



Statement of the Kingdom of Tonga

**First session of the Preparatory Committee
for the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States**

Delivered by Ms. Jeanett Vea of the Permanent Mission of the
Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations

22nd January 2024

United Nations Headquarters, New York

Esteemed Co-Chairs, Excellencies and distinguished Colleagues,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Kingdom of Tonga, in support of this critically important session, held after three decades from when the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development formally declared Small Island Developing States, a special case for sustainable development. Our statement is in alignment with that delivered by Vanuatu on behalf of Pacific SIDS, Tonga on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum, Samoa on behalf of AOSIS and Cuba on behalf of G77 & China.

This is particularly relevant given we, the SIDS, are seen as remote, small, fragmented and acutely vulnerable to the multifaceted and urgent challenges posed by increasingly severe effects of climate change and high debt levels. And given the size of our small open economies, whatever happens globally, affects us immediately through the myriad of rising prices, due to broken and uninterrupted supply chains. This has an everyday livelihood impact on our people.

Tonga is therefore committed to engaging in this process to chart a decisive course forward for the next 10 years ahead. We had the pleasure of hosting the Pacific Small Island Developing States Regional Preparatory Meeting in Nuku'alofa from 16 to 18 August 2023, and we would like to highlight key priorities building on from the Nuku'alofa Outcome Document and the Inter-regional Preparatory meeting held in Cabo Verde, in view of the zero draft ably prepared by our distinguished co-chairs, for which we appreciate.

1. Climate change remains the single greatest existential threat to the Blue Pacific, notably in physical and economic aspects, which threatens the livelihoods, security, and wellbeing of its people and ecosystems. However, existential threats in this context should not undermine certain rights, entitlements, and duties under international law, specifically with regard to climate change-related sea-level rise.
2. Tonga and other small island developing states require greater access to concessional finance to support our development endeavours and strengthen our resilience against



external shocks. Tonga fully supports the review of the International Financial architecture, fit for purpose.

3. We must ensure that the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) is regarded as an action tool, focusing primarily on ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of vulnerability. We need a tool that can provide meaningful and effective assistance, where, and when needed. We therefore call on the adoption of the MVI, and its operationalization incorporating a criterion for access by Pacific SIDS to low-cost and long-term financing.

Co-Chairs,

It is imperative in this regard, that we promptly provide predictable, stable, and substantial support for SIDS who are vulnerable to climate change, natural disasters and those struggling with financial difficulties. We therefore support building resilient economies through trade and investment, tourism and ocean-based economies, while enjoying safe and prosperous societies committed to urgent climate action and protecting our environment.

I thank you.