

Indigenous Peoples Major Group Statement
3rd UN Conference on Small Islands Developing States
3 Sept. 2014, Morning Plenary, Apia, Samoa

Presented by Mr. Petero Qaloibau, Sisi Initiative Site Support Group, Fiji

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, distinguished colleagues

On behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group, I thank you for this opportunity to share our views in this historic context.

We thank the host government, the organizers, supporters, and especially the people of Samoa for the incredible hospitality being extended to all the visitors of this beautiful country. As Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous persons with disabilities, indigenous women, children and youth, and indigenous older persons, we recognize our relations and remain honored and humbled to be received in such a traditional manner.

We are also cautiously encouraged by conference theme “genuine and durable partnerships” and welcome the specific reference to Indigenous Peoples in paragraph 40 of the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway in connection to climate change; however, we are concerned with the invisibility of Indigenous Peoples throughout the rest of the document. As we learned with the MDG process, invisibility does not promote genuine and durable partnerships.

The S.A.M.O.A. Pathway’s lack of reference to Indigenous Peoples of SIDS is inconsistent with the intent expressed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Article 18, for example, recognizes our right to “participate in decision-making” in matters which would affect our rights. It is also inconsistent with the spirit of the Rio + 20 outcome document, The Future We Want, which in paragraph 49, affirms the importance of the UNDRIP “in the context of global, regional, national and subnational implementation of sustainable development strategies.”

While we understand that the drafting phase of the S.A.M.O.A pathway is closed, we note the document was technically revised on August 26. As such, we recommend an additional technical revision in paragraph 80 to maintain consistency with the UNDRIP, Rio + 20, and other relevant international instruments. The technically revised paragraph would read:

80. We recognize that small island developing States possess a wealth of culture, which is a driver and an enabler for sustainable development. In particular, **the traditional knowledge and cultural expression of Indigenous Peoples and local communities**, which underscores the deep connections among people, culture, knowledge and the natural environment, can meaningfully advance sustainable development and social cohesion.

Original paragraph reads:

80. We recognize that small island developing States possess a wealth of culture, which is a driver and an enabler for sustainable development. In particular, indigenous and traditional knowledge and cultural expression, which underscores the deep connections among people, culture, knowledge and the natural environment, can meaningfully advance sustainable development and social cohesion.

Likewise, in paragraph 81(c), the technically revised paragraph should read “...involve **Indigenous Peoples and local communities** for the benefit of present and future generations;”

Original paragraph reads:

81. (c) To develop and strengthen national and regional cultural activities and infrastructures, including through the network of World Heritage Sites, which reinforce local capacities, promote awareness in small island developing States, enhance tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including local and indigenous knowledge, and involve local people for the benefit of present and future generations;

Mr. President, beyond these technical revisions, Indigenous Peoples should be specifically referenced and engaged in the implementation plan of the S.A.M.O.A Pathway, as well as in local, national, and international implementation of the post-2015 Development Agenda. The UNDRIP, relevant UN Conventions, Treaties, and other constructive agreements should inform implementation and engagement of the Indigenous Peoples of SIDS.

In closing, genuine and durable partnerships with Indigenous Peoples of SIDS, inclusive and consistent with our rights, should be seen as a part of the solution, not as an obstacle.

Finally, the Indigenous Major Group expresses our support for the statements presented by the Major Groups Forum and the PAPAPAPAITAI DECLARATION issued by the World Network of Indigenous and Local Community Land and Sea Managers Pacific Caucus Delegates.

Thank you.