



The Republic of Vanuatu

Statement delivered by Hon. Joe Y NATUMAN

PRIME MINISTER



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Theme: *"Delivering on and implementing a Transformative Post-2015
Development Agenda."*

(Please check against delivery)

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Vanuatu is honoured to join the other esteemed speakers, to congratulate Your Excellency, Mr. Sam Kutesa, for taking up the Presidency for this 69th Session of the UN General Assembly. I believe that under your able leadership, you will successfully guide this session to its conclusion. Let me also extend my gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador John Ashe for his exemplary leadership and for the important achievements made during his tenure in the past year.

Mr. President,

Since the last UNGA, many major global events have taken place which on one hand have contributed to strengthening the international system, and on the other hand have also threatened international peace and security and have directly derailed the process of development resulting in marginalisation of the vulnerable population of our societies. With the past efforts to address the global financial crisis we have witnessed that the global economy is recovering. This is good news; but as we know this recovery is fragile and further international efforts are needed to ensure that global growth prospects in the long run remain solid and sustainable.

We are concerned about the prolonged periods of conflict that have led to the displacement of the most disadvantaged members of our societies who are women, children and the disabled. It bothers us to see the increased radicalisation of groups and individuals targeted at creating terror and imposing threats to countries, Governments and citizens. All these are problems which could be avoided, if all countries strictly adhere to the peaceful principles of dialogue enshrined in the UN Charter. As members of the international community, we have a moral duty to ensure that the principles of dialogue and reasoning prevail in order to address these conflicts. I have no doubt that the multilateral system is best placed to address these challenges. With the outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus that has claimed over 2,000 lives in West Africa, we are also very concerned. On this matter, we highly commend the efforts of the UN agencies, in particular the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the international community to address the security risks of this epidemic. And so I congratulate the ongoing efforts of the UN Secretary General for his determination in trying to address these challenges. I would like to reiterate my Government's support for the ongoing efforts.

Mr. President,

Concerning the political developments in the Pacific region, I wish to congratulate the people of the Republic of the Fiji Islands for successfully and peacefully electing a new democratic

Government. My Government commends the people of Fiji for their resilience and steadfastness and I wish to congratulate the newly elected Prime Minister, for fulfilling his promise to the international community to successfully lead his country to a democratic election.

Mr. President,

Vanuatu, a small island developing state has a small economy which is open and vulnerable to internal and external shocks. These characteristics have determined and shaped our development outcomes. For decades now, our economy has been growing and is translating into increasing per capita incomes.

Vanuatu was one of the countries that called for the UN to allow vulnerability to become one of the three criteria for assessing or identifying graduation cases. Vanuatu's vulnerability was fairly recognized through the revised criteria, and our country ceased to qualify for graduation. It was not until the end of the 20th Century that Vanuatu's eligibility for graduation from LDC status stood out again, after a decade of unquestionable economic progress in our island nation. After the Committee on Development Policy (CDP) and ECOSOC reviewed our progress in 2012, the General Assembly, in December 2013, decided that Vanuatu would graduate. At the same time, a grace period of four years was granted to enable a "smooth transition" to post-LDC life. Vanuatu's graduation from LDC status is now earmarked to take place in December 2017. My Government accepts this as a positive sign post, however, the issue of vulnerability must be carefully addressed by the UN.

We are examining the LDC benefits we might eventually be losing, with a view to negotiating the possibility of retaining certain concessions deemed important, if not vital in order to sustain economic development. The impression we have from the processes involved in the graduation is that our attention is being drawn to the question of smooth transition, whilst circumventing the real issue which is the question of *vulnerability* even during the post-graduation stage. Our situation could be better described using the analogy of an aircraft on descent. Vanuatu is on the descent phase but the focus should not be on the "smooth landing", rather the emphasis must be positioned on what happens after that smooth landing - that is the real issue. Our vulnerabilities as SIDS remain undiminished, with lasting disadvantages and growing challenges regardless of our graduation from LDC status.

What is it then that this august organization, the United Nations, which was so generous in recognizing our vulnerabilities, is now able to offer to us, as SIDS, in support of our resilience-building efforts; in support of our productive capacity-building efforts; in support of our climate adaptation expenditure?

Don't these issues deserve special attention for SIDS as much as they do for LDCs? Would it be unreasonable to expect this special attention to translate into some kind of special treatment for SIDS? We appreciate the UN's focus on smooth transition for graduating countries but we also urge the UN not to divert from the real question, the question of the way we will be treated as SIDS after graduation.

