

OPENING REMARKS TO PLENARY 6 – PATH TO PARIS AND STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS

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Good morning. It is a pleasure to be with you in Suva, and to join you for this plenary session. I am very much looking forward to listening and learning over the coming days, and to seeing if there is any way I can be helpful to you all in the final run-up to COP21 in Paris.

There are now just over twelve weeks left until COP 21 begins. The international community aims to forge a climate agreement there which will impact on the peoples of the Pacific, as well as peoples everywhere, for decades to come. Today's children and

future generations will judge those who were present in Paris in December 2015, and ask whether they summoned the collective resolve to forge an agreement that puts us on the way to a safe world. It is no exaggeration to say that the very survival of many of the island homes from which some of you have come to Fiji depend on this collective resolve – and you do not need me to tell you why a strong agreement is essential.

The Paris agreement will not emerge automatically. It will emerge as a consequence of the hard work done over many years - but also as a consequence of what happens in the next twelve weeks.

Ensuring that the next twelve weeks are used to help the poorest and most vulnerable people and countries will require knowledge and leadership. This presents an enormous opportunity for the islands of the Pacific and other Small Island Developing States to shape the Paris agreement in a way that will benefit the peoples of the Pacific and peoples everywhere.

When I visited Samoa about a year ago to attend the SIDS conference, I was struck by the leadership on climate change - and on sustainable development more broadly - that is evident from so many of the SIDS. Because of your lived experience, you

understand climate change in a way that few do. You are witnesses to the human impacts of climate change, and know how lives and livelihoods can be damaged, how human rights and development gains can be undermined. You understand issues such as migration and climate adaptation because you are dealing with them today. You understand that climate change impacts more severely on women, but that women are also agents of change in building resilience. You know how hard it is to balance immediate, urgent development needs in areas like health, education and jobs with trying to focus on the long term investment needed for climate resilience and low carbon development.

In short, because of the fact that you are small, yet very much in the frontline of both climate change and climate action, you can make the connections that show how big decisions made in Paris and elsewhere impact on lives everywhere.

So your voice and your leadership matter, your knowledge and your insights are needed.

I hope that this morning's session and the rest of the sessions in this forum will help you to agree a shared strategy for the next

twelve weeks. Over those weeks, work will continue on several fronts, and you have a chance to influence the Paris Agreement for the better on all fronts.

First of all, the actual negotiations will continue. Two days ago, I left Bonn, where the negotiations are continuing on the text of the climate agreement to be reached in Paris. Mahendra will walk us through the status of these negotiations in a few moments so I will not pre-empt that by going into the critical issues. All I will say at this point is that it is highly probable that this week's negotiations in Bonn will conclude with a large number of issues outstanding. In that case, it will be absolutely vital that negotiators are given political guidance to deal with these issues very rapidly, so that the number of issues left for Paris is reduced to a minimum.

Secondly, alongside the detailed negotiations, the French Government is stewarding an informal process where Ministers from across the world seek to find ways to resolve key issues that are emerging from the negotiations. As part of this process, there is an informal Ministerial meeting next Sunday and Monday in Paris to look specifically at climate finance, means of implementation, adaptation and loss-and-damage which are all of vital importance to people in the Pacific and other SIDS.

Thirdly, work is ongoing on the other elements of what many call the Paris aLLIANCE. As you know, this consists of the four pillars that were first set out by French Foreign Minister, Laurent Fabius, who has worked tirelessly over the past year to advance this process. Pillar 1 is the formal negotiating track towards the Paris agreement, which I have just mentioned. Pillar 2 is the INDC process – where INDC stands for Intended Nationally Determined Contributions. As of the last week, 56 countries have formally submitted their INDCs to the UNFCCC, with many more working to submit their INDCs before 1 October so that they will be included in the Synthesis Report to be published by the UNFCCC Secretariat by November 1st. The Synthesis Report will summarise the extent of the gap between the INDCs and the internationally agreed goal to limit global temperature rises. It will be of vital importance to Pacific Islands and SIDS to understand what the gap is expected to be by 2025 or 2030, which are the years to which most countries are forecasting in their INDCs.

