



PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
UNITED NATIONS MEMBER STATES

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Plenary Statement for the Pacific Small Island Developing States
2023 United Nations Water Conference
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[Check against delivery]

Delivered by: Hon. Prime Minister Kausea Natano of Tuvalu

Honorable Presidents, Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me to speak on behalf of the 12 Pacific Small Island Developing States represented in New York and we align with the statement delivered by Samoa on behalf of AOSIS. I extend our congratulations to the Co-Presidents on assuming office for the 2023 UN Water Conference and for the leadership and tremendous work done and assure you of the Pacific SIDS' full support of your mandate and for a successful conference.

Water is a key source of life. Our need for water is as omnipresent and critical as our need for food or oxygen – it is essential not only for life but the full enjoyment of human rights and the realisation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Unfortunately, the world is not only behind on meeting SDG6, but we have regressed. 3 billion people (nearly a third of humanity) live in uncertainty of the safety and or security of their drinking water and so we commend the efforts to convene us for these next 3 days, to share not only our challenges, but also our solutions to move forward.

Presidents,

The Pacific Islands are home to diverse and dynamic cultures and ethnicities spread across the Blue Pacific Continent which is equivalent to 15% of the Earth's surface. One might assume being surrounded by the Ocean that we have a stable supply of water. I regret to say that nearly half of our people in the region still do not have access to clean and safe water and sanitation facilities. The statistics show that not only is the Pacific region lagging, we rank poorly in all indicators on SDG6.

Moreover, previously secure and stable water sources are at risk due to climate change. Many islands face saltwater intrusion into their water tables from sea level rise - and in a region where half of our countries don't have any surface water and rely solely on groundwater, this is already a catastrophe. Further, the increasing severity and occurrence of natural disasters such as cyclones, floods and landslides damage our water infrastructure and contaminate water sources impacting our ability to respond to and recover from these natural disasters.

The increasingly extreme cycles of drought and flooding and their impact on water accessibility, in turn affects our ability to grow crops for sustenance and to support key sectors such as tourism, health and education - access to clean, safe and reliable water, or the lack thereof, has a clear impact on the ability of states to meet their sustainable development goals.

In countries like my home country of Tuvalu, the saltwater intrusion has reached a level where our taro and coconut crops are compromised, we cannot reliably farm taro, which is not only a staple food but part of our culture in the Pacific.

Presidents,

The IPCC just released its latest report which states that Earth is likely to cross a critical threshold for global warming within the next decade, so we know water security in the Pacific and the world will worsen. So where do we go from here to meet SDG6, in particular, and the overall 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

We need support, through partnerships, international cooperation, financing and technology transfer, including in the digital space, to build resilience and ensure water security for the future. We must build water infrastructure fit for a new world in which storms are more frequent and stronger. We need to invest in water infrastructure, including water storage, treatment, and distribution systems.

Water management systems need to be built, based on our needs, appropriate for our small-scale and low population numbers and appropriate to avoid damage to our Ocean ecosystems. Sharing best practices, innovations and lessons learnt from development partners like Israel who have responded to water insecurity with technological innovation are key. Remote sensors, smart pipes, machines that extract water vapor from the air, and desalination plants as part of the solution need to be explored. But technology must be paired with the necessary capacity building and training to operate and maintain new technologies.

On a final note, we wish to reiterate that SIDS access to climate finance continues to be a key driver of our success in delivering on SDG6, because climate change is an ongoing and increasingly serious concern for our water insecurity. We note with regret that only 2% of all adaptation funds has been provided, thus far, to SIDS. This must improve. We can have grand ambitions to keep our citizens from growing parched,

and keeping clean, but without simplified access to adequate, predictable, and sustained finance, our countries will continue to regress as climate change adverse impacts are exacerbated.