Mr. President,

While Vanuatu has made some head way towards the achievement of MDGs, like other similar economies, it still finds it difficult to achieve all of the goals by 2015. The reasons for these are numerous but one of the significant difficulties is the narrow revenue base, coupled with a geographically dispersed population scattered over our 83 islands. It is therefore challenging for the Government to deliver basic services to all our people. We are grateful that development partners are always there to support us. Given the challenges that SIDS and LDCs face to finance their developments, I appeal to the developed countries to honour their commitments to increase their aid to 0.7% of Gross National Product as agreed upon in the Monterrey Consensus.

Mr President,

The current challenge of terrorism threatens the security of states, safety and wellbeing of innocent and vulnerable women and children. The kidnapping of innocent people including our Peace Keepers threatens international security and peace. As a participant in various UN Peacekeeping missions, I wish to express our gratitude to the United Nations and other countries for their assistance in negotiating the release of Fiji UN Peace Keepers. The collaboration by members of the International Community is a positive sign for collective responsibility for international peace and security.

Mr. President,

We salute the Secretary General for his leadership as a vigorous campaigner for climate action and for convening the Climate Summit 2014. Many pledges and commitments were made by leaders during the summit and we look forward to the rhetoric being translated to urgent actions. My delegation calls on the UN family to stand united to find ways to address climate change issues. We are staring down a climate change bubble and the longer we delay action the costlier it will be for our future generations. We need to act now and fast to ensure that we steer clear of the dangerous path of the current carbon pollution trajectory.

Mr. President,

The agenda for the 69th General Assembly "*Delivering on and implementing a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda*" is timely and relevant. This is especially with the ongoing efforts to arrive at a new Post-2015 Development Agenda for all countries. I commend the excellent progress made and I acknowledge that it is not easy to negotiate the goals with many member countries of the UN and the different groups they represent who want their development agenda incorporated. I believe that this draft does represent the consensus by all UN members and will transform development to a new level in each of our countries.

As a Pacific small Island developing state we are confronted with numerous development challenges and this needs to be addressed by the UN System and the international community. I reiterate that Climate Change is a major global challenge for all of us. For some

Pacific states, we are facing existential threats and we cannot address the issue of sustainable development alone, unless climate change challenges are addressed seriously by the international community. Given this, it is important that climate change remain as one of the important elements in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda. We note that there is considerable debate on this matter owing to its cross cutting nature.

However, we note that this is not a new agenda, for the Rio+20 Outcomes “The Future We Want”, the climate change agenda is highly featured in it so our current efforts to address climate change is consistent with this and this is also the reason why our climate change targets should be more ambitious. We strongly urge that the target below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial level be part of the targets in the SDGs.

In addition to climate change, our support for the SDGs includes, but not limited to:

- the inclusion of peace and effective institutions
- oceans management
- health, education
- energy security and
- Gender equality.

We also concur with the Means of Implementation (MOI) stated in the SDGs report and urge the UN and the developed countries to continue to support the developing countries especially the SIDS and LDCs with regard to sustainable development financing and improving institutional capacity in their endeavour to promote development.

Coincidentally, my country is at an important stage in its development planning process. Our current development planning framework will come to an end in the fourth quarter of 2015, and we are already consulting for the post 2015 era. The agenda and issues that are being discussed in the global arena will be translated into and merged with our own development aspirations. I take this opportunity to call on the support of our development partners to work in harmony and in the true spirit of partnership to fulfil the dreams of our people in particular our younger and vulnerable generation.

My Government acknowledges the synergy of efforts between the UN and the Commonwealth in upholding the international principles of peace and good governance as well as in promoting stronger partnerships for inclusive development. I wish to call on the UN to allow for the views expressed by the Commonwealth Heads of Governments concerning the post-development Agenda to be seen as an additional input into this process.

Mr. President,

My country has a history which evolved as a result of a long political struggle to achieve political independence in 1980. But at a time when most of us were young, my country was governed by Britain and France and we were stateless in our own country. We were neither French nor British citizens. And for over 7 decades, we were exposed to foreign rule. So we

had to struggle to re-construct our identity as a nation that could govern itself rather than be subjected to foreign rule.

After our independence in 1980, I finally arrived here at the United Nations with our late Prime Minister, Hon. Fr. Walter Lini in 1981, and I clearly remember that cold autumn morning, when a small group, along with the UN protocol staff gathered outside the entrance of this magnificent building to raise our flag, for the first time at the United Nations. A new nation was born and was being accepted by the UN family of nations.

