

Madam Chair Talofa! My name is Auiluma Lotoala from Tuvalu, a beautiful and peaceful country which has been labelled by the media as the sinking nation – we are not sinking, we are fighting for our rights to life and to remain on our islands.

Tuvalu is a small island situated to the north of Fiji in the Pacific. It has a population of around 10,000 peoples with a landmass of 26 square kilometers. We have no mountains, no rivers and therefore we rely on rainwater harvesting for our survival. The issue of climate change and rising sea threaten the future of our nation. The unprecedented challenges Tuvalu faces come in the form of an increased frequency of droughts, cyclones, king tides, storm surges, and erosion. The cumulative effects of rising sea levels and climate change expose a high degree of vulnerability.

Madam Chair, the most obvious threat is the incursion of king tides. King tide is not a new phenomenon, its frequency and intensity at present time is what makes the difference. The highest king-tide recorded in our history was on 28th of February 2006 with a height of 3.415m. It exceeded the 3.2m threshold mark. Could you imagine a country like Tuvalu with a highest point of less than 4 metre getting frequent visits of king tides?

During the king tide the island is flooded by sea water, it literally bubbles up through the ground flooding our land, destroying our traditional root crops. We are worried that in the future we will have no option but to leave behind what we called 'home.' If this is to happen, what will be the response from the EMPRIP?

Madam Chair, as a matter of urgency, allow me to propose the following recommendations to EMPRIP:

Firstly, EMRIP to request UNHCR and IOM to focus on the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples in the Pacific region, giving priority to the retention of the rights of Indigenous Peoples when forced to migrate due to the effects of climate change;

Secondly, EMRIP to request the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to include the respect for human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples as a principle in the development of the new treaty protecting biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ);

Lastly, EMRIP to support the protection of indigenous peoples' natural resources management and traditional livelihoods, through emphasizing the link between human rights and climate change in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Last but not the least, allow me to say thank you to the OHCHR for allowing be to participate in 2019 Indigenous Fellowship program.

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