



# Vanuatu

Statement by

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On The Occasion Of The General Debate of the 64<sup>th</sup>  
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**Vanuatu Permanent Mission to the United Nations**

## STATEMENT FOR 64<sup>TH</sup> UNGA

**Mr. President,**

**Mr. Secretary General**

**Excellencies**

**Distinguished Delegates**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I begin by joining others in congratulating you, Mr. President, on assuming this noble and high responsibility of the 64<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations. Let me wish you well in your leadership as the United Nations makes its way through the myriad of evolving challenges on the global agenda. I take this opportunity to also commend the Secretary General for his vision and the initiatives that he has strongly pursued in the interests of all humanity.

**Mr. President,**

The theme of the 64<sup>th</sup> UNGA will serve to focus the attention of the international community on the critical importance of building partnerships for more equitable and sustainable development. My delegation shares the belief that sustainable development is the responsibility of everyone, and that its realization requires strong partnerships at all levels.

I firmly believe that equity and sustainable development are mutually reinforcing goals because it would be difficult to underpin peace, security and growth in any process of development that leaves much of humanity behind. One of the major goals of my country's comprehensive reform program introduced during mid-1990s is to promote social equity, especially in terms of integrating the needs of our culturally diverse people and geographically remote communities into our national development priorities. I am glad to say that our nationwide policy consultation processes are still being undertaken to develop and continue sound policies and framework for service delivery to our people at the grass roots level.

We in the Pacific are grateful to all our development partners for their continuing support and commitment to work closely with us in developing mechanisms for strengthening development coordination, improving development outcomes, effective use of available resources and ensuring inclusiveness in our approaches to development.

**Mr. President,**

We are very much aware of the fact that despite continued high levels of development assistance over many years, economic and development performance of island states in the Pacific region remain weak. Many countries in our region, including Vanuatu, are not on track towards achieving all the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Vanuatu will therefore remain firmly committed to the principles of the Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific.

We are committed to work closely with the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat and other multilateral agencies to ensure that all resources made available to the region are centred with the aim of achieving real progress against the MDGs. We are also committed to work with our individual donor partners to ensure that they support our national development priorities that are linked to our overall efforts to achieve the MDGs.

However, Vanuatu is aware that commitments to strengthening development coordination in the Pacific region, is being made against the backdrop of the global economic crisis. Hence my delegation wishes to renew our call to international financial institutions to assist Pacific island countries in responding to the international economic crisis.

**Mr. President,**

Vanuatu is very concerned that its recent high economic growth performance, which rose above 6% between 2006 and 2007, will fall sharply as a direct result of the global economic recession. IMF and ADB growth estimates forecasted that Vanuatu's economy will grow at a slower pace in 2008 and 2009, averaging between 3-4%. Growth prospects for the future continue to remain uncertain. Maintaining a strong economic growth performance into the next few years will be critical if Vanuatu is to succeed in

delivering basic services as education, health and infrastructure development to its scattered 80 islands on a sustained basis.

In the light of these concerns Vanuatu is pleased that it will be hosting a Pacific UN Conference on the Human Face of the Global Economic Crisis in the Pacific in February 2010. Discussions between my Government, UN specialized agencies actively engaged in the Pacific region and Pacific regional organizations are underway on the organization arrangements for this important Conference. We all look forward to the outcome of the Conference, especially in terms of guidance and support for building Pacific regional partnerships that can assist us to address the impacts of this and future global economic crisis on the livelihoods of our people.

**Mr. President,**

The complex and challenging circumstances in Fiji has led to international condemnation and pressure for early elections to be held. Further international pressure was brought to bear on the government of Fiji in view of more recent developments. Whilst Vanuatu is part of the Pacific wide regional calls for an early return of democracy in Fiji, my government believes that continuing engagement of the Fiji government by the international community will be critical. Under Vanuatu's chairmanship the Melanesian Spearhead Group has continued to maintain high level dialogue with the government of Fiji, primarily to ascertain the views of the government of Fiji and to put forward the concerns of neighboring states. Vanuatu welcomes the recent establishment of a fully fledged department to oversee the implementation of the framework for change that the Fiji government introduced recently and to facilitate a nation-wide process of reconciliation and dialogue.

As the closest neighboring island state, Vanuatu continues to maintain the plea that the processes of returning Fiji to democracy and parliamentary legitimacy should be driven by peaceful dialogue and genuine concern for the socio-economic wellbeing of the people of Fiji. Any punitive measures would not be in the economic and social interests of the good people of Fiji, and the region of the Pacific as a whole.

**Mr. President,**

We are all too aware of unprecedented challenges that small island developing states like mine, Vanuatu, have come to be faced with today. Man-made, or linked with such phenomenon as climate change, these challenges pose unacceptable implications for the social, economic and political structures of our small island states, often with grave security implications.

Vanuatu would like at this juncture to cordially applaud the tireless and collective efforts of all the island nations, large and small in cooperating and working together towards the adoption in June this year of UNGA resolution A/RES/63/281 entitled *Climate Change and its possible security implications*. This is indeed a historical milestone for Pacific Small Island Developing States, such as my own country, because for the first time security implications of Climate Change was brought to the attention of the international community.

Over the years differential and conflicting views have stalled the strenuous efforts of the small island countries in convincing the world that the impact of climate change was irreversible. Benign in those arguments was that there was still time. At this point I wish to reiterate that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change must be the key institution for addressing climate change.

