



REPUBLIC OF NAURU

Statement by

His Excellency the Honourable Sprent Dabwido, M.P.

President of the Republic of Nauru

at the

General Debate

of the Sixty-seventh Session

of the

United Nations General Assembly

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United Nations, New York

Mr. President,

Allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of this sixty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly. Also, allow me to commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his effective leadership during the sixty-sixth session.

Please be assured of the full support and cooperation of my Delegation during your tenure.

Mr. President,

This was a very different place when Minister Paul-Henri Spaak, another one of your predecessors, opened the First Session of the General Assembly. The world had just emerged from the most devastating carnage it had ever seen, and this august body held the enormous task of stitching civilization back together again.

Finding common purpose among the original 51 Member States would be a Herculean effort – a similar endeavor had faltered only a decade earlier – but the stakes were far too high for failure to be an option. As such, this organization set upon its work in earnest to begin the long process of strengthening the rule of international law based on the principles of non-aggression and the sovereign equality of all nations.

It is a testament to their success that the membership of the United Nations has swelled to 193 countries and the past 67 years have been a period of relative stability. While the benefits of multilateralism over this time period were often shared unequally, as were the costs, the promise of a more stable and secure future for all imbued the United Nations with the legitimacy needed to pursue its ambitious mandate.

But we must never forget that the legitimacy that underpins our essential work here is not a birthright; we must earn it. When our words become hollow, that legitimacy is threatened.

Mr. President,

The work of your early predecessors was one of construction. The task at hand today – perhaps even more challenging – is one of restoration.

We are awash in unfulfilled promises stretching back decades. Barring a brief resurgence in the early 1990s, multilateralism is in many ways degrading into a scramble for finite resources, a destructive fight for a bigger piece of the economic pie, sugar coated with empty rhetoric. Look at the beginning of any international agreement and you will find reaffirmation after reiteration of our non-binding commitments to live up to our lofty ideals. Perhaps their greatest value is a reminder of how little has often been achieved.

Our words must have meaning if our multilateral institutions are to remain effective in addressing our emerging global challenges. Once again, the stakes are too high.

Mr. President,

This dynamic could not be more evident than in the climate change negotiations. This summer, we were treated to a new round of truly terrifying news. Arctic sea ice dropped to its lowest extent in recorded history, shattering the previous record by a jaw-dropping 18%. Some scientists are now predicting that the Arctic Ocean could be ice free during summer in as little as five years. The ice melt is already wreaking significant havoc on weather patterns around the globe, and has probably contributed to the historic heat waves that struck many places this year.

Just last week, a new study found that half of all coral reefs could be lost with a temperature rise above 1.2 degrees Celsius. The scientists further concluded that – quote – “There is little doubt...coral reefs will no longer be prominent within coastal ecosystems if global average temperatures exceed 2 degrees Celsius” – unquote. This would be devastating for the economies of small islands and coastal communities around the world, not to mention a staggering and irrevocable loss of biodiversity and our shared natural heritage.

More and more studies are concluding that the door to limiting temperature rise to even 2 degrees is rapidly closing, if it has not closed already. Meanwhile, greenhouse gas emissions continue to climb higher each year with no end in sight. Small islands may be the canary in the coalmine, but we all are staring a global catastrophe right in the face.

It is revealing just how much our ambition to address this crisis has been downscaled in just three years time. Copenhagen was the conference to save the world. Cancun was the conference to save the process. Durban, it seems, was the conference to save the rest for later.

Instead of increasing the urgency of our work to respond to the growing climate crisis, we have instead seen the steady dismantling of the international regime and a concerted effort to delay additional action until 2020.

Such an outcome is unacceptable. If multilateralism is to have any credibility, then we must move to an emergency footing and those countries with the greatest capacity must immediately begin mobilizing the significant resources necessary to remake the energy infrastructure that powers the global economy. This must begin at COP18 in Doha with the reprioritization of pre-2020 mitigation ambition and mobilizing the means of implementation, including finance, technology and capacity building.

Nauru will arrive in Doha prepared to make its contribution to the global effort. We have adopted a very ambitious renewable energy of 50% by 2015. We think we can achieve it, but we will need climate finance from international sources to do it. As with most developing countries, the means of implementation will be a key to unlocking ambition.

