Statement of Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni

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At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 22nd Conference of the Parties also serving as the 12th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, and the 1st Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement

Marrakech, Morocco, 16th November 2016

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. At the outset, allow me to first express the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga's utmost gratitude to His Majesty, King Mohammed VI and the Government and people of the Kingdom of Morocco for their most sincere and warm hospitality accorded our delegation upon our arrival.

2. The twenty first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change convened in Paris, France 2015 was indeed a highly significant step in enhancing global unity on the worlds most ominous issue that is climate change. Indeed, the adoption of the Paris Agreement was a first step by the global community toward ensuring the very survival of not only small island states such as Tonga, but also that of the planet we all call home.

3. A step that has now evolved into a giant leap forward being the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement on the 4th of November. A date already synonomous in Tonga - the day we celebrate the promulgation of our national Constitution.

4. And in this celebratory context, we applaud those that have already taken this forward leap and ratified the Paris Agreement, and implore those that have yet to ratify, to take action in the collective spirit of humanity as witnessed on 15th of October, 2016 that led to the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on phasing out of Ozone Depleting Substances, and also at the 39th ICAO Assembly with the adoption of the ICAO Agreement on Reducing Aviation Carbon Dioxide Emissions on 6th October 2016.

Mr. President,

5. It is undeniable that the effects of Climate Change increasingly threaten the very existence of Small Island Developing States such as Tonga, whose vulnerabilites are rapidly increasing and swiftly eroding our capacities for resilience. Capacities which when strengthened, and enhanced, will catalyze the requiste efforts for achieving and safeguarding our sustainable development aspirations.

6. Such development efforts continue to be hampered by unprecedented rates of coastal erosion, increasing occurences of flash flooding, effects which are further compounded by tropical cyclones that are predicted to increase in intensity. Predictions as such, are the realities we currently endure.

7. A disturbing co-existence that in the long term will see our demise as a small island nation-state, and ultimately resulting in the loss of our identity and integrity. A despondent fate that will be sealed through low ambitions, weak action and inaction at worst.

8. But in saying this, the implementation of the Paris Agreement brings new hope. A hope that rests on the conscience of the global citizens. The early entry into force of

the Agreement signals the next steps in the global partnership to combat the effects of climate change.

9. As such, Tonga recognizes and re-emphasizes the intrinsic value of limiting temperature increase to 1.5^0C and to ensure global cooperation in the implementation of the Paris Agreement, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, and the SAMOA Pathway. This is strategically reflected, framed, and aligned to all elements contained in our National Climate Change Policy 2016, in the development of our pending JNAP Phase II, and the National Organizational Outcomes in our Strategic Development Framework 2015-2025.

Mr. President

10. Upon ratifying the Paris Agreement, Tonga is committed in ensuring rapid progression at the national level that will empower and enable our efforts to implement the necessary actions toward achieving our NDC targets.

11. NDC targets that have prompted Tonga to embark on an ambitious energy road map that will see a dramatic rise in the proportion of renewable energy and energy efficiency intitiatives through 50% clean energy generation from renewable energy by 2020 and 70% by 2030, and our commitment to double the number of Marine Protected Areas by 2030 and to ensure viable and real sector emission reduction targets in the areas of Transport, Agriculture, Tourism, Environmentally sound Waste Management, and Reforestation measures.

12. The Kingdom of Tonga extends these same values and imperatives towards strengthening dialogue and partnerships for the enhancement of actions, support and synergies in the areas of technology, capacity building and the requisite financing for implementation. Financing that is channelled through numerous initiatives such as the Green Climate Fund, that can be further strengthened through enhancement of the existing capacity and the establishment of a GCF office in the Pacific region.

Mr. President,

13. In closing, this 22nd Conference of the Parties, and the opening of the first session of the CMA is testament to the genuine partnerships and collective responsibilities fostered between our countries which must contain a robust element of transparency. Civil society, academia and private sectors must play their roles in ensuring genuine accountability by state actors, must also be steadfast and continue to be the solid drivers in our search for solutions to the adverse effects of Climate Change.

14. Let us all steer together the sustainable wheel and universal push towards a resilient world, for both present and future generations.

Malo ‘aupito, and Thank you