

Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Speaking on behalf of UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres, let me thank the Third Conference on Small Island Developing States and the Government of Samoa. I am honored to join the chorus of voices celebrating contributions of Small Island Developing States.

There is no better location to discuss the future of Small Island Developing States. Here, we must recognize that the threats island nations face from climate change are unprecedented, unparalleled and for many, existential.

The IPCC lays it out clearly, but you have experiential evidence of the how island states are vulnerable, and it has been discussed at great length during this conference.

Today we meet less than one month before the Secretary General Climate Summit in New York, less than 3 months before nations place a draft new, universal climate change agreement on the table in Lima and less than 15 months before Paris, where the international community has committed to enact that agreement.

This is our window of opportunity to move to development that keeps islands above water, keeps people safe and keeps economies growing as the drivers of climate change are reduced.

This window is open, but closing fast. Above all, we have not become cognizant of the implied challenges of staying below 2 degree Celsius rise. If we want a fighting chance, we must reach climate neutrality in the second half of the century.

That means reversing the emissions curve in the near future and balancing emissions with the absorptive capacity of the planet to create truly sustainable development. Achieving this depends on three things:

First, national policy must move every nation towards bending down the emissions curve and deep decarbonization of the global economy.

Policy supports nationally determined contributions that form the backbone of the new, universal climate change agreement and policy in place now ramps up ambition and increases our chance of a climate safe future.

Second, business must be on board. Investment and industry are waking up to the fact that non-action on climate change poses more risk than regulations pose.

Industry earns returns from investing in resilient supply chains, renewable energy and energy efficiency. Investors see clean energy, climate friendly assets and green bonds as safer and better for their beneficiaries in the long term.

Third, the public must join the solution. Governments and business cannot act alone. Action by all is the only path to transformational change.

In these areas, much visionary leadership comes from Small Island Developing States.

National policy made Tokelau the first country run completely on renewables, with many island nations committing to a clean, efficient energy future.

Business leadership in the Caribbean shows islands a path away from costly fuels and disaster risk reduction attracts investment in the face of impacts.

Island peoples are increasingly involved, mobilizing communities to join in decision making and actively adapt.

The impacts of climate change will be felt everywhere by everyone. This conference has reverberated this truth the world over. The urgency to act is indisputable. But so is the proof that action is possible, profitable and paramount.

In this rapidly closing window of opportunity, Small Island Developing States show the course to chart: put policy in place to reduce emissions, build communities' capacity to adapt and open the door to finance and new technologies.

And then, make these actions visible and show that a climate-neutral future is a climate safe future, a prosperous and healthy future.

Standing on island shores, we easily see that arriving at a faraway destination requires planning ahead, charting a course and harnessing natural forces of wind and ocean and tide. It is no different for charting the course to climate neutrality.

We must set that course and let inspiring action and ambition already happening – much of it in small island states – be the wind in our sails that speeds our journey to a sustainable future.

Thank you.