Speech agenda 3: Cook Islands National statement

Thursday, 16 November 2023 | Roundtable (a) Population dynamics, sustainable development and climate change 09:00-10:30 hours

--------------------Speech starts-----------------------------

Excellencies, Honorable delegates, esteemed colleagues, and distinguished guests, Kia Orana and warm greetings from the Cook Islands.

Having just come out of the deliberations of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders 52nd meeting it is clear that we need to do more and we need to do it better.

The Cook Islands remains firmly committed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the attainment of holistic wellbeing for present and future generations. In December 2021 my government endorsed Te Ara Akapapa’anga Nui- the National sustainable development Agenda 2020+ which takes an extended outlook over 100 years which prioritises a generational scale towards a vision of wellbeing for all or as we say Turanga memeitaki. This period is interspersed with a 25 year outcome plan and a 5 year scorecard that will be adjusted as our nation and our people continue to evolve. This planning aligns with the philosophy and practice of ‘Akapapa’anga or the use and importance of genealogical legacies to and for the Cook Islands and her people. ‘Akapapa’anga or genealogies connects us all together and it is in this spirit that we must act as custodians for future generations.
In line with these dynamic challenges- in December 2022 my government endorsed the very first Cook Islands population policy which was the realisation of a key priority in the Cook Islands National Sustainable Development Agenda 2020+ and the Cook Islands Economic Development Strategy 2030 and which took 10 years to develop. Although several countries in the Pacific have formulated population policies, this is the first of its kind in the Cook Islands. The population dynamics in my country provided a challenge in a number of respects. First, the demographic transition in the Cook Islands is already well-advanced. This means that the present policy is not directed at reducing the overall birth rate in the context of declining mortality as traditional population policies are. Rather, a more complex set of issues arising from a rapidly changing age structure and dynamic patterns of emigration and immigration have arisen together with challenges on Non communicable diseases, addressing persons living with disabilities, sexual reproductive health, gender equality and women’s empowerment and the wellbeing of the family unit.

On the climate change front our leaders are committed to implementing the Paris Agreement, acting on the IPCC’s 6th Assessment Report, which represents the most comprehensive and robust assessment of climate change science. However we need help from our partners to provide substantially greater levels of climate finance, technology and capacity to accelerate the progress on this existential threat.

We look forward to working with our partners in addressing these challenges going forward. Thank you for your attention and commitment to these pressing issues.
HON. TINGIKA ELIKANA
Associate Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cook Islands
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Seventh Asian and Pacific Population
Conference Bangkok, Thailand 15–17 November 2023
APPC7 draft speeches
NOVEMBER 2023

--- Speech ends ---