



Remarks

by

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High Representative

and

Under-Secretary General

**for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States**

High-level Event on Loss and Damage and the 2030 Agenda
“Building Strong Linkages”

co-hosted by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Af-
fairs

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Fiji Pavilion, Bula Zone

Bonn, Germany

Your Excellency - Honourable Frank Bainimarama,
Your Excellency, Thoraq Ibraim, Minister of Environment, Maldives
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends

I thank you for the opportunity to share a few thoughts with you.
This is an important gathering and I thank the Under-Secretary General of the
Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Liu Zhenmin for co-organizing this event with
us-- the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing
Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Loss and damage as a term and I quote “ stands for impacts of climate related stressors that occur
despite efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to climate change. Loss and
damage can result from sudden onset events like cyclones as well as slow-onset processes such
as sea level rise. Loss and damage can occur in human systems such as livelihoods as well as
natural systems such as biodiversity - “ end of quote

Cyclones, sea level rise, attendant biodiversity loss and leave alone loss of life,
livelihoods and loss of hope for the future are not abstract concepts for island nations. It is their
and their peoples lived reality. Small island states can put many many faces to the words I just
shared with you. Sea-level rise coupled with extreme weather events induced by climate change
poses one of the most immediate threats to the very existence of island nations.

To illustrate my point, the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate
Change (IPCC) reports for the tropical western Pacific where a large number of small island com-
munities is concentrated, rates of the sea level rise between 1993 and 2009 - so a mere 16 years
- of up to four times the global average recorded!

Those of you who have lived on an atoll , I am sure have an idea of what this means!!! Don't we
all love the beautiful coast lines of our planet, hasn't coast line living become ever more sought
after ? But how many coast lines have already disappeared and will continue to disappear rapidly
if we do not act with urgency?

It is already beyond a doubt that climate change impacts will exceed adaptation
capacities of small island developing states.

Now consider that already in 1991 the Alliance of Small Island Development States (AOSIS)
alerted us to this when the UNFCCC was just being drafted.

More than a quarter of a century later, meaning also already a generation later and while politics
catches up with science, there is much to be decided on a way forward to address the issue of loss
and damage.

Indeed, COP21 provided an impetus for the continuation of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM). More recently at the COP22, in Marrakesh, the mandate of its Executive Committee was expanded to establish a clearinghouse for risk transfer and a task force for climate change displacement.

However important questions remain about the future of the Warsaw Mechanism, and specific issues it will address.

Adaptation is not and cannot be a one size fits all undertaking. Adaptation is place and content specific.

There is clearly a limit to what people or natural systems can adapt to. --- Can we expect small islands nations to climate proof after every disaster? What about disaster-prone SIDS that are in danger of becoming uninsurable? Can adaptation measures address the food security risks facing SIDS as a result of impacts of climate change? Can alternative livelihoods compensate for job losses arising from water shortage, and slow onset events such as loss of coastal ecosystems and loss of biodiversity threatening the SIDS?

These are just some of many questions we need to find answers to. I also must draw your attention to those losses which extend far beyond impact on economic outputs or impacts we commonly refer to, for some of the low lying SIDS such as Kiribati, Maldives and Tuvalu – it is nothing less than national sovereignty and national heritage that are at stake.

Ladies and gentlemen, Indeed, these critical interlinkages between impacts of climate change, resilience building and sustainable development of the SIDS are clearly outlined in the SAMOA Pathway.

OHRLLS is foremost entrusted with advocacy and enhancing coherence in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway at the global, regional and national levels.

We are your voice, your partner and we must work strongly together to build synergy and coherence between the SAMOA Pathway and the various key agreements we have reached.

As they say and as I will keep repeating in different fora: think globally and act locally.

All this though needs more than just words and to move to action , I have proposed to establish a network of SIDS national focal points.

In the spirit of the Samoa Conference and that of Agenda 2030, we must promote and invest more in genuine and durable partnerships for and with SIDS.

Within OHRLLS, this stream of work is carried out in the context of the small island developing States global business network. The platform has already been instrumental in encouraging exchange of best practices and lessons learned and peer-learning among SIDS to SIDS. I am pleased to confirm that the 2018 SIDS-GBN will be held in Mauritius from 2-4 May 2018.

I am sure, I do not need to remind you of the destruction that took place across the Caribbean islands by Hurricanes Irma and Maria - however, let this be a strong wake-up call to all of the global community of how fragile SIDS are to exogenous shocks and how these shocks are beyond their control.

You have seen the pictures that for days went across the globe - loss and damage were vividly illustrated by these often unbearable pictures.

They showed how the SIDS given their size, geographic position and often fragmentation, their transport issues were faced with utter destruction in disproportionate ways and how peoples lives were obliterated in seconds.

There are three key points I wish to bring to your attention when we talk about building strong linkages between loss and damage and the 2030 agenda.

First,

we must enhance our understanding and support of the issue through data, statistics and knowledge. As I said, there is no one size fits all. If support and actions are to be effective they must be responsive to the needs of small island developing states. Even from a risk-management perspective, it pays to have as much information as we can about the intensity of storms, changing weather patterns and information on slow onset events such as coral bleaching so vulnerable countries are better prepared to manage these risks and minimize losses.

Second

we must scale-up climate finance, technology and capacity-building. These three issues are linked and need ALL our urgent support. We have to show action and support in areas such as early warning systems, disaster preparedness, risk assessment and management, and insurance. This support will go a long way in building the resilience of SIDS and minimizing the loss associated with extreme weather events.

I have said it in other fora and I say it again and will continue to do so: a challenge for the SIDS - is to navigate through the climate finance landscape. The finance landscape consists of growing number of funds and programmes, each and every fund with their own policies, forms and reporting requirements and dare I say bureaucracy. We must think of appropriate ways to enable SIDS to fully tap into these resources to support their resilience-building efforts. We must do so fast! Real lives are at stake.

Third,

we need more focus and coherence to address the issue of Loss and Damage if we want to have tangible impact. We therefore must encourage all stakeholders, in the spirit of the Paris Agreement, to embrace focus and coherence. The very concept of loss of damage is yet to be clearly defined within the UNFCCC. For small island developing states, the imminent and very real risks of climate displacement and related migration issues will be much harder to manage purely through

loss and damage and purely viewed through an adaptation lens. Responses to loss and damage need to have in their sense these real and vital concerns of SIDS which can no longer wait.

I am confident that Fiji, as the president of COP23, and as the first SIDS nation ever holding this position, will pave the way for greater cooperation among all stakeholders towards addressing the issue of loss and damage, a priority concern of all vulnerable countries, including SIDS.

As the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, my Office stands ready to work with all of you so that progress on this important issue happens hopefully sooner rather than later. This is what we owe countless people looking to us to now move words into action.

Thank you.