Remarks

by

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu

High Representative
and
Under-Secretary General

Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

at

Associate Member and Observers Dialogue with Forum Leaders

14 August 2019, Tuvalu
Your Excellency, Prime Minister Sopoaga, Chair of the 50th Pacific Islands Leaders Forum

Your Excellencies - Pacific Leaders,

Dame Meg Taylor, Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum,

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Malo e lelei, Talofa

On behalf of H.E. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, thank you, Prime Minister Sopoaga and Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, for convening this important meeting guided by your vision and leadership.

I convey deep appreciation to the Government and people of Tuvalu for hosting us.

Thank you for your warm and generous welcome to all of us.

I have indeed the distinct privilege to represent the United Nations at the request of H.E. Secretary-General António Guterres.

The Secretary-General extends his warm greetings and his best wishes to Pacific Leaders for a successful meeting.

He was honoured to meet with many of you in May this year, his first visit to the region as United Nations Secretary-General.

He saw first-hand the challenges facing the region. He learnt about the leadership Pacific governments are displaying in their efforts to tackle climate change, protect the oceans and boost sustainable development.

The Secretary-General consistently raises and amplifies the voice of the Pacific to the rest of the world. He stresses the need for urgent action on climate change not only for the sake of the Pacific region, but for the whole world as so aptly said in his own words on leaving the region, and I quote "to save the Pacific is to save the whole world" (end of quote)

He looks forward to welcoming you to the United Nations in New York in September.

It indeed is an honour to be with you for this 50th Pacific Islands Leaders Forum, with the theme of:
“Securing our Future in the Pacific.”

The theme strongly resonates with our determination as the United Nations to support your vision of a Blue Pacific. A Pacific of resilient and sustainable island communities.

Our priorities are shared and encapsulated in the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development, and include climate change, oceans, gender equality, health, education, and so much more.

[Regional Peace and Security]

We commend the progress made in developing an implementation plan for the expanded regional security framework agreed by leaders last year in the Boe Declaration.

Enhanced cooperation will be necessary to collectively meet the emerging security challenges posed by climate change, cyber security, as well as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and transnational crime.

The United Nations is listening carefully to the priority areas of focus emerging in your discussions about climate security, and stands ready to support you in the implementation of your declaration under the framework of the Boe Action plan. The Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund is responding to this call, with a focus on programming on climate security tailored to the Pacific context. We look forward to engaging with you on this, to underpin existing advocacy and programming efforts in this area.

[Peacebuilding]

We commend national efforts underway on peacebuilding. The United Nations supports the leadership of the Solomon Islands in taking forward peacebuilding priorities, in partnership with the Peacebuilding Fund and Commission, following the departure of the successful Regional Assistance Mission.

We also congratulate the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government for your joint progress in implementing the Bougainville Peace Agreement, including the forthcoming referendum on the political future of Bougainville, which the UN will continue to support.

[Humanitarian]

On humanitarian issues, we commend Pacific Government leadership in recent emergency responses and progress on localization of humanitarian assistance. The UN remains committed to supporting nationally-led response capacity in the Pacific. We would also like to thank France, Australia and New Zealand for their support to nationally-led responses in the Pacific and facilitation of UN logistical responses.
We encourage Pacific Island countries to continue to implement the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit, with a particular focus on support to people with disabilities in preparedness and response to emergency.

**SAMOA Pathway**

Indeed, the issues of the Pacific nations are high on the agenda of the United Nations. We approach the SAMOA Pathway mid-term review in September.

We commend the leadership of the Pacific states for the progress you have individually and collectively made in the implementation of this important agenda.

As the Outcome Document of the Pacific SIDS Regional Preparatory Meeting in Nuku’alofa shows, progress has been made in all three pillars of sustainable development. However, key challenges persist and time is of the essence.

Climate change has and will continue to exacerbate existing development challenges. You have reiterated your concerns over emerging challenges including those posed by climate induced migration and displacement facing the Pacific region.

Tackling these requires strengthened partnerships and increased international cooperation. This must include measures to leverage appropriate and speedier levels of climate finance for effective action to build resilience to climate change. This will complement broader efforts to build a stable and secure Pacific.

The high-level review of the SAMOA Pathway on the 27th of September provides a critical opportunity for world leaders to put a spotlight on SIDS.

The negotiations on the Political Declaration is now at an advanced stage. The Declaration to be endorsed in the meeting will underscore the priority areas for action in the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway over the next five years. We look forward to seeing you in New York for this strategic and very important occasion.

**Climate Action Summit**

As you know, the Climate Action Summit takes place in New York on 23 September.

This is a unique opportunity to boost ambition and accelerate actions to implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. For the future of the Pacific and our shared planet, all countries must follow your example at the Climate Summit and review their commitments with concrete and realistic plans for zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The Summit will showcase a leap in collective national political ambition, and it will demonstrate massive movements in the real economy in support of the agenda.
The moral leadership of the Pacific region will continue to be essential to achieving a successful Summit.

**UN reform/MCO Review**

The United Nations must deliver and to deliver for the Pacific and all regions, the United Nations itself continues to implement the member states approved ambitious internal reform agenda.

We thank you, Pacific Island countries, for your constructive engagement in this vital process. We very much hope you already see and above all experience benefits of the Resident Coordinator system, newly empowered to play a key role in ensuring coherence among UN actors.

To better tailor our assistance, the UN will develop Country Action Plans - owned by countries - to align programmatic activities with country priorities.

It is important that the United Nations is well positioned geographically to adequately serve countries in the Pacific. To that end the Secretary-General’s report on the Multi-Country Office Review recommended a new Office for the Northern Pacific and this is now being consulted with Member States.

**[UN-PIF cooperation]**

These reforms also aim to make the United Nations a more effective partner for regional organizations and this includes of course the Pacific Islands Forum.

We wish to thank Dame Meg Taylor, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, for all her contributions to strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the PIF.

It is only together that the complex, pressing challenges spanning climate action, peace and security, oceans, and sustainable development can be addressed and so we count on our partnership and your continued support and active engagement.

Fakafetai Lasi