The Honourable Premier of Niue Island.

Hon Toke Tufukia Talagi

at the 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit,

Chiang Mai City- Thailand.

20th May 2013

Your Excellency, The Honourable Prime Minister of Thailand,

Chairperson of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum committee and the Organising Committee for the 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit
Respective Heads of States and Head of Governments for Asia and Pacific Region
President of the 67th Session of United Nations General Assembly, President of Asian Development Bank,
Leaders of Sub Regional Coordinators for Asia and Pacific Region
Distinguish Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen

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I am honoured to be here and visit your beautiful country, experiencing your culture and meet your friendly people and experience first hand, their warm hospitality. I am also deeply honoured to visit at a time that your country is Commemorating His Majesty’s the Kings 7th Cycle Birthday Anniversary coinciding with the 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit.

I am here, because I am concerned that not enough is being done with respect to this extremely critical issue. There have been many declarations made and our political intentions at these meetings are very clear. And the declaration that has been made here which I support wholeheartedly highlights this.

I am also here, to share our experiences and to highlight those issues which are extremely important to my country and the pacific.

We all know that water and its many issues and challenges and impacts is a product of climate change, increasing population pressures, unsustainable economic and financial practices and lack of political decisiveness. Climate change is the latest challenge out of the many that had bedevilled us all and unfortunately this has occurred because of our inability to curb carbon emissions and its consequential impact on rising temperatures, sea level rise and other consequential and potentially irreversible costs

We have all experienced the impact of more frequent and intense natural disasters that have occurred in all corners of the world.
We are slaves to our demand for energy derived from fossil fuels and the fact that our efforts for alternative renewable non CO2 producing energy has not make an impact yet also highlights our dilemma.

Our scientific solutions are starting to show results but they are not keeping up with the ever increasing global demand for unsustainable production using fossil fuels.

Worst yet is the impact that this CO2 is having on our seas as it absorbs more and more CO2. It is very likely that apart from rising sea temperatures we will also have the very real challenge of the changing pH and Acidity of the seas so that the oceans environment will impact our biggest food source-fish.

Sanitation is also a major issue in the pacific particularly the small vulnerable atolls scattered on the ocean surface. Even the bigger Pacific Island countries are facing the challenge of increasing waste and its impact on scarce land and the very real problem of polluting water supplies

Time. Distinguished guests are our worst enemy. But we are also culpable since we have been responsible for allowing this time lapse to occur because of our own lack of political will to act decisively internationally in a timely manner.

But lamenting this lack of decisiveness is not the answer either. I believe that

1. It is time to move on, learning from our past mistakes and doing a better job going forward
2. Accept that what is done has been done.
3. Shift our focus towards those solutions that will help us both regionally but particularly nationally
4. Recognise that each and every one of us will have our own unique solutions to our own unique challenges.
5. That the solution for the larger Asian countries are very different from those for small land scarce Pacific Island countries
6. Time stops for no one

For my country in particular, our focus currently is protecting our water resource through better knowledge,

1. Of the size of and capacity of the water supplies from all sources and plan its use and destructive capacity during times of surplus, but even more critically at times of severe scarcity whatever the cause.
2. Ensuring that this is distributed well.
3. Protecting it from being polluted by both chemical, and biological contamination
4. Developing and implementing better waste management systems
5. Lever edging the financial resources to enable us to implement our key water policy objectives
6. Make the key political decisions and priorities including passing appropriate legislative framework laws to manage all the above.
7. Seek sustainable practical solutions financially and socially.
8. Advocating and seeking international political decisiveness to the solutions that we need to make.

I am a great advocate for planning, and then budgeting for the implementation of that plan via the annual budget allocations both in the operational and the investment and development financial system. They both work in tandem and must correlate interdependently and intimately.
I have found that our national strategic plans and annual budgets were not necessarily linked. Both were produced by different ministries and both appeared to have their own set of priorities goals and outcomes!

I have likened this link to the building of a home. Plan the house then provide the budget to build it.

I wish to thank the donors and financial institutions which have provided financial support for our water programs. We value this support greatly. If there is an element of criticism it is that the costs for administrating and providing these funds should be minimised so that their greatest value is provided in the implementation of these projects and the best outcomes are that the community benefits the most.

Water is life and often this very fact is subservient to the need for high administration costs and making a profit. Let us not use sustainable solutions to make the costs for providing water be the slave to and subservient for excessive profits for the investors and financial institutions.

Finally, let me also acknowledge the youth contributions to our deliberations. It is appropriate and critically important.

I also acknowledge all the hard work that has been done by the organisers and the various committees involved.

Prime Minister, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Quests.

Thank you for your Attention.

Kia Fakamonoina mai he Atua e Fonoaga Lilifu Nei.