Mr. President,

The ultimate objective of the Climate Change Convention is to stabilize greenhouse gases at a level that would prevent dangerous interference with the climate system so that ecosystems can adapt naturally, food

productions is not threatened, and economic development can proceed in a sustainable manner. We should stop pretending that this is still within reach.

We must realize that we have polluted the atmosphere so much that many dangerous climate change impacts are now unavoidable. Therefore the UN system must begin analyzing and addressing the security implications of climate change. Climate change will become an increasing driver of conflict in the future if we do not take steps now to prepare. Increased competition over dwindling natural resources, food and water insecurity, and forced migration are just a few of the security issues that climate change is expected to exacerbate.

For this reason, the Pacific SIDS have called for the appointment of a Special Representative on climate and security, supported by adequate resources, to begin analyzing the security threats by climate change, and to work with interested Member States to build their resilience.

In addition, the Secretary General of the United Nations should be requested to conduct an assessment of the UN system's capacity to respond to the various security implications of climate change. Member States, particularly the most vulnerable, must have confidence that the international community has the tools and resources to respond to the crisis.

Some countries have been skeptical of Security Council involvement in climate change. This is understandable, because the body does not well reflect the diversity of UN Members as it's currently composed. The time has come to remedy this modern world. However, reform should not be limited merely to its membership. It must also provide a forum for addressing the security challenges of all countries, not just those of concern to the most powerful.

Mr. President,

The UN's sustainable development initiatives have also been graced with an abundance of lofty rhetoric, but few resources. Many countries, including my own, are not on track to meet their Millennium Development Goals, and in some cases have suffered setbacks because of the recent global economic downturn. At the same time, the flow of official development assistance from some channels has diminished, further jeopardizing our ability to achieve our MDGs.

We often forget that oceans cover 70% of the Earth's surface, and that healthy marine ecosystems are vital to the sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods of small islands. For many of us, the only valuable natural resource we have is our fish. It forms the cornerstone of our efforts to eradicate poverty and provide livelihoods for our people. For us, fishing is not just another economic sector – it is often the *only* significant economic sector and we must jealously guard our modest natural wealth so that it can provide for many generations to come.

While the Rio plus 20 outcome had few concrete deliverables, it did capture the Pacific SIDS vision of a "Blue Economy." If fully implemented, the new provisions could help stem the steep decline in fish stocks. We also welcome the recognition of ocean acidification as an emergent threat, and we must work

collectively to build resilience of marine ecosystems to climate change impacts. The commitments made in Rio must be backed by real resources so they can be translated into concrete results on the ground.

Rio also infused new energy into making islands a model for sustainable development by agreeing to convene the Third Global Conference on SIDS, to be held in the Pacific in 2014. The conference will provide an opportunity for the international community to make good on the promise of the Barbados Program of Action (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (MSI) by setting concrete goals and mobilizing real resources. We call on the international community to provide support for the conference, and to summon the political will necessary to make it a success. It was agreed at the first Earth Summit that the sustainable development of SIDS would be the first test of the global partnership. We must demonstrate to the world that this partnership means something.

A central aspect of this work must be enhancing the international system to better target the unique combination of challenges faced by SIDS, which should include the creation of a formal SIDS category at the United Nations. It is clear from twenty years of experience that the current arrangements for improving the sustainable development prospects of SIDS are ineffective. We must demonstrate that the multilateral system is nimble enough to evolve in response to the shortcomings that have been identified.

Mr. President,

Nauru supports the attention your theme for this year's General Debate, brings to the need to address disputes, by peaceful means.

Nauru welcomes the efforts made by Taiwan and China to reduce tensions and increase cooperation. I call on UN Member States to support continuing dialogue between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, and the parties concerned in the East China Sea dispute to recognize Taiwan's positive role in consolidating peace and stability in East Asia.

Nauru urges a rapid and peaceful settlement to the situation in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in a manner that treats those affected with dignity and respects their right to independence.

Nauru continues to support the right of Israel to live free from the fear of terrorism. We also acknowledge Palestine's right to statehood as part of a two-state solution which can only be achieved through peaceful means.

The challenges before the International Community are great, and can only be solved by concerted multilateral action. Your task, Mr. President, and ours, is to begin the process of rebuilding – a process that must restore the integrity of the institutions entrusted with the protection of human dignity. It was accomplished once before in the aftermath of a catastrophe. This time, our goal must be to prevent one. I pledge Nauru's full support in this endeavor.

God bless the Republic of Nauru and God bless the United Nations.

Thank you.