



## 94-09-07: Statement of Tonga, H.E. Dr. Langi Kavaliku

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AS WRITTEN

STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF TONGA DELEGATION,

HON DR LANGI KAVALIKU, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

AT THE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION & DEVELOPMENT

CAIRO, EGYPT, 5-13 SEPTEMBER 1994

Fakatapu

Mr. President, I would like to thank you for the privilege and honor  
extended to allow me to address this august assembly.

I would also like to join all the previous distinguished speakers in thanking you and, through you, the President and people of Egypt for the leadership provided, the hospitality extended and for the chance to share a few moments with you and your people along the Bank of the Nile and imagine the dawning of civilization so long ago yet still so poignant.

Mr. President

We are here in Cairo to find ways and means of meeting the challenge that had continuously faced our ancestors and which is now facing us. The challenge in the past was critical but limited spatially and geographically. The challenge in front of us today is different because it is on a global scale.

And that challenge is the provision of a quality of life befitting the integrity of each and every single human being. The challenge is before us not only because humanity has increased so greatly; not only because global resources may be diminishing but also because we hear our children crying and see them suffer from hunger, poor health, little shelter, no education and lost in the midst of global plenty; we hear women and mothers weep, the wailing of the unwanted, the silence of the lost; we see freedom and equality pushed aside by such wrenching and pressing need and wants that it burns the soul; and because we see the changing tides, the rapid social change that leads to confusion that leads in some cases to the suicidal plunge of the family and of cultures.

Even in the small Kingdom of Tonga, the challenge had been, and will continue to be manifested.

Since the beginning of contact between us in the South Pacific and European explorers, a rather romantic image of the South Pacific Islands has emerged and is firmly rooted in many people's minds and in many international organizations.

But I can tell you that there are problems, even in Paradise

The problems that are listed in the proposed Programme of Action are also the problems that we face in Tonga. Our resources are taxed to the limit in meeting social services where we spend over 30% of our budget. Perhaps what we face may not be as acute as in other areas with larger populations but when it is acute for one individual or one family; for one child or one man or woman; for lack of one responsible parent or one safe motherhood - to me, even that, in my definition, is ACUTE at any level

In our efforts to solve those problems and meet those needs, Tonga would like to acknowledge with appreciation the assistance and cooperation of several developed countries; of NGOs both national and international; and of regional and international organizations.

Tonga supports the proposed Programme of Action. We support it as a statement of problems and alternative solutions which will enable decision-makers at any level to reach more informed decisions based on the beliefs, culture and the integrity of each of their citizens.

Nonetheless, we also have a few comments on the proposed Programme of Action.

Firstly, we would have liked to see more positive statements on the need for responsible parenthood. Certainly, by implication, one can read these things into the document but we believe that if we want to move ahead, in the Pacific at least, one of the issues to be highlighted is responsible parenthood. In our age of rapid social change in the threshold of the 21st Century, parents are the ones, because of the responsibility they inherently feel, who at times are at a loss. Children and youths - bless their hearts - are much more adaptable and in spite of their difficulties. When parents experience conflicting values and norms of behavior alternative reproductive health measures, the questioning of and their rights, their children's rights and perhaps even their integrity as human beings, it is the parents that need assistance.

It would be too presumptuous on my part to define what are human rights what are supposed to be universal and fundamental rights. We believe nonetheless in equality and in the complimentary of relationships of human beings who are equal in a fair and just manner. If we can move more in that direction, we believe we have achieved something.

Secondly, we believe that there should be more positive thinking about the role of men. If there is a need for the enhancement or empowerment of women - and we believe that there is - then there is equally a need for the re-education of men. It is not just a matter of enhancement and respect for one - it must be on both sides.

I am reminded of a Tongan proverb - Olunga he Kaliloa - which literally means "to rest one's head on the long pillow". But the proverb means "to rest one's head on the mother's arm." In the evening in Tonga the

children rest their heads on their mothers arm while she tells them legends, values and norms of behavior, the problems of the family and of the country, soothe their fears, heal their wounds, answer questions and be a mother, philosopher and provider.

Perhaps there is a need for husbands to rest their heads on the arms of their children's mothers! And listen and learn!

