of the Least Developed Countries, Land Locked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States *for* coordinating global overviews to track progress of where we are in the implementation of the Plan.

It is unfortunate to note that at the end of this review, it is clear that while much progress **has been achieved** by **many** LDCs in various areas of the seven commitments of the Plan, stagnation is still evident among most of the LDCs. Many challenges remain; some presenting formidable undertakings for a number of LDCs.

We welcome in this regard the elaboration of the Cotonou Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Brussels Program of Action, not only because the Strategy provides the analytical snapshot on the current status of achievements in LDCs, but most importantly the identification of remaining challenges and recommended actions to be undertaken by LDCs in collaboration with development partners.

Madame President

On behalf of my Government and people of Samoa, I would like to acknowledge with appreciation the contributions of our traditional development partners. I am pleased to say that in the case of my country, the partnerships are genuine and needs-focused, actively executed towards national ownership and managed well and in a timely manner in order to achieve aid effectiveness. It is also an integrated participatory process that harnesses the strengths of non government organisations and in particular the private sector, in all facets of development planning. As a least developed country, Samoa is determined to meet the remaining challenges, assured in the knowledge that our partners are with us all the way to provide support whenever needed.

Madame President

Samoa as you are aware is being considered for graduation from the list of LDCs. While this may be a positive reflection in our endeavours to improve the lives of our people, we are concerned that this may be premature and would undermine our achievements to date. The data before the Economic and Social Council indicate that Samoa has performed well in the other two LDC graduation criteria, namely, the Gross National Income and the Human Assets Index. However, the data also shows that Samoa's performance under the Economic Vulnerability Index remains poor and is one of the most economically vulnerable countries in the world.

UNCTAD in its vulnerability profile report of Samoa to the Committee on Development Policy of the Council Samoa's Economic clearly mentions this. The CDP itself acknowledges it. The General Assembly resolution 2004/66 on the smooth transition strategy states that "graduating from the list of least developed countries should not result in a disruption of development plans, programmes and projects". It is therefore imperative in our view that careful consideration be given to the areas of vulnerability to ensure sustainability and robustness of our modest achievements consolidated over the years are able to withstand the impacts of external shocks. I would like to reiterate therefore our request for the General Assembly to favorably consider the deferment of Samoa's graduation from the list of LDCs until Samoa's vulnerability profile meets the threshold level of the Economic Vulnerability Index.

Madame President

Samoa cannot overemphasize the double disadvantage of being a Least Developed Country as well as a very small island developing State and the impact of any adverse events is felt throughout the country. We endure as many cyclones or floods in as many a year. Our dependence on imports, single-product export concentration, limited industries and overseas markets are well known. Our structural vulnerability would continuously generate challenges that have systemic effects on our economy. External shocks including the current oil price hike resound throughout our country impacting on investments, infrastructural development including the daily lives of our people.

Samoa is dependent on a few sources of income such as remittances, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, services and an infinitesimal manufacturing sector. Samoa is extremely vulnerable to climate change. We experienced 16 cyclones in the past 25 years. Immediate effects are the high degrees of economic and social shocks on the agricultural and export sectors, tourism, food security, property and infrastructure that are still felt years after the cyclone.

These vulnerabilities and challenges notwithstanding, our modest achievements to date are primarily a result of the stringent utilization of assistance accrued to Samoa by virtue of its LDC status, and through prudent planning and people-centered financial and economic policies. Largely through our LDC status, Samoa has been fortunate to participate in many regional and international consultations and meetings. Our LDC status has also afforded us many training programmes for capacity building and strengthening. Our financial contributions to many international and regional organizations are only affordable to us because of our LDC status. Loans at concessionary and competitive rates are granted in recognition of this fact.

Samoa's progress and relative success to date belies the extent of our country's true vulnerability to external factors beyond our control (economically and climatically) due to dependence on tourism and remittances. The question of graduation clearly underscores the 'island paradox' that we now find ourselves in.

Madame President

I would like to reassure members of the United Nations that it is not our intention to challenge the graduation criteria. Nor do we challenge the proposal for Samoa to graduate. Rather, I request the General Assembly to look at the reality of a Least Developed Country and a very small island developing State and to carefully consider the areas of vulnerability so that our modest development progress thus

far will not regress. I appeal to Member States' sense of pragmatism and logic to change the graduation rule to make the Economic Vulnerability Index one of the key criteria to be met before graduation from the LDC. Accordingly, on behalf of my Government and people of Samoa, I request that the graduation of Samoa from the list of LDC category be deferred until the issue of economic vulnerability is included as one of the two criteria to be met.

Thank you Madame President.