

V A N U A T U



STATEMENT

BY

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PERMANENT MISSION
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DE LA REPUBLIQUE
DE VANUATU
AUPRES DES NATIONS-UNIES

Mr. President
Mr. Secretary General
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates

I bring to this august gathering a warm greeting from the people of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. President,

At the outset, I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption as the President of the 59th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. May I further take this occasion to acknowledge with deep gratitude the contributions of your predecessor who so competently steered the work of the 58 Session to its conclusion.

Here, I must also acknowledge the outstanding role of Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary General, for being resolute in his efforts to revitalize the organization in addressing global concerns *and* my delegation hereby reaffirms its support for Mr. Annan's profound and meticulous leadership of the United Nations.

I also take this time to convey the condolences of my Government and people of Vanuatu to the people in the Caribbean nations, and in particular Haiti, for the loss of so many lives and for the extensive damage caused by the destructive forces of nature that swept through the region recently. We offer you our moral support and pray for a speedy recovery in the lives of the affected peoples and for the swift rehabilitation and rebuilding of the devastated areas of your nations. These inevitable natural calamities again expose the extreme and particular vulnerability of island states, seriously affecting national economies.

Mr. President,

Annually, from this rostrum we reaffirm our faith and confidence in upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter. We entered the new Millennium with much anticipated hope of creating a just and better world for all our citizens. However, global insecurity and the varying dimensions of serious conflict have created a frightening situation. The world is expected to plunge into further turmoil unless the role of this only truly global body is reinvigorated to resume its legitimate responsibility in addressing the causes of conflict and maintaining peace and security. I come to this Assembly with some trepidation as I see the globe spiraling beyond control unless its members uphold the universality of the United Nation's decision-making process in addressing global concerns.

The world is at the crossroads and we meet here at a critical juncture. Around us civil strife, wars, poverty, diseases, famine, drought, natural disasters, terrorism, environmental degradation, depletion of land and marine resources, etc are ravaging the world. The displacement of peoples from their natural habitats and the sacrilege of the human suffering in many parts of the world demonstrate that unless immediate remedial strategies are implemented the global situation will continue to deteriorate.

Moreover, the emergence of conflict in areas once believed stable coupled by the deterioration in law and order and the senseless killings of innocent peoples are painful reminders that warrant rethinking of policies and decisions.

Globalization has brought with it both opportunities and challenges but for the small island states the challenges are much more ominous.

Mr. President,

Those are the realities.

These negative developments lead me to conclude to the indispensability of the United Nations and the need for all members to work as friends and equal partners. Globalization has brought nations together-we are interlinked and interdependent and this requires global cooperation and governance from all responsible members of the Organization . Understandably, there are vested interests from the powerful but this requires genuine cooperation and goodwill, and the convergence of those interests and the United Nation's role in that regard must remain fundamental to ensure compatibility with the international legal framework. Maverick policies and decisions will only create further division and hostility.

With that mindset, I believe there is now consensus for far reaching reforms to be introduced to make the United Nations relevant to all its members with the fundamental objective of preserving international peace, security, and stability.

My government fully supports efforts to reform the United Nations system to ensure a stronger and more effective organization. On this note my delegation wishes to endorse the views of other delegations on the need to review the membership of the Security Council that will better reflect geographical representation and the underrepresented group of member countries of the United Nations, without affecting the authority of the Council.

I hope all the rhetoric that has come before this Assembly can be translated into concrete and practical action. We must be resolute in our collective desire to work together as sovereign nations in addressing the world's problems through multilateral institutions. The blueprint for international cooperation has been established but reforming certain structures in the United Nations system must be seen as the prerequisite if we are serious in moving forward. The Achilles heel of the current structure is the imbalance of power play in the United Nations system. It has become so chronic that it has weakened the multilateral focus, cohesiveness, and internationalism of the United Nations.

The principles of democratization and good governance so actively advocated and championed by some members must be reflected in the reorganization and decision-making process of the United Nations system.

It is in this regard that Vanuatu supports the review of the permanent membership of the Security Council to include Japan, a representative from the African continent, the Middle East, and one from the group of small developing countries. A more representative Council will bring openness and transparency, create confidence, and ameliorate understanding and cooperation. A restructuring of the Security Council membership is long overdue. Diversity is essential here.

My Government looks forward to the report of the Secretary General's High Level Panel.

Mr. President,

While the fight against terrorism takes center stage, it must not overshadow the socio-economic development agenda and other serious security concerns affecting the developing world and in particular those of small island states. Resources will inevitably be diverted towards combating terrorism in all its facets but judicious decisions need to be taken. It is against this background that our delegation wishes to associate itself with statements made by other delegations on the imperativeness of supporting the development constraints of developing nations, and in particular the concerns of the small island states on vulnerability.

At the Millennium Summit Leaders adopted the 8 Millennium Development Goals with targets to be achieved by 2015. While commitments have been made the lethargic performance of many countries, including Vanuatu, demonstrate the need for more international support in assisting countries meet those targets.

