



**His Excellency Lionel Rouwen Aingimea M.P.,
President of the Republic of Nauru
31st Special Session of the General Assembly in response to the coronavirus
(COVID19) pandemic
3 and 4 December 2020
[Pre-recorded statement]**

Mr. President

It is an honour for me to address this special session of the General Assembly in response to the COVID19 pandemic. We solemnly acknowledge the recent increase cases around the world and the attendant loss of lives. We stand in solidarity with those countries that continue to suffer from the pandemic. Amidst this global crisis, I am pleased to share with this august body that Nauru still remains free from COVID19 by the grace of God.

I take this opportunity to share our experiences of why this government has been successful in keeping the virus away from the shores of Nauru, thus ensuring the health and safety of our population; and also share those challenges we continue to face as we grapple with the global pandemic.

If there is a key message from Nauru's experience it is the need for a strong, collective and multilateral response to help pave the way forward to finding solutions towards mitigating the pandemic and its knock-on effects on the economy, the safety and well-being of our people and our environment. We look to a robust United Nations to do this work effectively and we need a United Nations that is fit-for-purpose, responsive and works with the big and the small.

Nauru's historical experience is our key to surviving this pandemic, we heeded the lessons of the past - that an outbreak in one part of the world can produce a catastrophic and devastating effect on our tiny country if we do not act quickly. We are not immune to outbreaks even though we are geographically isolated from other countries.

Nauru had expressed its concerns with WHO's leadership at the outset of the pandemic. We found it slow in declaring the global pandemic, thus delaying needed action. After WHO's declaration, this government declared a State of National Disaster for the Management and Preparedness of COVID-19. And today we still remain under this State of National Disaster.

Mr President

The work of the UN is important to Nauru and we see the relevance of the UN's assistance in complementing our work on the ground. At the same time, we also see the need to improve coordination and engagement with smaller countries like Nauru.

The pandemic has further exposed the weakness of the multi-country office in our region and underlined the disconnect between the ideal of a coordinated regional response and the reality of meeting the needs of smaller and more vulnerable States in our region. We emphasize that in times of crisis access to resources for support in a timely manner is critical to ensure the effectiveness of a response mechanism.

To that end, we look forward to the early establishment of a new multi-country office in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) as a positive step towards a robust coordinated response with targeted support from the UN Development System to the small island developing States (SIDS) in the North Pacific.

Nauru's success in keeping the virus from our shores is our capture and contain policy. This government took proactive steps to enact national laws to support the necessary new policies and measures to deal with the pandemic. We created a national COVID Taskforce to ensure that our responses are coordinated and coherent taking a whole-of-government approach working with the private sector, civil society and the community at large. We took measures to secure our borders by implementing travel restrictions with quarantine protocols while at the same time having an open and controlled border policy in place.

Our COVID Taskforce is mandated to manage the national quarantine facilities for incoming passengers traveling on our national airline, which has reduced its operations to every two weeks in response to the pandemic and the nationwide travel restrictions in place. We have used the borders of other countries as a bulwark to ensuring we have additional safeguards in place.

The border restrictions in place require passengers coming to Nauru to undertake a mandatory PCR test for COVID-19 72 hours prior to travel and to show proof of a negative test to be able to board.

In-coming passengers are quarantined for five days in a contained and secured location. On the first day of quarantine, the passengers undertake a PCR test done by doctors and will be strictly quarantined in their allocated rooms until the test results are received and hopefully return as negative. On the fifth day, passengers undergo another PCR test and if results are negative they are then released.

Nauru has robust testing equipment in place made available by one of our key partners, the Republic of China (Taiwan). Australia, the U.S, Japan, New Zealand, and India also played a critical role in our efforts to prevent COVID from reaching our shores.

Today we have the capability to carry out COVID tests on our own and in country. This is a key milestone achieved within months of the pandemic.

We have also seen improvement and have benefited from the WHO's advisory role on the nature of the virus. As a SIDS we have little to no means nor the capacity to participate in the research of the virus, but we have remained vigilant to keep up with the WHO's latest information. This has helped shed some understanding on the nature of the virus and has

proven useful to the national COVID Taskforce. Science-based policy is critical to ensuring that our capture and contain policy remains effective.

Nauru commends those countries who are working towards a vaccine to combat the virus and we wish you all the success in making it a reality for the global community in the near future. We look to our partners to make this vaccine available to all SIDS.

Mr. President,

This government launched its Desperate Imagination Vision and plans during a pre-COVID world. The vision is one of innovative thinking towards a financially sustainable and resilient Nauru. While we have confidence in our vision and our plans, we cannot access the financial resources to actually implement them.

We call on the need for a global financial system that is responsive to the needs of developing countries like Nauru and to partner with us through this pandemic and beyond to help build a more resilient and sustainable future.

The impact of COVID19 has further amplified our vulnerabilities and climate change continues to be an existential threat for some and remains the single greatest threat to humanity. We are uncertain of what the future holds for countries like ours, but it is clear that we need a multilateral response to take urgent and bold actions today. Sustainability of our nations and our people must be front of mind now and always.

In closing I wish to thank all our donor partners for their valuable support and we look forward to your continued partnership during these difficult times.

Mwa tubwa kor. (I thank you).