Pillar 3 is to address the global finance package that will be needed to advance climate action. I will return to this in more detail in a moment – because it is of make-or-break importance to

success in Paris and it is essential that it receives the attention of Heads of Government.

And finally, Pillar 4 was created to provide a space for non-state actors, in other words those without a formal seat at the UN table. This includes civil society, regions, cities and businesses, and provides them with a platform to come forward and outline how they will contribute to climate action. Over the course of the year, this has been formalized into what is now called the Lima to Paris Action Agenda.

These four pillars form the basic framework for the Road to Paris, and the Paris outcome – and they have been underpinned by significant diplomatic and political efforts. Genuine political leadership is resulting from these efforts. But it is also very clear that despite this leadership, more action and investment is needed to get us onto a pathway to a safe world guided by science.

But crucially over the coming twelve weeks, there will also be a significant increase in the engagement of Heads of State and Government. This Heads of State and Government engagement from all countries is essential - because if the Paris outcome is to

set out an ambitious path to a safe world, it will involve agreeing on a far-reaching vision to transform the global economy that can only be set out by Heads of State and Government.

So I urge you to consider this morning how the Heads of Government of the Pacific can shape the Paris Agreement.

On the one hand you need to ask what do you need for this agreement to enable you to reassure your people? What do you need from Paris to look your citizens in the eye and tell them that a meaningful start has been made to reverse the climate pollution that is causing them to worry for their children and grandchildren?

But as well as this, you have an opportunity to show the world that the countries on the front line of climate change are not just victims, you are also shaping solutions that will be of benefit to people everywhere.

But you can also make it very clear that you cannot do this alone.

Because while the leadership evident here, in other SIDS, in Africa, Asia and elsewhere in the developing world is inspiring,

that leadership can only be effective if it is underpinned by genuine international solidarity.

This international solidarity is not about an old-fashioned vision of aid given as charity from rich to poor. Rather it is an international solidarity built on a collective self-interest which recognises that the nature of climate leadership will be different in different places.

It is clear that rich countries must create zero carbon economies as soon as possible by phasing out their high emissions. This will require strong leadership and tough political decisions and some of them are exhibiting this.

But the world also needs to understand that climate leadership in developing countries can be even more difficult – because you are seeking to develop inclusive, low carbon economies in a way that has never been done before. Unlike today's wealthy countries, many developing countries are not seeking to develop using fossil fuels and then cut, over time, the emissions that result. You are seeking to develop without emissions, when you are simultaneously facing massive costs to deal with the impacts of climate change that are already very real, such as damage to

physical infrastructure and the heart-breaking realities of people being forced to migrate from their homes. And you have to do all this while faced with a whole array of other development challenges that put pressure on scarce finances - such as education and healthcare.

So if international solidarity is to be more than a concept, there are many practical elements which need to be addressed in the next twelve weeks. But among these practical elements, climate finance is a critical catalyst to turn your leadership into action immediately.

There are many who support you in making this point - the Secretary General of the United Nations has repeatedly emphasised the importance of climate finance, and addressing the particular financing concerns of SIDS and Least Developed Countries. The French Government identified finance and support as one of the four key priorities of their COP Presidency. The Germans made it a priority of their G7 Presidency.

All recognise that climate finance – and especially a credible mobilisation of the US\$100 billion per annum of climate finance

for developing countries that was first promised in Copenhagen – is a make or break issue for Paris.

However, talk about US\$100 billion in climate finance can sometimes become an abstract issue about numbers on a page. It becomes a negative conversation about accounting, rather than a positive conversation about supporting leadership, and creating new choices for people.

I suggest that as Heads of State and Government from Small Island Developing States, you are well placed to change this conversation in the few weeks left before Paris. I suggest you can do two things in particular.