The global economic situation today discriminates against many of the developing economies. Unfair trading practices and imposition of intrusive policies on national economies, in this case Vanuatu, affect the economy by opening it up to unfavorable conditions that only favour the stronger nations. Post-Cancun poses extreme challenges for the economic survival and socio-economic stability of many of the small developing nations like Vanuatu.

My Government's initial focus is on the social sector- in health and education. The Government's Prioritized Action Agenda launched last year in consultation with development partners is the catalyst for Vanuatu's medium to long term strategic planning. This development policy framework is consistent with achieving the MDG targets and emphasizes the need to empower our rural population through infrastructure and capacity building initiatives. Our appeal goes to our development partners to adequately assist us in its implementation.

On that note my delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the United States of America for granting Vanuatu eligibility to access development funding from the Millennium Challenge Account.

Mr. President,

The primary responsibility for development lies with the state itself however, external influences and conditional aid has not adequately corresponded to Vanuatu's development priorities and advancement. The pretext for foreign advice conditioned with development assistance has been to improve governance and are sectors considered vital in establishing a strong economy.

In Vanuatu's case this line of argument has not produced tangible results with restricted progress reflected in our continuous struggle with reforms that are more or less dictated by external forces. Both the recipient and the external assistance must be balanced and sensitive to national interests. Too often, these normal reactions are misunderstood by some of our development partners.

From Vanuatu's perspective, externally driven reforms must be buttressed by an equal partnership that respects local tradition, culture, and rights of all citizens without disturbing the essential uniting mechanisms of society that have successfully held us together over time. An exploitive agenda can only erode and dismantle these ingrained mechanics leaving us vulnerable to the rapid changes affecting all today.

Vanuatu embraces democracy and concepts of **governance/transparency** but these must be tailored to suit the traditional system without affecting the relevance and significance of those far-reaching principles.

Mr. President,

In recent times the history of the Organization has been characterized by indecision that have blemished the record of the United Nations, and I speak to the longstanding issue of self-determination, and in particular the case of West Papua cognizant of the Charter espousing the principles that continue to guide the Organization's efforts in the process of self-determination.

The United Nations must be consistent in its decisions for the recognition **and** respect of the fundamental rights to self-determination for the people of West Papua. The truth **surrounding** the so called Act of Free Choice must be exposed to the Melanesian sisters and brothers of West Papua, and the rest of the international community; the saddest of all is the UN General Assembly Resolution 2504 on West Papua in 1969. How can the UN continue to ignore the cries of over three million people demanding justice?

As World leaders, we have time and time again, expressed serious concerns and dissatisfaction that certain decisions and actions by the United Nations or its organs were not consistent with the purposes and intentions of the Charter. However, with case of West Papua absolutely nothing has been done to rectify the gross violation of internationally accepted practice. It is therefore our joint responsibility to address this grey area in history.

The continuing disputes and concerns raised on the legality of UN -endorsed instruments which have been concluded during those years, such as the New York Agreement of 1962, to govern the UN administration of the so -called Act of Free Choice in West Papua is a clear example challenging the integrity and validity of the UN resolutions at that time. In our opinion the UN conducted exercises were a total farce conditioned only to suit the geo-political climate of that period.

The United Nations cannot and must not continue to turn a blind eye on its own past failures. It is morally, politically and legally wrong to do so.

The Netherlands, which was the former colonial authority, in particular, should also recognize that they should shoulder some responsibility in helping to resolve the unfortunate situation of West Papua in a peaceful and transparent manner. Why is no one accountable for those unjust decisions affecting the lives of millions today?

Vanuatu therefore calls for:

- The establishment of a Special Commission of Enquiry to review the UN's conduct in relation to the 1969 Act,
- The UN to send a fact-finding mission to examine the situation in West Papua with regard to human rights abuses and other related issues,
- The re-inscription of West Papua on the List of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

These are critically challenging responsibilities.

Mr. President,

On a final matter, my delegation strongly reaffirms its support for Resolution 2758 of the Session of the General Assembly in 1971 recognizing the legal and political representation of the People's Republic of China as a member of the United Nations. Vanuatu again reiterates its unwavering support for One-China and urges all members of the United Nations to work in the interest of world peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I must bring to the attention of this Assembly another priority issue that is of grave importance to my Government and Nation. I raise again the matter concerning the relocation of the ESCAP Pacific Operations Center in Vanuatu to another location. My Government was not properly consulted and requests that the decision to relocate the EPOC from Vanuatu be reconsidered. If the UN ESCAP Pacific Operations Center's relevance in the region is questioned then my Government is proposing that a proper review be carried with a view to restructuring the ESCAP Office in order to relocate the Pacific Operations Center to Bangkok. Programmes and activities under ESCAP responsibility may be better coordinated through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the region.

I hope wisdom will prevail as the debate continues on our future destiny. Despite all our differences and diversities human security for all is our main goal, and this should remain the focus of the UN agenda. The cardinal question is will members allow the United Nations to undertake serious reforms in meeting the challenges ahead? The future remains in our hands.

Thank you for your attention.