

Launch of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) Hub

Honourable Prime Minister, Josia Voreqe Bainimarama,

Deputy Director-General Dr Audrey Aumua,

Pacific Coordinator of GIZ James MacBeth,

Government representatives from Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Papua New Guinea and Fiji,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen – thank you for the warm welcome.

I am delighted that my first visit to the Pacific is to represent the UK as Commonwealth Envoy and to participate in the official opening of the Regional Pacific Nationally Determined Contribution Hub. Commonwealth and Climate Change

As we know all too well, the countries of the Pacific in the front line of the struggle against climate change. We have much to learn from one another and we must support each other.

The Commonwealth has been sounding the alarm on climate change as early as the Langkawi Declaration on the Environment in 1989. The overwhelming majority of Commonwealth member states continue, I am glad to say, to advocate for ambitious action on climate change today.

At the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London, Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to deliver the Paris Agreement and pursue efforts to limit the increase in global average temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. They also recognised the impact of climate change on the ocean, including sea level rise, ocean acidification, and coral bleaching.

This Commonwealth focus is in no small part down to the sustained advocacy of Pacific Island Countries – not least Fiji as the President of COP 23 in Bonn.

Regional Pacific NDC Hub

We should all be grateful for the role of the Government of Fiji in driving this important agenda and its sustained support for the establishment of this Regional Pacific Nationally Determined Contribution Hub. I also wish to acknowledge the efforts of all the donors, and regional organisations for all their support, and to SPC in particular for providing this fantastic home for the NDC Hub.

As we know, Nationally Determined Contributions are at the heart of the Paris

Agreement and are vital to achieving its long-term goal of limiting global warming.

That is why the United Kingdom announced at the CHOGM in 2018 that it would support this initiative by contributing £1.2 million of funding.

It is great to see your strong support, Honourable Prime Minister, demonstrated by you officially and personally opening the Hub tonight.

We have already seen some of the progress The Hub has made, including the creation of NDC Roadmaps, investment plans and project pipelines in Tuvalu and Kiribati; a climate change education programme in Nauru; and the establishment of a Monitoring, Reporting and Verification system in Solomon Islands, to name just a few.

Future Ambition

Without greater ambition the NDCs agreed in Paris in 2015 would only limit global warming to around 3 degrees. We know that this is not enough and that ambitious revised contributions can help to close that gap.

The United Kingdom is therefore pleased to be following in Fiji's footsteps by hosting COP 26 in partnership with Italy. We are determined to sustain our historic leadership on climate change, and to be committed, ambitious and effective hosts.

2020 now needs to be a year of climate ambition. It is great to hear of some of the ambitious targets coming from this region and it is crucial that every country comes forward in 2020 with ambitious new climate commitments, which will help us meet the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

When it comes to the UK itself, we have actually cut emissions by 40% since 1990, which is the fastest rate of reduction in the G7 group of countries. You may have heard the announcement we made yesterday by our Prime Minister, bringing forward the deadline to 2035, after which time it will be illegal to sell petrol or diesel vehicles in the United Kingdom. And that ban is now extended to include hybrid vehicles as well. We have also doubled our commitment of climate finance, we have now committed £11.6bn over the coming five years.

CHOGM 2020

The next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Rwanda this June is a key milestone, maybe the key milestone, in a crucial year on climate change ahead of COP 26 and on biodiversity ahead of COP 15.

Rwanda has already proposed, and the rest of the Commonwealth membership has agreed, that environment, which includes climate change and the ocean, should be one of their five key themes for the summit. The great ocean states of the Pacific now have an integral role to play in developing ambitious climate commitments that create positive momentum ahead of COP – we look forward to announcements at CHOGM on revised NDCs or net zero Long Term Strategies.

I would like to urge all country representatives here this evening to draw on the technical expertise of this NDC hub, to take ambitious action to tackle climate change and to work with the UK and other Commonwealth member states on the path to the Rwanda CHOGM and to COP 26.

This Regional Hub contributes to a sustainable and resilient development pathway, and the transition to net-zero emissions in Pacific Nations, presenting a continuing opportunity for the Pacific to give a lead at COP26. Thank you all for attending this evening's launch event. In the months to come, we must move forward together to advance this common cause, which is nothing less than the future of the planet and the future of humanity.

Thank you.