



REPUBLIC OF THE FIJI ISLANDS

Statement by:

RATU INOKE KUBUABOLA

Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Co-operation and Civil Aviation

HEAD OF DELEGATION

HIGH LEVEL PLENARY - UNFCCC COP 15

Copenhagen, Denmark

Thursday 17 December, 2009

Mr. President
Heads of State and Governments
Excellencies
Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen

The Prime Minister of the Republic of The Fiji Islands, Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, was all prepared to leave Fiji and join us here when, a Cyclone struck Fiji two day ago, ravaging and devastating parts of Fiji. The timing of the Cyclone sent a strong, loud and clear message to this momentous Conference on Climate Change. That message is: ACT NOW TO SAVE OUR COUNTRIES, MANKIND and OUR PLANET. The Prime Minister remained in Fiji to oversee the "picking up of the pieces".

Mr. President

If there ever was an event in the history of mankind requiring unity and a commitment to a common, universal cause, this is it. If there was a moment on our planet requiring concerted action, it is now. If there was a place where we could collectively and unanimously demonstrate to future generations that we sincerely care for the world in which we live, it is here in Copenhagen.

All credible indicators are confirming that our survival as humans is under serious threat. Our way of life, customs, homes, markets, land, our corals, reefs, ocean, our very future, are all at stake. We are challenged by a phenomenon so massively destructive that if we fail to act now, we shall individually and collectively suffer the consequences and will have only ourselves to blame.

Sir, Fiji is a Small Island State. The adverse effects of climate change on our islands are visible and real. Our coastlines are eroding; cyclones are becoming frequent, more intense and destructive.

They bring death and injury to our people, destruction to farms and businesses, devastation to our economy and impose enormous demands on our social services. Our country and our people are under siege from the effects of global warming.

Mr. President

Fiji is privileged to be a member of SIDS, AOSIS and of the Group of 77 and China. It has given strength to our representations. Throughout the process leading to Copenhagen, the needs and interests of Small Island Developing States have come to be recognized and appreciated in their peculiarity. For too long, we have been uncomfortably associated in a development grouping with diverse interests that threatened to drown the realization of our own.

Mr. President

Our interests are not sophisticated. They are not insurmountable either. In terms of financing, all we ask for is a transparent, practical mechanism that ensures ready access to funding. We are not experts at mountain climbing. We will find it frustrating to conquer the steep slopes of application procedures with a thick canopy of financial institutions and implementing agencies which frustrate the delivery of funds to the ground while consuming inordinate portions of the said funds in administrative costs.

Mr. President

As Government, it is our duty, obligation and responsibility to facilitate and promote national development and a better life for our people. Our coffers to address the deleterious effects of climate change on our nation are not bottomless or inexhaustible. Storm surges, flooding, cyclones, saltwater intrusion and rise in sea levels, are phenomenon which have been exacerbated by human activities. Sadly, most of these activities are perpetrated somewhere far away from our shores. I urge all to let us respond now, at this moment, together, to address global warming. If we act now and together, victory over global warming shall be ours - yours and mine.

Mr. President

Fiji, like most others in AOSIS, have been consistent and clarion in our call for deep cuts and reduction in carbon emission by developed countries. This is because we have no other options open to us as small island nations. To request that we give up our call for 350ppm and the 1.5 degree Celsius would be akin to asking SIDS to commit suicide. We do not have the leeway or option to make that decision.

Fiji now calls on the bigger developing countries also to reduce their emission. It is indefensible to hide in the cloak of under-development so as not committing to a universal responsibility to reducing carbon emissions. Together we aspire, together we shall achieve. We all, industrialized countries, major developing countries and others, must prevent the profligate carbon emission bird of sorrow from nesting in our hair.

Mr. President

In the global scheme of things, Fiji's emission is very insignificant, some 0.001%. We see Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), and enhancing forest carbon stock in developing countries (REDD+) as a small but meaningful way in which our country can contribute to mitigating climate change...Fiji is well ahead in the formulation of REDD policies. We believe that a robust, equitable and transparent Agreement for REDD is a must.

Finally Mr. President,

I express my Delegation's gratitude to you and the peoples of Denmark for the warmth of the welcome and reception during our stay in this great and historic city of Copenhagen. We pay tribute to the Danish Government for leading the way in the development of green technology. The greatest tribute we can pay to Copenhagen and to humanity is to agree, sign and fully implement; either now or soon, a legally binding instrument that addresses challenges imposed by climate change.

THANK YOU MR. PRESIDENT