

[At UN, Tonga warns of dire security threats posed by climate change on island atoll countries](#)

As head of more than 170 South Pacific islands, sustainable development and surmounting the 'devastating impacts' of climate change in his country were the focus of King Tupou VI of Tonga in his address at the United Nations General Assembly.

"In contributing towards the implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and its landmark Goals ([SDGs](#)), including the internationally agreed blueprint for the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS), the [SAMOA Pathway](#), Tonga has made both accords an integral part of its [national planning](#) processes," he said on Wednesday.

He emphasized the importance of the UN High-Level Political Forum ([HLPF](#)) on Sustainable Development, which he pointed out will review the SAMOA Pathway in 2019.

"Climate change continues to pose significant security threats to us as island States," he said, noting with concern "the devastating impacts of climate change on our marine environment."

He welcomed the establishment at the initiation of German and Nauru of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security "to further highlight the nexus between the threats of climate change with threats to international peace and security."

He stressed that despite the effects of sea level rise, Tonga's territorial boundaries, established under the [UN Convention of the Law of the Sea](#), should remain unchanged.

"Our Sovereignty must not be compromised by climate change and we welcome the work of the [International Law Commission](#) on this critically important and timely issue for consideration of the [Sixth Committee](#) of the General Assembly," he said, referring to the Assembly's standing body that deals with legal issues.

He was looking forward to the 24th Session of the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC) in December to address the adverse impacts of climate change and the need for innovation in adaptation for [small island developing States](#).

King Tupou VI told the Assembly that Tonga has engaged in this year's first [Inter-governmental Conference](#) on the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity in the high seas and the seabed and was "hopeful that a gradual convergence of views will result in a zero draft of a legally binding

instrument for consideration at the second and third meetings of the Inter-governmental Conference next year.”

He noted that last year, Tonga had commissioned its first Independent Power Producer-owned Solar Farm and “strongly believes that it can achieve its 50 per cent by 2020 renewable energy target through more and stronger public-private partnership arrangements.”

“Finally,” he said, “sustainable development, whether it be, [among others], through good health and well-being, climate action, life below water, or affordable and clean energy, can only be realized through international peace and security.”

“We continue to look to the Security Council to protect the innocent from threats to international peace and security in whatever form, be they traditional threats such as armed conflict, or newer threats like climate change, to ensure no one is left behind,” concluded King Tupou VI.

[Full statement available here.](#)