

Tactical manoeuvring on climate change must end, South Pacific leaders tell UN debate



Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa

26 September 2009 – Countries can no longer afford to play “blame or shame” games or to wait for other nations to take the lead if they are to strike a meaningful deal on reducing greenhouse gas emissions when they gather in Copenhagen in December, the leaders of South Pacific nations told the General Assembly today.

Samoa 's Prime Minister Tuila'epa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi used his address to the Assembly's high-level debate to warn that reaching a climate change agreement at the global talks in the Danish capital will be a “test of multilateral solidarity.”

Although acknowledging the historical responsibility for the causes of climate change was legitimate, he said that “allowing it to get in the way of making decisions... would be a grave mistake.”

This week, at United Nations Headquarters in New York , Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon staged an unprecedented high-level summit on climate change to try to build momentum ahead of the talks in Copenhagen , where countries are hoping to reach a pact on cutting emissions when the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012.

Mr. Malielegaoi said time was already running out, especially for small island nations such as his own.

“Playing the ‘blame and shame’ tactics, or ‘waiting to be led but not willing to lead,’ are no longer options. For no single nation, no single group of nations, and no single organization on its own can win the war against climate change,” he said.

“The divergent yet inextricably linked interests of Member States demands that we ‘seal a deal’ in Copenhagen .”

Feleti Vaka'uta Sevele, Prime Minister of **Tonga**, urged countries to seize the opportunity to “change the wasteful energy habits of a lifetime into the productive energy habits of the future.”

Mr. Sevele stressed that the pledges and rhetoric made by presidents and prime ministers at this week's summit were not enough – they have to be matched by actions.

Tuvalu's Prime Minister Apisai Ielemia said he was hopeful that the Copenhagen negotiations would prove to be a watershed in the fight against climate change.

"I hold great faith in this conference. But my faith will be diminished if key milestones are not achieved," he said, citing – among others – an agreement to reduce overall emissions by 2015, strong commitments from wealthy nations to finance and support poor countries become more resilient to climate change, and a focus on reducing emissions from deforestation, albeit in a coherent manner.

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