First of all, you can articulate how the US\$100 billion can deliver real benefits for people and for the world.

You can make it clear that one day, and hopefully sooner than we realise today, market forces will finally align behind a global low carbon and climate-resilient economy. But our hope that we will one day reach such a world should not blind us to the reality that this is still not the world of today. Today's truth is that the costs of adapting to climate change are prohibitive for many countries.

Low carbon investments are often – though not always - expensive in the short term despite their long term benefits. And as you know well, the financial costs of catastrophic events are enormous and can set economies back years.

You can help to make it clear that these financial realities are not abstract concepts, they have profound impacts on people. Having no choice but to spend money dealing with climate change impacts takes money away from more productive uses. Having no real choice other than to invest in dirty energy because you cannot afford the upfront costs of clean energy damages the health and well-being of everybody. Being unable to protect agricultural land from the impacts of climate change damages farmers' livelihoods and as a consequence, their families' wellbeing and the economy of their community and country. It also puts up the price of food for everybody. Not being able to purchase modern fishing fleets can force fisher-folk to follow unsustainable working patterns which does not help them or their communities.

As political leaders, you can make it clear that climate finance offers the power to change these realities. It is not about numbers

on a page, it is about creating new choices for people. This human reality sometimes gets lost.

And the second area where you can help to make practical progress on this issue is to highlight the practical elements needed to craft a finance package that is relevant to the concerns of SIDS.

At the Financing for Development summit in Addis Ababa in July, many of the specific issues faced by SIDS were raised and acknowledged by the international community. Issues such as debt sustainability, the financing challenges created by achieving middle income status, and the practical challenges in attracting low cost private capital – all of these issues impact on the ability of SIDS to take ambitious climate action. But they are not always fully aired in the conversations about climate finance, despite being issues that would enrich that conversation in a very practical way.

So I urge you to use the next twelve weeks to progress these issues through political leadership and engagement with the French Government and others who are working to create a finance package that works for everyone. One of the reasons I am

here today is to make it clear that I will be happy to work with you on this in any way that will be helpful in the weeks ahead.

It will be key to work together as Heads of State and Government from this region, from other SIDS, and indeed from the developing world more broadly. Broad-based, informed political leadership has the potential to take us a long way in the coming twelve weeks – and there are a number of critical political moments where progress can be made involving Heads of Government and Finance Ministers. The first is the opportunities provided by the SDG summit in September where leaders from most of the world's countries will gather. The second is the IMF/World Bank Annual meeting, where Finance Ministers will address climate change on October 9. The third is CHOGM where Heads of Government from many of the world's SIDS will be present alongside many of the major economies. And then of course there is Paris itself. I urge all political leaders to use these increasingly scarce opportunities to get practical on preparing for a successful outcome from Paris, including a credible financing package for SIDS. Wherever I can be helpful, I will support you in progressing this issue and helping you to make the case with other partners from around the world – and I am confident that there is sufficient

goodwill from the French Government and others to make practical progress in the weeks ahead.

In summary, our global multilateral system exists, in part, to provide a platform for small countries and to support the vulnerable. Over the coming twelve weeks, you should use it.

So let us travel to Paris with a very practical mind-set. There are a lot of people relying on all of us to make the right decisions. I have just spent a wonderful week with my five grand-children back in Ireland. They are young – ranging in ages from just 16 months to 11 years. But they will still be young in 2050, they will only be in their 40s, in fact the youngest will not even be 40. 2050 is not that far away and I wonder what my grand-children and their peers around the world will think of us when they look back on this year. They will share their world with 9 billion other people. What will they think of us? They will ask were we too short-sighted to act to help them and their children? Or did we use the opportunities of 2015 to make a new beginning, take a stand and abandon the climate damage which was causing so much suffering everywhere? We can make the right choice, but we need to work hard in the weeks ahead – so let's forge a way forward and make Paris a success.