

Statement at the Opening of the 79th Commission Session

H.E. Mr. KAUSEA NATANO

Prime Minister of Tuvalu

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It's a great honor to deliver a statement at the annual Commission session, on behalf of my country, Tuvalu.

At the outset, I wish to express my appreciation to the Government and People of the Kingdom of Thailand for the kind hospitality accorded to our delegation present in Bangkok.

Congratulations and thanks are also due to the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, for ESCAP's work in the Pacific, particularly through the Subregional Office for the Pacific in Suva.

As Pacific nations recover from the socio-economic devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic, as a subregion of ESCAP, we face the single greatest existential threat of climate change. As emphasized by the Executive Secretary in this year's Theme Study, "The Race to Net Zero": Accelerating Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific", the need for countries to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change, must be front and centre of the region's post-pandemic recovery.

For Tuvalu, the climate crisis is creating an increasingly uncertain future in our Blue Pacific. In three words, **we are sinking**. Our people, in my generation or the next, will be unable to exist on the islands that have nurtured our ancestors for centuries. We are raising ambition in climate action, but we also have to prepare for a worst-case scenario.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I commend ESCAP for highlighting the transformation required for enhanced climate ambition and action. Tuvalu supports regional frameworks and architecture on climate-smart trade and investment, climate finance, energy transition, low-carbon transport and strengthening of statistical capacity. These areas of action are

important policy strategies in the Pacific. As a leader of one of the smallest islands nations of the Pacific if not the world, we must take these recommendations forward within the context of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Tuvalu's national development policies, including its Te Kete 2021–2030 vision, have identified policy priorities which are consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Last year, with the launch of the Tuvalu National Trade Development Strategy (2022-2026) and our first ever Voluntary National Review, our government's policies are very much aligned with the overall sustainability and climate-smart trade and digital policy options articulated in the Theme Study. We are doing our part, so I urge development partners and the international community to come and join forces in our journey.

Like other developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States, Tuvalu needs predictable and adequate climate finance to mitigate and adapt to climate impacts. Pacific small island developing States face the largest economic losses due to the frequent occurrence of natural and biological hazards.

The Theme Study recommends the creation of a regional fund to defray the costs of member States in preparing low-carbon-transition or energy-transition projects and encourages the adoption of green technologies, including preparing policies to decarbonize the transport sector.

This recommendation resonates very strongly with Tuvalu. We have been advocating for many years on the need to scale up financing as we confront limited fiscal space and growing debt vulnerabilities. In this regard, we step up our call for enhanced transparency of financial flows and facilitating access to developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States. Let's work together to turn commitments into action.

Looking ahead, ESCAP's proposed regional platform is essential to support climate-related action. Aligned to this, I am pleased to see our progress in the development of the Pacific Regional Framework for Climate Mobility, a unique initiative of the UN, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and other regional partners together with Pacific nations. We know well that climate action requires inclusive multilateralism

and regional cooperation in synergy with the 2030 Agenda, SAMOA Pathway and the Paris Agreement commitments.

Finally, I count on the leadership and support of the ESCAP membership in accelerating climate action in the Pacific and beyond. We need to uphold the principles of regional cooperation and solidarity to achieve net-zero and keep global warming within 1.5°C.