Statement by
H.E. Mr. Mahe Tupouniua, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations
on Agenda Item 21: Globalization and Interdependence at the Second Committee during the Sixty-Eighth Session of the General Assembly
New York, 23rd October 2013

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, Tonga wishes to associate itself with the statement delivered by Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Tonga would like to extend its gratitude and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports on the agenda items under discussion today and wishes to make four additional and brief comments about globalization and interdependence in its national capacity.

Mr. Chairman,

Firstly, I would like to speak on the issue of globalization and development generally. Globalization must benefit the developing countries of this world. The world and the UN development institutions in particular should be cautious so as to not neglect those countries that cannot benefit from the growing interdependence and international trade as much as other countries can. It is difficult for Tonga, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) generally, to foster sustainable industrialization and create the economies of scale necessary to reap the full benefits of globalization. These difficulties should not be forgotten and the affected countries must be afforded special consideration from the international community in this regard. If we speak of interdependence in this regard, it should connote a symbiotic relationship of states for mutual benefit. Such interdependence must be a cornerstone of the post-2015 development agenda.

Globalization may not be an evolution that the world passively watches. Globalization should rather be the product of our efforts and choices which have been actively and consciously shaped to serve our principles and needs. The United Nations is uniquely positioned to lead this effort. Equitable growth and effective use of our resources are two principles to strive for to ensure that globalization will be what we want it to be.
Tonga wants to emphasize the Secretary-General’s statement that there “remains a vacuum” in “regional mechanisms for managing globalization”. Tonga, through the Pacific Islands Forum has been active in such a regional mechanism that addresses the specific challenges of SIDS, but more needs to be done for globalization efforts to take into account unique regional contexts.

Mr. Chairman,

The second point I wish to make is with regards to the role of trade in globalization. Increase in international trade is an integral part of globalization. While Tonga considers free trade an important part of development, the challenge of healthy nutrition in Tonga makes it necessary to consider carefully the effects of free trade on the unlimited imports of foods with detrimental health effects. The link between free trade of unhealthy and fatty foods need our cautious and continuous attention. The Forum Trade Ministers meeting in July this year had noted this important link and are thus engaged in this regard.

For Tonga, as a SIDS, it is imperative that the level of official development assistance (ODA) available is either maintained or increased as it is distinctly linked to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals through aid for trade initiatives. It is insufficient for countries like Tonga to rely on the potential of international trade and investment to finance their development. For Tonga, the predictable provision of ODA remains fundamental to confronting and mastering the challenges of globalization.

Thirdly Mr. Chairman,

The environmental effects of globalization are especially concerning for Tonga. Globalization has come and continues to come at environmental costs. Carbon dioxide emissions have increased by 40 percent between 1990 and 2008. Increased natural disasters have contributed to the degradation of our coastlines. The Secretary-General himself has acknowledged that SIDS are especially vulnerable to these changes. Indeed, climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific. Tonga encourages the starting of a global dialogue to ensure that the global commons will be preserved for future generations as suggested by the Secretary-General in his report.

Tonga joins other SIDS in calling for the inclusion of climate change as a cross-cutting issue of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and for Oceans to be a thematic priority in the post-2015 United Nations development agenda.
Mr. Chairman,

My last and concluding point I wish to make relates to sustainable development in terms of energy. Moving towards more sustainable energy sources is vital for addressing environmental sustainability in the midst of the challenge of climate change.

Tonga agrees with the Secretary-General that research on ways to sustainably develop must be improved and therefore the collection of reliable data in this regard becomes increasingly important. In this vein, Tonga thinks that the implementation of the concept of establishing a Pacific Regional Data Repository for Sustainable Energy for All or PRDR for SE4ALL is a step in the right direction. It is pleasing to note that Pacific Heads of Delegation to the recent Leader’s Week last month had signed a Declaration in the presence of, and lodging with Secretary – General Ban Ki-moon evidencing the political commitment required in this regard.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman