STATEMENT
by
HONOURABLE TUILAEPA SAILELE MALIELEGAOI
PRIME MINISTER, INDEPENDENT STATE OF SAMOA
at the
HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF JOINT MEETINGS OF UNFCCC COP16/CMP6
CANCUN, MEXICO, 8 DECEMBER 2010

Madam President,

The Government and people of Mexico have invested much to ensure that the Cancun conference is a success. And they, like our small island developing states, have every right to be disappointed if Cancun becomes yet another missed-opportunity. This is unacceptable and we must not allow this to happen.

While negotiators are trying to win every conceivable concession from their counterparts before anyone can agree to act, let us not lose sight of the truth. Climate change does not need a negotiated instrument or permission to cause indiscriminate destruction and havoc to our islands whenever it feels like it. Yet in doing so, it unceremoniously robs some of people of their homelands, identities, their loved ones and a hopeful future.

Madam President,

Climate change is the world's most urgent problem and the greatest moral challenge of our time. That is the indisputable truth.

Known crisis of global dimensions pale in comparison to what climate change poses to our world as a whole and to the future security of some of our low-lying islands as sovereign states. To address this effectively and decisively requires visionary leadership that rise beyond the dictates of vested national interests and political tenures and view the world as a single constituency where everyone must work together within the limits of their capacity and capability to be part of the total solution. We have been working towards a global solution and promised to negotiate in good faith, yet we have focused more on what divides us, not on what binds us. Our differences are highlighted and given prominence, not what we have in common. Entrenched positions that do not

reflect today's realties are often resorted to as a guise to frustrate and stall any meaningful progress.

While no country is untouched from the reach of climate change, small island developing states, in particular, are acutely vulnerable and lack the necessary capacity and resilience to absorb and quickly adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change. No country should therefore stay detached and unconcerned to the plight of the majority. All countries must work together with a sense of urgency and commitment to address climate change, today, not tomorrow. It should not just be the science that recommends what we should do, but also our conscience.

Madam President,

Samoa knows from bitter personal experiences just how unsettling the negative impacts of climate change can be on our economy and the fabric of our society. This is why climate change has become a national priority for my government. It compels us to negotiate under the aegis of the UNFCCC and to participate at the highest level possible to underscore our commitment to play our part in tackling this problem.

But Cancun must deliver. It should lay the foundation for the realization of the Bali Action Plan. Our timelines are slipping by fast and we are playing catch-up. Yet each day lost to indecisiveness and wrangling on petty points, only intensifies the challenges we face. Failure to agree on a package of balanced decisions is not an option, or we risk accelerating the erosion of confidence in the legitimacy of the UNFCC as the only forum for solving the climate problems, and undermining the centrality of the multilateral process.

Hopefully this is not the ultimate goal of some parties. Much is at stake for the interests of a few to triumph over the wishes of the majority of mankind. But in any negotiations, there comes a time when we need to reach accommodation and compromises in the true spirit of give and take.

Madam President,

Adaptation will remain Samoa's priority for future climate funding assistance. While our needs continue to benefit from resources made available from our traditional development partners, additional funding resources beyond what is currently available is required for us to adapt effectively, and in a sustainable manner.

This is why a decision to establish a new Climate Fund with a dedicated window for Adaptation must be part of the Cancun package. SIDS challenges

and priorities are not identical to those of other negotiating groups both in focus, relative sizes and magnitude. It is critically important that SIDS has a voice in the transitional group to set up the Climate Fund, and in its Governing Board once its final architecture is in place.

Doing it right from the start during the conceptualization phase of the Fund, and guiding its work from within the new entity when it becomes operational, are lessons SIDS have learned from past experience with similar institutions where they had minimal participation at the early, yet critical stage.

No matter the size of a new Fund, the inherent vulnerabilities of small island developing states will prevent them from benefiting optimally from such a fund. Unless tailored modalities of access and delivery, commensurate with SIDS relatively small sizes and capacity constraints, including absorptive capacity are acknowledged and provided for in the proposed fund. Key to SIDS utilizing these resources is the ability to effectively access and manage them. In the absence of such modalities, any climate funding, old or new will be a dis-incentive and not a solution to the adaptation needs of the very group of vulnerable countries the fund was meant to address in the first place.

On the existing financial mechanism, Samoa is pleased with recent decisions by the Council of the Global Environment Facility. One relates to individual country allocations, the first for most Pacific countries, and the second is the proposed pilot on direct access by accredited National Implementing agencies to GEF resources. Samoa encourages the inclusion of regional intergovernmental entities, like SPREP, so that Pacific island states can also benefit from this pilot initiative.

Madam President,

Pacific island states continue to lack reliable climate information data essential to assist decision makers develop adaptation and mitigation strategies in response to climate change. This will remain a challenge for some time – hence why partnerships with member states and intergovernmental institutions to bridge some of the information gaps, become all the more important. Samoa is privileged to represent the Pacific on the World Meteorological Organization High Level Task Force assigned to develop a Global Framework for Climate Services. We hope that further development and operational implementation of such a useful framework will receive the necessary support for its continuation.

Madam President,

Let me conclude with a plea to all the Parties under the Convention, big or small, developed or developing, emitter or not.

All countries capable of taking mitigation actions are encouraged to do so within the confines of their respective capabilities and capacities. Samoa is no exception. In the spirit of global collaborative effort, we have on our own choice pledged to take action so that we will be carbon-neutral by 2020. This is no mean task and it's not going to be easy. But we are determined to walk the talk and make a modest contribution, as everyone's effort counts.

Collectively, we have the power to lead in transforming our economies into sustainable and responsible drivers of global development and economic growth. Deferring innovative action and firm commitments to some future date, while continuing with business as usual is costly and unsustainable in the long run. It only hastens the pace of climate warming affecting the stability, health and continued existence of this planet. Individually and jointly we must make tough and bold decisions to ensure that we cannot continue to develop in a manner that transfers to future generations a debt they cannot pay and did not ask to inherit.

Thank you.