



The 57th Commission on the Status of Women

**Priority Theme: Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence
against women and girls**

Statement by

The Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Hon Willy Telavi

for

The Pacific Islands Forum

Check against delivery

1. Madam Chair, Excellencies and distinguished delegates.
2. I make this statement on behalf of the member countries¹ of the Pacific Islands Forum and I am honored to be given that responsibility.
3. Madam Chair, I pledge to you the full support and cooperation of our members. With your skilful leadership we are confident that we will arrive at meaningful Agreed Conclusions for all, at the end of the session.
4. Through you, Madam Chair, we thank the United Nations Secretary General for his two key reports under this priority theme. They do provide a sound basis to guide deliberations on this theme.
5. Madam Chair, through you we would like to acknowledge with appreciation the country visits to Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands in March 2012 by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Ms. Rashida Manjoo. We look forward to her full report.
6. We recognize that violence against women and girls and its causes and consequences constitute multiple forms of discrimination and human rights violations. Our members therefore are committed to ending of all forms of violence against women, and agree to the promotion and protection of the full enjoyment of women's human rights; advancement of gender equality; and the empowerment of women and girls in the Pacific region.
7. Despite the vast political, economic, social, cultural and geo-political diversities within and between Pacific communities, and our particular vulnerabilities to natural disasters and climate change; we share the common commitment to addressing violence against women and gender inequality.
8. Madam Chair, gender equality has been and continues to be a key strategic objective of the Pacific Plan². At their annual meeting in 2012, the Pacific Leaders adopted the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, which provides the highest political strategic platform for the intensification of work in the Pacific to support gender equality, including the elimination of violence against women.
9. At the more operational level, the Pacific Platform of Action for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005 – 2015 guide the work of Pacific countries in this area. It provides a Pacific regional context to our commitments made in various

¹ Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

² Is a document designed to strengthen Pacific regional integration and cooperation. Its four key pillars are designed for development progress: economic growth, sustainable development, good governance, and security. As a 'living document', it states that the Pacific, as a region, must work to address these challenges to raise living standards, increase access to opportunity and stimulate pro-poor growth for its peoples

international instruments like the Millennium Development Goals, the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and others.³

10. Madam Chair, we would also like to restate our commitment to core human rights treaties and in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocol noting the overarching framework that it provides in addressing discrimination against women and girls.
11. The Pacific Leaders through the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration call on members to incorporate articles from CEDAW into legislative reforms and policy initiatives across government.
12. We further reaffirm the commitments to protecting our children and in particular the girl child under the Convention on the Rights of the Child which has been ratified by all our member countries. Likewise we are committed to protect women and girls living with disabilities in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
13. Madam Chair, violence affects all aspects of the lives of Pacific women and girls. We therefore acknowledge the need to accelerate regional and national actions to end all forms of violence against women and girls, in all its manifestations despite the context and the setting in which they occurs.
14. There is a need to enact appropriate laws and policies supported through approved budgets. Costing and resourcing the implementation of policies and legislation across all responsible sectors, particularly health, policing, social welfare, justice, education, finance and planning is a necessary step in turning commitments into action.
15. Madam Chair, I now like to share with the Commission some of the key initiatives and actions taken in the Pacific towards the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.
16. Madam Chair, the Pacific has progressed well in terms of the number of national prevalence studies undertaken on violence against women and girls. Studies have been conducted in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, and most recently in Fiji. Further studies are currently underway in Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, Palau, Cook Islands and Nauru. Hopefully by the end of this year 11 Pacific countries would have completed their national studies.
17. With the studies completed, we are very concerned about their findings as they indicate 2 out of 3 women in Pacific countries experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.
18. The studies have also revealed high levels of severe abuse, and strong correlations between childhood and adult experiences of violence signaling the need to address violence in the family much earlier, and to prevent violence from happening in the first place.

³ Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1960

19. We are also concerned about the impact of conditions under situation of armed conflict and political instability which intensify sexual and gender based violence, rape, and sexual assault.
20. The Pacific national prevalence studies have provided the evidence based data that strongly support the need for substantive legislative and policy reforms on violence against women and girls and related services.
21. There are specific domestic violence legislation and related protective measures in place in Palau, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji. Work is in progress in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu in drafting and working towards comprehensive integrated legislation in this area.
22. In the Pacific we also have dedicated regional working groups focusing on specific aspects of gender equality.
23. The Sexual and Gender Based Violence Reference Group assists member countries with their policy and legislative reforms to address sexual and gender based violence.
24. The Regional Working Group on Women Peace and Security assists Pacific Countries and Territories to accelerate implementation of existing international, regional and national commitments on women peace and security under the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.
25. We also acknowledge with gratitude the support of the Australian and New Zealand Governments, who are member countries and key development partners in the Pacific for their continued financial and technical support in this area.
26. Madam Chair, the challenge in the Pacific is obviously the need to operationalize the political commitments through the development at national level of appropriate human rights based policy and legislative frameworks on violence against women and girls. These policies and legislation must be appropriately resourced to ensure their effective implementation.
27. We are also committed to providing an enabling environment so that Pacific women and girls may participate and contribute fully to their community development. This may be achieved through equitable representation in parliament; gender parity curricula which support the equal value of boys and girls in education; safeguarding women's reproductive health, rights to inheritance, access to land, ownership of property, and full economic participation.
28. Madam Chair, the work of the 57th CSW is of particular significance in the context of the global debate on the Post 2015 Development Framework. It is incumbent on us to ensure that the post 2015 Development Framework encapsulate the importance of efforts to end violence against women, as a major contributor to the achievement of sustainable development. We therefore support strongly the call for gender equality to be at the core of the Post 2015 Development Framework.

29. Madam Chair, as we embark on our work and discussions on the Draft Agreed Conclusions, we from the Pacific will like to see some reflection in the Conclusions some of the following key points in our efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls:
- **to further strengthen** the political and financial commitments;
 - **comprehensive, coordinated and multi sectoral** interventions tailored to suit the appropriate local, national and regional circumstances;
 - **comprehensive transformation** of sex and gender stereotypes;
 - **strengthened commitment** to provide access to full, quality, safe and affordable social protection and services to all women and girls, in particular those from disadvantaged groups;
 - **creation of an enabling environment** for the realisation of women's fundamental human rights; and
 - **call for stronger development partner commitment.**
30. We acknowledge the work by civil society groups and networks and their efforts towards re-shaping behaviours and attitudes in eliminating violence against women and girls. We also recognize the important role men and boys play in eliminating violence against women and girls.
31. As a region of mainly small island developing states, we are fully cognizant of our capacity and resource constraints, and our vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change. We therefore call upon the development partners and donor community to support the Pacific region's efforts in strengthening our national systems to allow us to provide comprehensive and coordinated responses to prevention and services.
32. Madam Chair, in concluding I wish to reiterate the appreciation and the value the Pacific countries accord to the work of the Commission in advancing gender equality globally. We wish to register our interest in contributing more to the work of the Commission through participation at its Bureau.
33. I warmly thank you for your time, Madame Chair.

END