PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Nauru to the United Nations
800 Second Avenue, Suite 400A, New York, N.Y. 10017

High Level Segment of the
United Nations Conference on Climate Change

Statement delivered by
His Excellency President Marcus Stephen, M.P.
on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States

7 December 2010
Cancun, Mexico

Gracias, Madame Presidente.

Congratulations on your assumption of the Presidency. We take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to His Excellency President Calderon and the people of Cancun for your warm hospitality.

I have the great honor to speak on behalf of the fourteen Pacific Small Island Developing States, namely Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and my own country, Nauru.

The Pacific SIDS align themselves fully with the statement to be delivered by His Excellency Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister of Grenada, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

Madame President,

The Pacific has a rich cultural and linguistic tradition. Hundreds of distinct languages are spoken in homes throughout our fourteen countries. No more than 10,000 people speak my native language of Nauruan, and it, like so many others, may soon disappear.

However, none of our words are quite so exotic as the ones spoken by the climate change negotiator. The people who inhabit these walls communicate in acronyms: QELROS, LULUCF, and NAMAs - letters that carry the power to determine which of our nations may thrive and which may vanish beneath the waves.

Yet neither this, nor any other language, adequately captures the destructive impact that climate change is having, and will continue to have, on the people of our region.

The gravity of the crisis has escaped us. It has become lost in a fog of scientific, economic, and technical jargon. Without bold action, it will be left to our children to come up with the words to convey the tragedy of losing our homelands when it did not have to be this way.

So instead, I will describe the task before us by evoking a concept that has universal meaning and power: that of responsibility.

I, along with my fellow leaders from the Pacific, have a first and overriding responsibility to protect the safety and wellbeing of our people. It is the reason that we have flown halfway around the globe to be here today.

Our countries are small, so perhaps the nature of our responsibility is different than in other places. We are not beholden to powerful corporations or entrenched interest groups. Our governments are not deadlocked because of ideological divisions. The decisions we make have a very direct and immediate impact on our neighbors and friends. We are the heads of the Pacific family and we will continue to defend our family when they are put in harms way.

Madame President,

As members of the AOSIS, we have consistently offered proposals that reflect the latest scientific and economic understandings of climate change. We are not seeking charity. Our principles will not be sold to the highest bidder.

We are taking responsibility.

Some of us have convened international summits to facilitate a way forward. Others have declared their intention to make their countries carbon neutral. All of us have developed ambitious low-carbon development plans and have commenced with implementation despite the enormous difficulties we have accessing financial resources. We are fighting to adapt to the new environmental realities we face.

Our priorities are clear. There is very little room for compromise. When you ask us to compromise, you are asking us to choose how many islands we will lose. This is not a choice we are prepared to make.

Our choice is to continue to work towards a fair solution. We are optimistic that this conference can take us one step closer towards a two-track, legally binding outcome in South Africa. This must include amendments to the Kyoto Protocol and a new, Durban Protocol that captures our work on Long-term Cooperative Action.

Madame President,

There is a phrase in these negotiations that gives us hope: "A Shared Vision." It signifies a unity in purpose and a recognition that all of us are prepared to work towards a more just future. This must be a collective effort to deliver a diverse and abundant planet to our children.

This is the responsibility that all of us in the room -- from the smallest country to the largest -- have been entrusted with. This is on our watch. We must succeed.

Thank you.