

Kia Ora, and Bula Excellencies, my Indigenous family, and fellow attendees,

As an indigenous Polynesian woman, I am the descendent of ancestors who navigated the Pacific by the strength of their relationship to the natural world, not by accident, but with the intention to forge a pathway for generations to come.

Today, my indigenous brothers and sisters have again circumnavigated the globe to be here with you, at this important meeting.

As indigenous peoples, our traditional knowledge and technological innovations, anchored in the natural world, have enabled our peoples to not merely survive, but to prosper, adapt, and thrive in an ever changing world, without being at odds with Mother Earth.

So today, as parties discuss how to combat the greatest challenge of our time, know that as custodians, indigenous peoples have shown that this CAN be done. For we have done it before.

We believe that beyond every horizon lies undiscovered, or rather, untapped opportunities and solutions. In the face of climate change, the custodians of this planet will continue to do what we have always done. We will continue to listen to Mother Earth, and uphold our traditional knowledge. Because this is where solutions lie.

Yesterday evening was the culmination of a process that identified a pathway to operationalise the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform. Yesterday was also a day, when parties finally listened to indigenous voices.

We have witnessed a new fire, a fire of willingness and inclusion, cooperation between Indigenous Peoples and Parties in good faith, and we have received tremendous support from the COP presidency, and SBSTA chair.

So as we all continue to navigate a way forward on climate change, it is our profound wish that the light from that fire, as well as the direction from our ancestors, will illuminate the work of the coming days to ensure that we are all able to paddle this waka in the same direction.

Mauri Ora, Vinaka Vakalevu!