Mr. President,

As a freedom fighter, and as the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, that took office less than 6 months ago, I proudly stand here today to thank the United Nations for the recognition and endorsement of our membership. But more importantly, I want to underscore here on this podium, the unfinished business of the United Nations to bring closure to its work on decolonization. Part of my country's sovereign territory is still being disputed by one of our former colonial powers, who is our dear friend and development partner. I am delighted that the UN has once again through the work of its Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Dr. James Anaya, brought the matter to the twenty first session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. My country is delighted that France responded in 2012 to this report and expressed their openness to dialogue. We believe this openness is a necessary element for progress that will allow our indigenous peoples to resume the rights to fully exercise their cultural and spiritual obligations in the two islands of Umaenupne (Mathew) and Leka (Hunter), and to revive the traditional routes of our ancestors in the Tafea province.

Mr. President,

My country's political struggles have led to a strong position on decolonisation. We share the dreams of those who are still longing for freedom so they could achieve self-government and independence. As we near the midpoint of the United Nations Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, I want to echo those voices, from within our region and beyond who should one day stand on this podium as free and democratic nations.

My Country acknowledges the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon reminding the UN Committee of 24's Pacific Regional Seminar on Decolonization in May this year that "Good intentions will have to be translated into credible action to make the Third International Decade a success."

Following this, my country supports the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Report of the UN Mission to New Caledonia this year and call on the UN and the international community to pursue their efforts in providing support to the people of New Caledonia and the government of France in their endeavor to implement a successful decolonization process under the Noumea Accord.

At the MSG 19th Leaders' Summit in June 2013 in New Caledonia, the MSG Leaders renewed their commitment through a declaration to support the Front de Liberation Nationale

Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS) in their pursuit for full emancipation under the Noumea Accord through the provision of technical assistance and training programmes for the Kanak peoples to fully exercise their right to self-determination and independence.

While the New Caledonian people look forward to a political transition, I call upon the United Nations through its regional agencies to provide assistance to New Caledonia, in particular the FLNKS and the Kanak people in specific areas of training to enable them to fully participate in the implementation of the Noumea Accord. I thank the cooperative efforts of the Government of France for facilitating the implementation of the Noumea Accord in a very mature and responsible manner. These efforts must not be derailed.

Mr. President,

I cannot close this section of my speech without paying tribute to late Dr. John Ondowame, a Freedom fighter from West Papua who passed away last month while in exile in my country. He was laid to rest in my country as a hero who had fought for the rights to self-determination for the people of West Papua. He and other martyrs had a dream that one day the United Nations and all nations advocating and promoting the democratic principles will hear their cries and deliver the promise of a self-determined future. At his funeral service, I stated that his struggle for freedom and justice will continue to be our struggle until colonialism is eradicated.

There are many other heroes in many countries that are still voiceless and are suffering in silence either due to unilateral policy choices or because of ignorance by the multilateral system. My country is encouraged by the onset of flexibility exercised by the United States of America towards the Cuban people. I believe the willingness for dialogue and consideration is a responsible gesture that will slowly open the door for a better future for all Cubans. We as individual countries must be ready to be a voice of the voiceless. Bigger and richer countries must be the burden bearer for smaller nations. In doing so, we demonstrate the willingness to live as a village, a world community of friends and not aggressors. I want to stress that the only way to address this issue is through dialogue and unity. It is our moral responsibility not to fail those who have been victims of past ignorance.

Mr. President,

My country and many others have repeatedly raised these concerns on this same podium for many years, because we subscribe to them as inalienable human rights. The concerns of vulnerability, sustainable development, fisheries, job creation, human rights and many others are reflected in the SAMOA Pathway document. My country fully endorses the SAMOA Pathway as a guide that is to be used to navigate through our development challenges.

The SAMOA Pathway, built on the Barbados Program of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, has charted a decisive course going forward. The UN System and the international community are urged to ensure that it is integrated into a transformative post 2015 development framework and that we close the implementation gaps of the BPOA and

MSI. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Government and the people of Samoa for ably hosting the SIDS Third UN Conference.

Mr. President,

I wish to extend my deep appreciation for allowing me to provide my views on this important forum. I hope that the statements and the deliberations that we make today will translate into concrete actions that would lead to a better future for all our peoples.

Long live our aspirations to create lasting peace and a better world for our people.

May God bless the United Nations.

I thank you Mr. President.