Thirdly, we believe that the moral dimension in what we are set out to achieve must continue to be positively emphasized. It is true that this opens up a Pandora's box but that is life. It is often said that what differentiates human beings from the rest of the animal kingdom is that human beings are moral beings. We should not minimize this just because we have differences of opinion and controversies. Each person, each society, will have to make its own decision but it would be a sad world if scientific and technological advancement, the pressure of pressing needs and wants and controversies de-emphasize the moral dimension. In the long term it may prove to be the most lasting and most effective approach to population and development and quality of life.

But in stating our views on the moral dimension, we are not talking about the views on abortion and reproductive health as expressed so eloquently by opposing sides at this Conference. What we are talking about is the moral dimension of the totality of life as each of us lives it. It is more than abortion or reproductive health, and it is more than traditional or new sexuality. It is more than enhancement of women or children or family planning. It is the integrity of each human being and of humanity.

Fourth. We would like to emphasize, as others already have, the critical and pivotal role of the family - both nuclear and extended. As such we

believe that there should be more positive thinking about the family and its role in population and development. It should be an integral part of our work because the family can be a stumbling block as well as a phenomenon of hope.

Once again, by implication, we can deduce the role of the family in the Programme of Action. But it is not a thing that is valued on a pedestal. It is something living and should be taken as an integral part - indeed for us in the Pacific - a central part of the Programme.

Fifth. We believe that there should be much more concern and many more programmes for youths. We accept the pressing need for the enhancement of women, safe motherhood and reproductive health. But we also believe that for our tomorrow we must be much clearer about our stand on youths. Their problem is not just the new sexuality, unwanted pregnancies, better health services and more education.

Lastly, in our view, international or out migration is an important element in Population and Development for Small Island States with very limited resources and numerically insignificant - in major country terms - population. There are of course advantages and disadvantages but we believe it is an issue that needs further exploration in cooperation between developed and developing Small Island States. In Tonga's case it has led to a .5% rate of population growth and \$57 million dollars.

Mr. President

Tonga came to this meeting not because of what we want but because we wanted to share with you our concern regarding Population and Development and to add what little voice that we from the small states

have in the international arena to support the proposed Programme of Action to answer the challenge before us.

But we support it knowing that it is not the panacea for all our problems in Population and Development: the road from Cairo will be a difficult one. We do not have excessively high hopes but would like to believe that we have realistic hopes.

Much has been made of what is regarded as a controversy regarding some aspects of the proposed Programme of Action.

We are surprised that it is taken as a de-stabilizing factor in our meeting. We believe it that the controversy is a healthy sign. If the issues were not important or critical there would not be any differences of opinion or controversy. It proves that what we are challenged with and why we are here is important to the world community. If nobody was concerned or worried, we should not be here at all.

Even if the differences are not ironed out, we believe that we should still move ahead, while recognizing that they are there and respect the differences of opinions of communities and beliefs. We believe that it is the complimentary of relationship between us that needs to be addressed. And thus we applaud President Mubarak's call for the bridging of differences.

We respect Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland's philosophy and pragmatism.

We share Mrs Benazir Bhutto's dream and hopes and we support Vice President Gore's call for a critical mass of political will and we also owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Nasif Sadik for her vision, leadership and humanity.

Mr. President

Whatever may be the outcome of our meeting here in Cairo will become an important charter for the present and future for all of us and of future generations to come.

For Tonga we will continue what has been started and will start what needs to be started. We have very limited resources and we may not be able to do much. If there are others who are willing to share and be partners with us in our work on Population and Development we will welcome them. But if we have to do whatever can be done with our own limited resources, we will continue to do so.

To meet the challenge and provide quality of life befitting the integrity of each and every human being in Tonga, there is no choice but to try whatever much or whatever little that may be.

It is Tonga's hope that what may be agreed here in Cairo as the Programme of Action will be like the Nile - a river of life which provides sustenance and nurture humanity to a quality of life based on freedom equality, justice and peace and the integrity of human beings.

It is equally our hope that the road from Cairo will not be a panorama of lost hopes that, in the words from a famous children's book:

We have met the enemy

And the enemy is us.



Mr. President, I thank you.

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For further information, please contact: [popin@undp.org](mailto:popin@undp.org)  
POPIN Gopher site: <gopher://gopher.undp.org/11/ungophers/popin>  
POPIN WWW site: <http://www.undp.org/popin>