Statement by
Dr. T. Suka Mangisi, Deputy Permanent Representative
of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations at the General Debate under Agenda Item 19 on
Sustainable Development at the Second Committee during the

Mr. Chairman,

Tonga associates itself with the statement delivered by Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and
China, the statement delivered by Nauru on behalf of the Alliance Of Small Island States
(AOSIS), and the state to be delivered / delivered by Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Pacific
Small Island Developing States.

Tonga thanks the Secretary-General for his reports on the agenda items under discussion today
and wishes to make five additional and brief comments about sustainable development in its
national capacity.

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset I want to point to the connection between the situation of my country, Tonga,
and the world at large. Many of my country’s problems are uncommon, like limited space for
industry, but on a deeper level we believe that other countries can learn a lot about themselves in
studying our situation carefully.

The gravity of the impact of climate change and rising sea level in my country and the Pacific
regionat large crystallizes questions about sustainability, intergenerational solidarity, and
harmony with nature in a way that they do not yet for other countries. However, in the future the
wider international community will have to face similar issues with similar trade-offs. Small
Island Developing States (SIDS) can make an important contribution to the international
community as a whole in how to think about and best react to natural disasters and their social
and economic consequences and be the nurturing ground for successful responses around the
globe. It is for this reason that we believe the international community might treat Tonga and the
other SIDS not as a special case but as a reflection of the future, from which lessons may be
learned and determine how engagement should be made.
Mr. Chairman,

My delegation, in response to the implementation of the **Mauritius Strategy**, we point out that that SIDS not only remain affected by small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export bases, and exposure to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks, but SIDS have suffered significant **setbacks** due to the recent global economic and financial crisis, the energy crisis and the food crisis. Tonga wishes to remind fellow member states of the Rio +20 outcome document which noted with concern that SIDS have made less progress than other countries.

Tonga has carried its share of realizing the Mauritius Strategy. We developed, for example, the Tonga Energy Road Map 2010-2020 which sets out our path toward a sustainable and low-carbon energy sector. Moreover, Fiji will host the ninth Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas this December and Tonga hopes to actively participate in formulating our new five year action strategy with a focus on “building resilience for a changing Pacific.”

Tonga encourages Member States and UN agencies alike to visit the website of the Small Island Developing States Network, at sidsnet.org, to learn more about the situation which Tonga and countries in similar geographical situations face today. We believe it important for Member States to have a concrete idea about the critical nature of the problem. We further welcome the development of the “country vulnerability-resilience profile” that will help SIDS to better learn from each other in coping with our challenges.

Mr. Chairman,

**Regarding natural disasters**, as estimated by the World Bank, Tonga sustains 6.6 percent of average annualized losses from natural disasters. This dramatic situation is further exacerbated by the high volatility in disaster severity making it hard for Tonga to plan an adequate response. The international community needs to be aware that while often only large disasters show up on their news, it is the “extensive risk, characterized by low-severity, high-frequency disasters,” that is one of the greatest challenges for Tonga’s development.

Investing into disaster resilience has a double pay-off as it not only protects the people and their livelihoods but also any future investments tailored for other development goals. As we stressed at Rio +20 these interlinkages must be recognized and move us toward more coordinated and comprehensive investment strategies.

Tonga supports the Secretary-General’s conclusion that bolder and more focused action is necessary to pre-empt future risks and joins the Secretary-General in recommending the aspect of disaster risk reduction as part of the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals. Tonga itself has put disaster risk management on top of its agenda as is visible from the recent development of our “Joint National Action Plan on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management 2010-2015.”
Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to speak a little on the concept of global solidarity—among nations and between generations. Intergenerational solidarity is a clear challenge to SIDS like Tonga where a real concern is our children’s ability to have a home where we have had it for generations. Our national context crystallizes the issue of intergenerational solidarity to an extent that it has not yet done so in developed countries. This, again, should make the international community interested in the SIDS context, to learn from it, and to assist it to overcome its challenges so that developed world may find avenues to move forward in their own like challenges.

Every person’s life is fundamentally shaped by the options available to him or her and an integral part of intergenerational solidarity must be the conservation of options. In Tonga, we are losing this fight for the conservation of options toward our children right now and largely because of factors outside our control. In strengthening the international community’s support toward SIDS, the world shows its solidarity with our children. This is especially warranted as Tonga firmly agrees with the Secretary-General in stating that “the developed world holds the responsibility for climate change mitigation through the reduction of carbon emissions.”

In moving towards international solidarity, the principle of solidarity with future generations should be firmly embedded in the international law of our time and feature prominently in the operative texts of treaties and resolutions.

Mr. Chairman,

Finally, my delegation wishes to state that development has often been translated into becoming a part of the world’s mass production and consumption system. This has to be reconsidered. In particular if we take the ideal of sustainability seriously in the sustainable development goals of the post-2015 agenda, we need to recognize the limits of our planet and the need to live in harmony with it.

Harmony with nature must also entail living in harmony with our oceans and seas. To ensure that oceans and seas receive the required attention, Tonga joins the other Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) in calling for a standalone sustainable development goal that deals exclusively with the oceans and seas.

Tonga echoes the recommendation of the Secretary General to emphasize the ideas of harmony with nature in education around the world. Our children will one day own this world and their reconceptualization of life as benefitting from harmony with nature will be an integral part of sustainable development in the generations to come.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.