

TUVALU GOVERNMENT



MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORT

STATEMENT

IMO: ISWG - WEPC21

London, United Kingdom: 3 – 7 July 2017

Mr Chair, fellow IMO members, good morning/afternoon and thank you for allowing me to speak to you today.

My name is Monise Laafai and I am the Minister of Communication and Transport for the Government of Tuvalu.

I know that you have much to get through in this Committee so I will be brief.

Tuvalu, like other of our Pacific neighbours and other Small Island Developing States, actually we consider ourselves to be Large Ocean States, but are profoundly affected and extremely vulnerable to climate change impacts, and that is why we are here today.

With only 26 km² of land, all our 9 islands are low lying and on average less than 2m above sea level. In fact, we are the second lowest-lying country in the world after the Maldives. The UN considers that Tuvalu may well be the first nation to suffer from complete loss of landmass due to climate change. Whilst we are threatened by the rising seas, it is the changes this brings to our freshwater sources and supplies that will make our country uninhabitable first.

Increasingly, severe storms erode our protecting reefs. King tides and storm surges will easily wash over our islands. We experienced this when

Tropical Cyclone Pam, which caused so much devastation to our neighbours Vanuatu in 2015, also generated storm surges of between 4 and 5 metres across our islands.

At the same time, international shipping is a key pillar of our economy. 98% of our imports and all our exports are transported by sea. Our seafarers' remittances make up half of our national income. We must ensure that in parallel to decarbonising shipping, we safeguard its role enabling vital links between countries, and employment opportunities for future generations.

Tuvalu, along with all our Pacific Island neighbours, are signatories to the Majuro and Suva Declarations, and therefore fully committed to doing all we can to keep global temperature increases to well below 1.5 degrees.

Mr Chairman, the issue of climate change and sea level rise puts Tuvalu's very existence as a sovereign nation at risk, and that is precisely why we have travelled for days to be here with you to discuss this critical issue.

So, I humbly urge all of us here today to progress the development of IMO's roadmap as a matter of urgency and to work tirelessly to reach a collaborative agreement on what is needed to develop IMO's strategy for reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions.

For the survival of my country and our neighbours, I beg that we must all strive collectively for the highest level of ambition possible.

Mr Chair, Tuvalu fully and very strongly support the vision of decarbonisation of shipping by the second half of this century.

Therefore, we hope this week that we can at least agree on an unambiguous vision for the Strategy, centred on decarbonisation of international shipping, and that the Working Group progresses the development of an effective structure for the further intersessional meetings.

I would be grateful if this statement could be added to the Committee's report.

Thank you.