Statement of H.E. Mr. Mahe ‘U. S. Tupouniua, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations and Chair of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) on the Adoption of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway at the 69th Session of the General Assembly

New York, Friday, 14th November, 2014

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Thank you for the floor, Mr. President,

I am honored to be speaking on behalf of the 12 Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) present at the United Nations, namely the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and my own country Tonga.

I want to first take this opportunity to profoundly thank and to congratulate the Government and People of the Independent State of Samoa on the memorable hosting of the Third International Conference on SIDS in September this year. Also, as the region that played host to the Conference for the first time ever, we are particularly proud of its success. Our gratitude also extends to the co-chairs of New Zealand and Singapore, the respective members of the bureau, the UN Secretariat and all participants that contributed.

Mr. President,

The SAMOA Pathway just adopted reaffirms the special case of SIDS and also the vulnerabilities and challenges of small island developing States to the effects of, inter alia, natural disasters and climate change, and stresses the continued importance of the support of the international community in pursuit of sustainable development.

The Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, is a crucial blueprint for broad-based improvements to the welfare of populations in all islands. It recognizes that for sustainable development to be possible, islands must take requisite actions in all three dimensions, namely social, environmental and economic. The detailed roadmap that the plan elaborates, based on actions across twenty different headings - from climate change to marine
resources, tourism to trade, health to culture - is one of the more detailed and valuable outputs that has resulted from cooperative action between small island developing states in all regions.

However, PSIDS acknowledge that implementation of the Mauritius Strategy has, at times, been uneven. Especially in light of the global economic recession, some islands regressed. In spite of the considerable efforts of Pacific states, many have been unable to attain internationally agreed goals and targets, including those set out in the Millennium Development Goals.

These shortfalls are best understood as a reflection of the enormous challenges faced by Pacific SIDS, and by SIDS globally. With low agricultural capacity, a small base of natural resources, and some unique infrastructure challenges, often compounded by geographic remoteness, SIDS face a set of additional hurdles in efforts to promote sustained, inclusive, and equitable economic growth. And these challenges are compounded by the reality of escalating adverse impacts of climate change. Extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and ocean acidification, among other impacts will make it harder to accomplish gains in sustainable development.

Mr. President,

These issues were emphasized by the International Conference in Samoa. The theme of the conference was “The sustainable development of small island developing States through genuine and durable partnerships.” The SAMOA Pathway follows the Mauritius Strategy in specifying actions that SIDS together with their partners can undertake in a variety of areas to further all three pillars of sustainable development.

As the theme of the SIDS conference stresses, partnerships and support of the international community is critical to success. PSIDS welcomes the continued adoption of this resolution by consensus as an important signal of that continued genuine and durable partnership. Now the time for implementation has come. Already we are working in Second Committee to follow up on three key areas: 1) On how to monitor the success of the partnerships announced in Samoa, as well as future partnerships further; 2) On how to continue the conversation in future UN deliberations, including the High-Level Political Forum; and 3) On how the UN support for SIDS can be strengthened.

How we define the follow-up will determine how the commitments made will be translated to success on the ground.

Finally, we as PSIDS therefore reiterate our commitment to take ownership and leadership and work with relevant stakeholders at all levels in ensuring that the SAMOA Pathway attains the success that it deserves whilst also laying a solid foundation that will serve as a springboard that complements the pursuit of the sustainable development goals the global community sets.

I thank you, Mr. President.