



**PAPUA NEW GUINEA STATEMENT  
TO THE  
63<sup>rd</sup> SESSION OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**BY**

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**New York, NY  
27 September 2008**

Mr. President

On behalf my people and Government of PNG, I bring you warm greetings and pledge our support to you as you guide us in our work.

We thank your predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for his strong advocacy during his tenure as President of the 62<sup>nd</sup> UNGA, especially in the area of climate change.

We support the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon and the UN, especially its agencies, for the work it does to enhance our development aspirations in Papua New Guinea.

As we have always done, my Government continues to support the UN.

Mr. President

The UN currently provides the global forum for member states to address the many global issues we face together.

UN reforms need to be carried out in all the relevant areas of the UN. We need to address the international gender architecture to be more robust, responsive and effective and has to be part of the core reform process to cater for our women, youth and children.

We must also be vigilant against terrorism and threats to international peace and security.

The 'One-UN' system needs to be translated more meaningfully in order to effectively enhance each member state's development priorities.

We support the call for the reform of the UN Security Council in the both the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council. A number of emerging developing countries need to be accorded permanent status on the Council to better reflect today's circumstances.

We therefore welcome the recent consensus to initiate the inter-governmental negotiation process to properly address this long outstanding but critical UN reform issue.

Mr. President

We live in a world that provides us many opportunities, as well as formidable development challenges.

The challenges include addressing the destructive effects from the illicit use of small arms and lights weapons, the need to address globalization, and food and energy security which lead into the wider issue of human security.

Additionally, the adverse impacts of climate change and global warming continue to threaten the existence of many small islands states especially from the rising sea-levels.

Mr. President

For many small island States, sea-level rise and the adverse impacts of climate change are security issues threatening their very survival. We therefore call upon the international community to urgently act in order to ensure the security and welfare of small islands developing states.

Mr. President

As a thriving democracy in the Pacific, it is my Government's desire to see our friends and neighbors in the Pacific and beyond, enjoy freedom and prosperity.

In this regard, consistent with the decision of the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum, Papua New Guinea strongly encourages Fiji to restore parliamentary democracy by preparing for and holding elections in 2009. Throughout, however, Fiji must be supported, not isolated, in efforts to address her specific national circumstances.

In other regional issues, Papua New Guinea commends the work done so far on the Pacific Plan, which we believe may catalyze our region's development.

It is Papua New Guinea's strong view that the member states from the Pacific region should be categorized separately by the UN in terms of aggregated data and in the area of social and economic classification.

While we ourselves are ready, Papua New Guinea can support Vanuatu's call for an extension to the May 2009 deadline for submissions on Extended Continental Shelf.

Mr. President

The MDGs provide us one of the greatest opportunities to leverage our development process. For this reason, we commend the Secretary-General for convening the high-level session on the MDGs during this General Assembly session.

However, for the MDGs to be effectively implemented, they must be addressed consistently with national circumstances and with host-country leadership. Further, to be effective over the long term, developing countries must take ownership of the MDGs.

At this midway point of the MDGs, for Papua New Guinea, we believe there is cause for cautious optimism:

- Papua New Guinea celebrated 33 years of unbroken constitutional democracy on 16<sup>th</sup> of September this year.
- Due to the political stability achieved by my Government, we can now afford to plan long term for our own development.
- We have had steady economic growth in the last five years, due to prudent economic management that has resulted in five successive budget surpluses.

Mr. President

Achieving the MDGs remains an integral development priority of my Government.

We have set ourselves 15 national targets and 67 indicators, which have been integrated into our Medium Term Development Strategy and sectoral plans.

For example,

- PNG recognizes that education is a pre-requisite for the betterment of our peoples' lives. This is entrenched in our Constitution and prioritized under a 10-year National Education Plan.
- The current 'One-Laptop-Per-Child' pilot project will make learning accessible, enjoyable and fruitful for our children while bridging the digital divide. We are looking to expand the project nation-wide during the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in Port Moresby in November.
- In partnership with UNICEF, we have also introduced proactive programs accelerating the girl child's access to education.
- In the area of health issues, major challenges remain, such as maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS, which the Government is now addressing through the 10-year National Health Plan.
- We have also recorded some positive results in other major health indicators, including a decrease in malaria-related deaths and incidences, and the stabilization and decline of Infant and Child Mortality.

After all, reducing poverty, expanding access to education and health, and empowering women through economic and social participation are what we are addressing in my Government.

Mr. President

The Eighth Millennium Development Goal makes reference to 'partnerships'. We strongly believe this Goal is critical to the achievement of the other seven Goals. We believe, however, that all partnerships must be underpinned by mutual respect among the partners.

