



Speech by the Honorable Teleke P. Lauti
Assistant Minister for Natural Resources and Environment
Government of Tuvalu

Mr President,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here in The Hague and to experience the warm hospitality of the people and Government of the Netherlands. I feel that the people of the Netherlands and the people of Tuvalu share a common concern. We are both low lying countries and subsequently vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise.

Tuvalu's fears about climate change and sea-level rise are very real. The sea is our very close neighbour. In fact, on the island where I live, Funafuti, it is possible to throw a stone from one side of the island to the other. Our islands are very low lying. When a cyclone hits us there is no

place to escape. We cannot climb any mountains or move away to take refuge. It is hard to describe the effects of a cyclonic storm surge when it washes right across our islands. I would not want to wish this experience on anyone. The devastation is beyond description.

This concern is so serious for our people, that the Cabinet, in which I am a member, has been exploring the possibility of buying land in a near-by country, in case we become refugees to the impacts of climate change. This is a very expensive and extreme adaptation option. We do not want to move. Tuvalu is our home, our culture, our history and our livelihoods. For this reason, we have a pain in our hearts, that the decisions we make in this very meeting could well affect the future of our children. We want our children to share our heritage on the islands that make up our nation. We hope you share our concern.

Mr President, we make a very strong appeal to all at this meeting to take the issue of climate change very seriously. We appeal to your sense of humanity. We make a special appeal to the industrialised countries to take their responsibilities under the Climate Change Convention with the leadership and sincerity it deserves. It is the industrialised countries who have shared the benefits of development, but they, in turn, have given us the legacy of a polluted atmosphere. You must ensure that your industrial development does not lead to our cultural decline. We are all citizens of this Earth and we share a common responsibility to care for it. Please take this responsibility firmly on your shoulders.

This is not the time for hollow words and empty commitments. Neither is it the time to invent new loopholes. We are together, here in this city of peace, to come to an agreement on the Kyoto Protocol, to set in stone strong commitments to achieve, real, measurable and long term efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

It is for this reason that our country has taken a very strong stance on the issue of land use, land use change and forestry. We do not believe that these so called 'sinks' provide the real solution to climate change. Now is not the time to invent new definitions and systems for accounting that will turn our attention away from effective emissions reductions. Nor is it time for sinks projects under the Clean Development Mechanism.

Mr President,

It is not time for industrialised countries to use the Kyoto Mechanisms to offload your responsibilities onto other countries. The industrialised world must take concrete steps to reduce their own emissions. This means that we must set a domestic target for emissions reductions before countries are allowed to use the Mechanisms. This concept of complementarity has to be a cornerstone of any agreement on the Mechanisms.

Climate Change is a very serious environmental problem. In finding the solution to this problem we must not provide an incentive to create new environmental disasters. For this reason we believe that nuclear power

must be clearly excluded from the Kyoto Mechanisms. Already the Pacific is used for shipments of nuclear waste. This must end.

Tuvalu is a poor country financially and thus the impacts of climate change create an extraordinary burden on our economy. Adequate adaptation funding must be part of the package of decisions at this meeting.

We note that some countries have indicated that decisions made at the meeting will determine whether or not they will ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Some have made this indication as a sincere signal that they are willing to stand up and take on their responsibilities. We applaud this sincerity and sense of responsibility. Unfortunately, others have used it as a veiled threat to ensure that the negotiations at this meeting fall in their favour. We find this highly regrettable.

Mr President,

We believe that we all share a responsibility to address the issue of climate change. To this end, Tuvalu is exploring the potential for converting the whole country over to renewable energy technologies. Under the guidance of the Education and Scientific Cooperation of Asia and Pacific we are exploring the potential of hydrogen power as a source of energy for our nation.

Finally, Mr President,

Tuvalu as the newest member of the United Nations, firmly believes that the family of nations that are represented at this meeting under your careful and insightful guidance will reach a solution to bring about a meaningful contribution to addressing the issue of climate change.

We have great faith in your leadership and look forward to fruitful and sincere negotiations.

Thank you.