

**Thirty-fifth Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, 1-4
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**STATEMENT BY HONORABLE FAAMANUIA TAMOA
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FAO Director General, Mr Qu Dongyu

FAO Assistant Director General Mr. Jongjin Kim

FAO Sub-regional Coordinator for the Pacific, Mrs Eriko Hibi

Honorable Ministers

Honorable Chair

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Malo ni! Good morning, Good afternoon and also Good evening to one and all.

I am indeed honored to have been given the opportunity to address the 35th Asia Pacific Regional Conference through this virtual means on behalf of Tokelau.

I thank the Government of the Republic of Bhutan for agreeing to host this regional meeting and also commend FAO for the excellent planning that has been accorded this inaugural virtual APCR conference.

I would also use the opportunity to thank FAO for the technical support it has been able to offer Tokelau since the 32nd Session of APCR in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in 2014. It has indeed enabled household vegetable gardens and quality small scale traditional domesticated livestock farming from TCP project in agriculture and food security. However, a high reliance on rain water to sustain these food production activities can be a challenge when droughts take effect.

Honorable Chair, Tokelau has its unique challenges. Not only is it a Small Island Developing State, but it is also an atoll nation. With a total land area of 12 square kilometers barely 8 meters above sea level, our land is predominated by coconut plantations due to our soils porous nature making it very infertile. Amidst living the daily

threats of changing climates and rising sea levels, Tokelau now face the uncertainties of the global pandemic caused by COVID 19. Need I therefore say that Tokelau is one of, if not the most vulnerable people in the world.

Honorable Chair, it has been well said by the incoming Director General of FAO Mr Qu Dongyu that “there is no security without food security” and that “WHO are already warning that COVID-19 could be with us forever”. The implications are, our environment security is at risk, our health security is at risk and our food security is also at risk! According to FAO reports, “up to 80 percent of people living in vulnerable contexts rely on some form of agricultural production for their survival”. As alluded to above, what little land Tokelau has is used for growing food. However, our biggest land is the sea.

We have been harvesting our inshore coastal fisheries as main food and protein sources since the days of our ancestors. In this space I wish to again acknowledge FAO for its kind technical assistance through its “Safety at Sea Project” that provided increased awareness to the dangers at sea and on our traditional fishing grounds. Our coastal fisheries does however, is still in need of modern expertise development and guidance from FAO in the wake of what is now becoming a global food security crisis.

Honorable Chair, I am with the understanding that the incoming FAO Director General Qu Dongyu does not only bring new ideas to his new role, but also new solutions to the different challenges and uniqueness in contexts of FAO member countries. In these difficult times of multiple global crises, one has to be serious about national food security. As the representative of Tokelau, I bring forward a humble plea in order to ensure Tokelau's long term survival as a people and as a low lying atoll nation. With a total population of 1,400 divided up almost equally inhabiting three islands, small scale hydroponic farming can prove huge potential for ensuring Tokelau's food security. I have seen the positive impacts of such small scale new farming methods in neighboring small island states which leads me to believe that innovative technology can prove significant benefits as a solution to addressing our food security.

Last but not least, I am aware that Madam Eriko Hibi, one of few UN FAO officials who dared the 30-hour boat ride to Tokelau from Apia, would have provide further testimony to FAO about the realities and challenges of Tokelau. I sincerely hope and trust that the 9th FAO Director General Qu Dongyu is as adventurous as Madam Eriko Hibi and will also visit Tokelau sometime during his tenure as Director General of FAO which none of the previous eight DGs has ever ventured.

Thank you for the opportunity Honorable Chair