Given our vulnerabilities and geographic realities we in the Pacific region are among the first to come to terms with the security implications of Climate Change. I would like to stress here that no country, small or large, developed or developing will be able to avoid the security implications of climate change which are already affecting the livelihoods of our people as the international community struggles to come to terms with the idea that climate change poses a real threat to the future survival of mankind.

**Mr. President,**

No better word could be accorded to this particular phenomena of global crisis than the word DOOMED unless all the relevant organs of the United Nations intensify their efforts in considering and addressing this issue of Climate Change. The momentum today presents the realization that these threats are real and therefore require urgent attention.

In the lead up to Copenhagen, Leaders of the Alliance of Small Island States have agreed this week that more action is expected from the international community in living up to their commitments. While globalization and interdependency has brought with it both opportunities and challenges for the small island states the challenges are much more ominous.

The gathering of world Leaders at the Climate Change Summit at this year's General Assembly is a reaffirmation that climate change presents a security threat to all our nations and peoples.

**Mr. President,**

Consisting of volcanic and coral islands, Vanuatu is one of the smaller island nations in the South Pacific region and in the world. With a rapidly increasing young population and low economic growth rate, until very recently, UNDP assessment places Vanuatu amongst one of the poorest countries in the south Pacific region. This level of underdevelopment drastically limits its capacity to effectively curb threats associated with the adverse impacts of climate change.

**Mr. President,**

More than 80%, of the population of Vanuatu depend on the land for their subsistence farming and contributions to the national economy. Their traditional farming practices have been shaped by their subsistence needs and climatic conditions. Land has always been culturally precious to the Ni-Vanuatu mainly because rights to its ownership and use form a central part of their culture and traditional governance. Increasingly considerable pressure is being placed on access to land by the rapidly growing population. This issue is likely to be compounded by possible losses of arable land owing to the adverse impacts of climate change. Such potential losses raise serious economic, political and security implications for Vanuatu.

Not only is Vanuatu a Least Developed country but it remains one of the most disaster prone nations amongst the small island states in that it is highly susceptible to cyclones, coastal erosion, river flooding, earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis and volcanic eruption.

**Mr. President,**

Without doubt these are challenging times. We followed with great interest the recent Summit on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its impact on Development. Vanuatu is deeply concerned that like climate change the crisis is caused by outside influential forces and its rippling effects are quickly reaching our nation's most vulnerable population i.e. children, women, the disabled, the working poor, who will be the one's hardest hit and least able to cope with dramatic changes.

**Mr. President,**

Vanuatu is indeed being hurt through a variety of measures such as decreasing trade, erratic commodity prices, increased borrowing costs and strains on official development assistance. One of the reasons of this downturn is that we are quite dependent on external finance which includes aid and trade. Furthermore our foreign – exchange earnings and government revenue relies on a small number of commodities but we are confident in counteracting these impact measures by introducing progressive microeconomic policy mechanisms and improving government structures and striving to maintain political stability. This feature is in line with upholding the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the focus of achieving country targets by the year 2015.

**Mr. President,**

Vanuatu ideally concurs with the ensuing planned Summit notion that climate change is one of the most fundamental challenges ever to confront humanity. No issue is more fundamental to long-term global prosperity. And no issue is more essential to our survival as a species. We strongly feel and support that a fair and comprehensive global deal in Copenhagen is a way forward for all of us, whether one is small or large, developing or developed nation. Mutual cooperation, respect and trust are the key political driving force for a successful deal in Copenhagen.

**Mr. President,**

While we commend recent efforts to reform the United Nations Vanuatu shares the view of other countries that to ensure a stronger and more effective organization the need to review the membership of the Security Council must be sooner than later. By better reflecting geographical representation and the underrepresented group of member countries of the United Nations there will be stronger sense of responsibility and responsiveness. A more representative Council will bring openness and transparency, create confidence, and ameliorate understanding and cooperation.

But it must be done in a way that does not affect the authority of the Council. Understandably, there are diverse and vested interests among many of us. But 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.

The spirit of negotiations must therefore be conducted in a mutual atmosphere through constructive dialogue and positive engagement. Diatribes offer no solutions and recourse. We must remain resolute in our defense of the United Nations as we are continuously reminded by the horrors of conflict and the scourge of disease and famine on people, especially women and children.

**Mr. President,**

At a more administrative level the highly bureaucratic procedures and accession mechanisms established by the United Nations system for much needed funds have placed unnecessary strain on local capacities. As the burgeoning climate crisis looms in the horizon we need to identify ways of simplifying the procedures, for instance of accessing climate change funds and revising delivery modalities, including exploring direct access possibilities. The blueprint for international cooperation may be there but action must go with it.

Finally, my delegation welcomes Security Council resolution S/2009/473 on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and disarmament. The presence of all the Leaders of the permanent five demonstrates a commitment to control the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Maintaining international peace and security will always remain humanity's greatest challenge. There is hope.



Despite all our differences and diversities human security for all is our main objective. We recognize the efforts of the Secretary General of the United Nations and commend the manner in which he is pursuing with relevant UN bodies in "Mobilizing Political Momentum for Copenhagen". Saving the earth and humanity remains our ultimate goal.

In closing we go to Copenhagen with optimism. The future is in our hands. Let us not deprive future generations their right to live in a world of peace and stability.

I thank you.