For this reason, let me highlight some key 'partnerships':

- Our partnerships with Australia, New Zealand, the EU, Japan, China, Italy, Austria, and many NGOs continue to strongly contribute to PNG's development.
- The "*Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security*" and "*The Forest-11 Group*", launched last year by His Excellency, the President of Indonesia.
- The William and Malinda Gates Foundation, facilitated by the Clinton Foundation, in the area of HIV/AIDS and the provision of anti-retrovirals.

Mr. President

To succeed, we must significantly scale-up our 'partnerships'!

Often, we all tend to wallow in the negative -- environmental degradation, catastrophic climate change, crippling poverty, ineffective governance -- rather than leveraging upon the positive.

My Government's vision is to transform these societal challenges into a framework for environmentally and socially sustainable economic growth. It is time to shed policy chains of the past and create a new paradigm for the future.

Let me be specific:

- First, we cannot account for the environment as an 'externality'. Our natural environment and her services are not 'free' to society. Once we lose these services, often forever, the costs can be significant.
- Second, we must create a broad framework for ecosystem service markets. Carbon sequestration must only be the first step, followed by valuations for biodiversity, water purification, rainfall generation, crop pollination and food security.
- Third, we must now view our natural environment as an engine for wealth creation. These valuable ecosystem services must be transformed into lasting wealth that supports the rural communities that have traditionally cared for these assets.

Let me use the issue of reducing deforestation and forest degradation, an issue that our Prime Minister has championed internationally.

Deforestation is a complex subject, but - put simply - it is driven by the fact that the world values forests more dead than alive! Traditional economic theory - which considers ecosystem services a 'common good' and thus free to all - is primarily responsible for the massive loss of the world's forests!

With these ecosystem services valued at zero, rural communities that depend on and care for forests must make a living in other ways. Keeping the land forested means sacrificing the opportunities to be gained by converting it to other uses, such as producing commodities like timber, palm oil, coffee, and cocoa. The international commodity markets, in fact, have hardly changed from colonial times.

In many ways, these two economic relics are increasingly perverse and nonsensical. The environment is devastated, rural communities stay poor, and the rich shift the blame. They cite lack of governance and corruption. But these are not drivers of deforestation, but symptoms of obsolete market constructs.

Therefore, global leaders must re-draft economic theory and reinvent global markets for a sustainable future. For example, the latest estimate is that around \$20 billion a year will be needed to halve carbon emissions from deforestation. But this would be a wise investment, even for this one ecosystem service alone.

Forests sequester some 3.3 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually. So, with today's carbon prices over \$30/tCO<sub>2</sub>, rural communities are effectively subsidizing the carbon emissions of the rich by around \$100 billion per year - more than total ODA annually.

Toward this necessary paradigm shift, Norway has provided great leadership. First, Norway has stood up against global climate change and has targeted carbon neutrality by 2030. Next, Norway has dedicated \$2.8 billion to offset emissions reductions from deforestation in developing countries through the valuation of forest eco-system services.

Faced by the ravages of climate change as a small-island developing state, our Prime Minister, Sir Michael Somare, has charted out his own bold goal to reduce emissions in Papua New Guinea -- 50% before 2025 and to become carbon neutral before 2050.

Sharing similar vision, this 'partnership of leadership' between Papua New Guinea and Norway may significantly address several of the greatest challenges of our time:

- Effectively valuing global environmental services
- contributing toward the mitigation of climate change
- conserving global biodiversity
- and, financing the MDGs in rural areas.

Mr. President

In closing, our global economy values companies in the billions simply for advertising trinkets while we surf the internet. Some countries make billions selling fossil fuels that pollute our atmosphere, others for producing low-cost consumer products that humanity does not require. In fact, Google is worth \$150 billion while the world's last great tropical forests, left standing, are worth nothing. How can this be right?

Together, we must reconstruct our value frameworks. New environmental markets must support tropical countries striving toward sustainable development by generating 'billions' from rainforest ecosystem services that humanity has so far been exploiting for free.

Several communities in my country have voted to cancel their logging concessions, telling me that the forests and rivers have provided all they needed for thousands of years. But, in some ways, they now feel trapped.

The old ways allowed them to survive, but did not prepare their children for an increasingly complex future. They now struggle with schools that cannot afford the best teachers and health centers with only basic medicines.

Yet these communities still remember how to live sustainably, a skill many others have forgotten in the rush to get ahead.

But there is hope. Bold leadership is required on both sides of the economic divide to transform the way we value our environment and create wealth for rural populations.

As leaders, we must understand that while we may inherit this earth from our forefathers, in fact, we truly borrow it from our grandchildren and our future generations.

By learning to save our environment, indeed, maybe we can relearn how to save ourselves!

Thank you.