



GOVERNMENT OF TUVALU

**41st SESSION OF THE UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE
GENERAL POLICY DEBATE**

Presented by:

**HONOURABLE AMPELOSA TEHULU
ACTING PRIME MINISTER**

From:

FUNAFUTI ISLAND, TUVALU

Via:

PRE-RECORDING VIDEO

Excellency, the President of the 41st Session of the General Conference.

Madam Director-General of UNESCO

Heads of Delegations to this 41st Session of the UNESCO General Conference.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Talofa and Warm Greetings from Tuvalu, the smallest independent island nation in the world. It is an honor, indeed, to speak at such an esteemed forum - the UNESCO General Conference.

First of all, please allow me to congratulate you, Excellency, on your election as President of the 41st session of the General Conference. Furthermore, I acknowledge you Madam, for being re-elected as Director-General.

Mr. President, I assure you that Tuvalu will offer its full support, whenever and wherever necessary, during your presidency.

In late 2019, the current Tuvaluan Government came into office with a commitment to settle all UNESCO overdue contributions and arrears...and I am proud to say that we have accomplished that outcome. This was because we believed that Tuvalu and UNESCO have a moral obligation to promote culture and bring education to every child in our jurisdiction. For this, I humbly ask that the UNESCO council considers the Pacific Small Island Developing States, such as Tuvalu, in their plans and decision making...and that you consider us with justice, fairness and integrity.

Tuvalu, like every other developing country, greatly benefits from its partnership with UNESCO – in particular, the education and cultural sectors. At present Tuvalu is one of the few countries on earth that is still COVID free...and we are grateful for this precious gift.

However, we are also facing unprecedented threats from climate change that are daily impacting our existence. While our schools have continued to operate during the pandemic, it has generated great fear and uncertainty,

and combined with the reality of climate change, has created new challenges for our education system.

In the face of challenges such as COVID-19 and climate change, the Tuvaluan people continue to work with UNESCO to provide quality education to our children. Together we have developed and implemented education interventions and activities, including learning resources, e-learning and data management systems, and teacher capacity building.

Mr. President, I speak to you from our two-point-four (2.4) square kilometer island capital. The threat of COVID-19 will fade away one day, but the effects of climate change will stay with us forever. Too much has already been spoken about climate change. What we need now is ACTION.

I urge the use of education and culture as platforms to push Governments and communities to act without delay.....but I also recognize that to achieve this outcome, we need personal capacity and adequate financing.

It is our sincere hope that UNESCO and the Small Island Developing States, such as Tuvalu, work more closely together to provide quality education to our children, and in so doing, ensure that our cultures shine evermore.

Thank you & Fakafetai lahi.