

NAURU'S PAPER ON URBANISATION AND RURAL PLANNING:

The new administration in Nauru will be facing a number of very big challenges – in climate change, education, public health, and housing, to name just a few. But it cannot map out a sustainable future nor address any one of the very big challenges without land rehabilitation. The coastal areas of the island that currently developed cannot sustain any future growth.

For Colleagues information, Nauru is a very small island of one. It is 22 square miles in size.

We have been mining the middle of the island for over 60 years for our natural resource called Phosphate.

Although we have benefited and prospered from this resource for many years, the downside is that 80% of the land in the middle of the island will need a huge rehabilitation planning and project to restore the land back to its useful state.

Also another factor that needs to be included is that the Land belongs to the people. So you could say that Nauru is both urban and rural into one.

Our current President Aingimea at his first year UNGA Meeting in NY in September, I quote from his statement:

“I called for the Higher Ground Initiative in his UNGA statement this September – to reclaim the 80% of our island that was damaged by mining. And to relocate our homes and critical infrastructure away from the low-lying coastal areas. This will be an important resilience-building measure. However, there is a real opportunity to do more than just move things around.

We know very well that development patterns copied from larger countries do not always work well in small island contexts – they often generate too much waste and are costly to maintain. We also recognize that the built environment is a reflection of our cultural values and heritage. Therefore, Nauru aspires to pioneer a new vision for sustainability in the Pacific – a new Pacific urbanism – that draws on regional traditions and local knowledge, but is adapted to a climate constrained world.

Nauru will be looking to its development partners for assistance in what would be our small country's biggest undertaking. We will certainly require technical expertise in the areas of design and urban planning, and I'm sure there are many wonderful examples of urban sustainability throughout the countries represented at this meeting and beyond.”

Accessing affordable finance will be another key, and unlocking the World Bank and other International Financial Institutions is a top priority. Finance for major infrastructure projects is not readily available for small countries with a narrow

economic base and limited capacity to carry additional debt. The Bank does have programs that entitle small economies to various grants and concessionary loans, but Nauru in particular is currently classified as an upper middle income country, and therefore does not qualify. In our view, this is not a fair characterization of a country with only one or two reliable sources of revenue, however, World Bank has in the past been willing to lift certain limitations for some Small Island Developing States.

Nauru is about to break ground on a major new upgrade to its port facility, so things are starting to move forward in Nauru. Through the support of the ADB, Australian Government, the port should open new business opportunities for local entrepreneurs, and could become an important hub of commerce for the country and potential business.

Progress on Higher Ground and a sustainable urbanism would keep this momentum going and give us a real chance to escape the economic stagnation that has plagued the country for some time now.

The Executive and Legislature are both committed to the success of the Higher Ground Project. Our biggest task ahead is to build a new vision of urbanism that reflects the values of all Nauruans and enjoys the support of landowners, who will have a major role in the decision making process. That being said, I think the only way to pull this off is by working with partners (including parliamentary colleagues like this group and others) with a clear commitment to good governance, transparency, and mutual respect.