

# **CLOSING ADDRESS**

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**Suva September 4, 2015**

**---CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY---**

Once again, thank you for your kind invitation to attend the Pacific Island Development Forum. I have been very pleased to return to the South Pacific - it is just over a year since I attended the SIDS Conference in Samoa where I accompanied the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

While in Samoa, I heard about the pressing realities of climate change that people of the Small Island Developing States are experiencing, but also about the inspiring leadership being exhibited by so many SIDS in the search for solutions.

And over the past few days here in Suva, I have listened again as you have recounted your experiences - about how climate change is threatening human rights, reversing hard-won development gains, and making sustainable livelihoods more difficult in societies that are already vulnerable. I heard of the pressing challenges of migration and the existential threats faced by entire countries, and of your determination to defend your national sovereignty.

I was also struck by how the same messages came through again and again from different groups, and that there was a broadly common understanding of the problem. I was pleased to listen to the views of Heads of Government and Ministers. Yesterday and today, I participated in meetings with civil society. And in all cases, those who were speaking gave the problem a very human face.

The people of this region know that climate change is not some abstract phenomenon understandable only to scientists. You are witnesses to the fact that the most vulnerable countries are already suffering. You see when fresh water is scarcer because it mixes with salt water, and rainwater harvesting is less reliable due to more droughts, cyclones and typhoons. You see when sanitation and hygiene is impacted because of this water scarcity, and when this causes children in particular to suffer. You see, as President Tong said yesterday, that life becomes

harder when the edge of the sea gets nearer to the edge of your home. I heard of how last year, all pregnant women in a hospital in Kiribati had to be evacuated when the sea waves reached the maternity ward. I heard of how schools have had to close more often, sometimes because they are being used as cyclone shelters and sometimes as a result of damage from weather events. These are not scientific abstractions. These are real people's lived experiences.

But as well as hearing of these realities, I have also heard of your determination to be part of the international process to forge an enduring solution to climate change and to reach a meaningful climate agreement in Paris at COP21.

Last year, when I came to the South Pacific, COP 21 was over a year away. I travelled to Samoa directly from Paris, and within 48 hours, I went from meetings convened by President Hollande in the Elysee Palace to the Feleata Sports Complex in Apia.

I was very pleased to participate in the Paris dialogue on climate change and to see first-hand how committed President Hollande, Minister Fabius and the rest of the French Government are to a successful COP21. That commitment has remained steadfast ever since. But the journey to Samoa which followed was as important to me because it symbolised the crucial task facing us all – to connect the concerns and

opportunities of the Small Island Developing States, other developing countries and the entire world with the process towards a meaningful climate agreement in Paris at COP21. It is only by gathering in everybody's concerns, and paying attention to everybody's opportunities, that we will be able to summons the collective global effort that is needed to deal with the climate challenge we face.

Today, we are just over twelve weeks from the start of COP21. Many of us here will soon be making the journey in the other direction - as we travel from the South Pacific to Paris. For me, the symbolism of the connection - between these islands and the place where a new climate agreement will be forged - is as strong today as it was last year.

But as we travel to Paris, we must be about more than just symbolism. As we prepare for the Paris Climate Change Conference, the international community must draw together all the strands of good work that have been done over the past year. Yes, we must build on the positive momentum created to date - but we must also take care not to paper over the issues that remain outstanding and pretend they do not exist. Rather, we must use the next twelve weeks to resolve those issues. I suggest that this can be done across three broad avenues of action.

The first avenue is to support the Parties to the UNFCCC in the negotiations on the climate agreement and the other related elements to support ambitious climate action - this is the bedrock for everything that must happen in the years ahead.

The second avenue is to sustain the global momentum created by progressive citizens, civil society, businesses, communities, cities, regions and countries who are demanding meaningful climate action.

But the third avenue of action, directly related to the first one, is to harness the power of political leadership from all the Parties to the UNFCCC to resolve the critical outstanding issues that will remain before Paris.

This political leadership will be crucial to seizing the opportunities available in the next twelve weeks, and as I said yesterday, the Heads of State and Government of the Pacific, and other Small Island Developing States, have a vital role to play in ensuring that this opportunity is grasped. I urge you to reflect on just how important this moment is, and .

Because despite all the potential for progress in the negotiations that are taking place in Bonn, and all the people power being motivated through the global movement for climate action, ultimately political leaders are needed for this final stage of the road to Paris.

I urge you to use the next twelve weeks to forge a cohesive voice for the people of the Pacific and other SIDS. You can start at the United Nations special session on the Sustainable Development Goals in New York in a few weeks' time. Every Head of State and Government present will speak there – so it will be very powerful if the Pacific SIDS, other SIDS, and those who support you, speak with one voice. As Pacific SIDS, you can draw out the complementarities from the Suva Declaration which you have agreed here, and the outcomes of next week's meeting of the Pacific Island Forum in Port Moresby.

You can build from there to the IMF/World Bank Finance meetings in Lima in October, from there to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Malta in November, and from there to Paris. At all of these meetings, you wield power to make a difference and to highlight the actions necessary for transformative change. The climate leadership of SIDS is well-known and you have many supporters, which is why your continued leadership and engagement are all the more imperative. You speak as the most vulnerable, bearing the brunt of the adverse impacts of climate change. But you also carry the torch of being some of the most ambitious and innovative when it comes to climate action, particularly on renewable energy.

As I said yesterday, 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.

As well as speaking with a coherent, united voice, I suggest you need to be clear on what you want on your return from Paris. What will it take to restore hope among your peoples that the world can turn back from this destructive path? You have set out your objectives in the Suva Declaration. I urge you to reflect together on which of these objectives must be achieved in their entirety in Paris, and which require that the door is kept open so that they can be achieved in the years ahead?

As I said yesterday, I know that climate finance will be a critical catalyst to turn your leadership into action.

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.

In particular, in his engagements with leaders, the Secretary-General has emphasised the importance of developed countries providing greater clarity on the public finance component of the \$100 billion in climate finance before Paris,

as well as on how they will engage private finance, and how they will prioritise support for SIDS and LDCs.

Shortly after my return from Samoa last year, the Secretary-General gathered world leaders at the United Nations Headquarters for his Climate Summit. And even though the Summit was addressed by the world's political leaders, by leaders of businesses and by celebrities, it was a woman from the South Pacific – Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner of the Marshall Islands – who had the most profound impact on a lot of people who were present there. In a poem dedicated to her daughter Matafele Peinam, she set out how her people were faced with climate change, but also how they were willing to show leadership if the rest of the world acted in solidarity with them. In some of the most memorable words of that day, she said “we deserve to do more than just survive, we deserve to thrive”. She also made it clear that the people of the Pacific could do this if the rest of the world stood by them in practical forms of solidarity.

But if Matafele Peinam and the billions more to be born in the years ahead are indeed to thrive, as they deserve, they need the leadership I have spoken of yesterday and today. The people and countries of the Pacific have a remarkable opportunity to provide that leadership.

But we only have twelve weeks to go, let's use them well.