

SAMOA



STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE TUALA SALE TAGALOA
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On behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

**At the Sixth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-6)**

The Hague, the Netherlands, 21 November 2000

Mr President, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies and distinguished delegates:

I have the honour of addressing this Conference on behalf of the 43 states and territories of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), representing 39 Parties to the Convention, 12 of whom have ratified the Protocol.

Mr President, I am informed that our AOSIS delegations have been labouring late into the nights last week alongside colleagues from the Group of 77, and those from the developed countries. They have laboured to present their Ministers with proposals for rules, principles, methodologies, guidelines, guidance, elements, modalities, mechanisms, procedures, options, linkages, trade-offs and compromises. From this, we Ministers are asked to construct a package of agreements that takes into account the interests of all concerned, and that confronts the greatest ecological threat humankind, and this precious earth, has faced.

We are grateful for the trust implied by a challenge of such complexity. But let me speak, instead of simple things:

- We know the causes of global warming.
- We know which countries bear the main responsibility for historic and continuing emissions of greenhouse gases.
- We know that there are policies and measures which, if supported by financial resources and appropriate technologies, will reduce and replace our over-reliance on fossil fuels.
- We also know, as the most exposed and vulnerable, what we must do: we must anticipate, prepare and adapt for the potentially devastating consequences that are beginning to take hold and that await us in future.

Faced with these simple truths, AOSIS entered these negotiations calling upon the international community to agree strong, clear targets for industrialised countries, that would confront this challenge with directness, responsibility and leadership.

Five years and five COPs later, we are struck by the tremendous financial, technical and human resources; the abundance of creative, intellectual and political energy that has been invested -- not in the straightforward challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions -- but in constructing a regime of impenetrable complexity. Had these resources and that energy been invested instead in action, how much closer to our ultimate goal we would be!

There is however, still the opportunity to cut through the complexity, and build an agreement in The Hague that faces simple truths with direct and credible action. For our delegations, direct and credible action must be based on:

- Domestic action by Annex I Parties that demonstrates progress through the implementation of concrete policies and measures to cut industrial emissions of greenhouse gases, both before and during the Protocol's commitment period;
- A prompt start for the Clean Development Mechanism that promotes investments in environmentally safe and sound, renewable energy technologies;
- Tightly-defined rules that recognise the role of land-use and forests in the carbon cycle, but that prohibit countries from offsetting their obligation to reduce industrial emissions through activities that are neither measurable nor permanent;
- Strong and enforceable rules and procedures that both prevent and penalise non-compliance;
- Clear instructions to the GEF, and surcharges across all the mechanisms that will ensure that a predictable and adequate flow of financial resources and technology is available to assist with adaptation to climate impacts.

Do these essential elements represent our "bottom line?"

Mr President, we heard much last week about "bottom lines", and about elements of a package deal that our negotiating partners must secure. Without these elements, some threaten to "block the process", or to reject the outcome on the basis that it is "unratifiable".

Mr President, in this process, in this common challenge we face, no single country, however powerful; no set of economic interests, however deeply vested; has the right to draw bottom lines. Only nature, through its unfathomable, unpredictable power to strike that fragile balance between life and extinction, will draw the bottom line in this process. Nature alone presents the ultimatum. We in this room, for this week, share the collective responsibility to respond.