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# The Republic of Vanuatu

Statement by

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PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU  
AND CHAIR OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM**

On the occasion of the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

*“Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance”*

**27 September 2010  
New York**



**Mr President,  
Excellencies  
Distinguished Delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Vanuatu is very pleased that we are meeting under your presidency, and on behalf of my Government and the Pacific Islands Forum, I extend warm congratulations and express to you our full confidence and co-operation.

Allow me also a moment to pay tribute to your predecessor, H.E. Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, for his exceptional service and leadership during the 64<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, and for the considerable and important achievements of this past Assembly session.

In the same spirit, I take this opportunity to also commend the Secretary General for his vision, leadership and tireless efforts in working towards achieving the common interests of all humanity.

**Mr President,**

Many innocent lives continue to be wasted with people killed or wounded, and multitudes displaced by heinous acts designed to undermine and destabilise the collective efforts of the international community to achieve peace and security for our societies. These many unprecedented events continue to test the very foundation of our Organisation.

As we prepare to enter the second decade of this 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it is vital now more than ever that our membership affirms our confidence and faith in the purpose and principles of the United Nations. It is important that we continue to assert our support for fundamental human rights and the peaceful coexistence of our nations. The range and urgency of challenges that now confront the international community in our globalised and interdependent world demands, at the very least, our steadfast support and commitment to peace and security for our communities and peoples, and future generations.

If we are to effectively guarantee human rights, and achieve peace and security, and social and economic justice for all, we need to be united in this endeavour, and our cooperation and multilateral joint efforts durable and effective.

**Mr President,**

My Government and people of Vanuatu are steadfast in our belief that the United Nations remains uniquely suited to the pursuit and coordination of global initiatives to attain these objectives.



**Mr President,**

Vanuatu hosted in our capital Port Vila the 41<sup>st</sup> annual Pacific Islands Forum last month. As current chair, I wish to inform the Assembly that the Pacific leaders again noted that transnational crime remains a threat to national and regional stability, in particular the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and illicit drugs. Consequently, the Pacific Islands Forum has strengthened cooperation in counter-terrorism measures as well as emphasised national efforts and regional cooperation in combating transnational organised crime and in strengthening border control capacities.

Two years ago in Cairns, Australia, Forum members at the highest level reaffirmed support for ongoing action by the Forum Secretariat, and in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders, to raise awareness of the seriousness of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and its impact on the Pacific, and establish this issues firmly on the political agendas of our Forum members. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is now widely recognised as a risk to human security and a potential destabilising factor for communities and societies alike.

The Pacific Islands Forum remains committed to collective arrangements and mechanisms to assist regional governments recover from national conflicts and crises. These efforts are evident in the positive results of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and the contributing member States under the Biketawa Declaration, and it would not have been successful without the strong leadership and commitment of the Solomon Islands Government.

While many of our member countries have not ratified the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), Forum Leaders already recognised the important role that UNCAC offers in providing an internationally agreed framework for the construction of an effective anti-corruption framework for countries around the world. The Pacific Plan that was endorsed by Forum Leaders in 2005 also focuses on strengthening anti-corruption institutions, requiring the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to examine options for regional support to consolidate commitments to key institutions such as audit and ombudsman offices, leadership codes and anti-corruption institutions. I am pleased to say that our regional organisations are working with the various UN agencies to progress work to promote UNCAC.

While known as a region characterised by oceanic isolation, smallness and general vulnerability, the Pacific Region is only one of the few in the world to have experienced nuclear weapons testing. Advancing therefore the cause of nuclear non-proliferation, as well as the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (also known as the Treaty of Rarotonga), remains critical and relevant to our signatory members States. The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty reflects not only our region's deep commitment to international peace and security, but also to collective international action to secure that state of peace and security. In welcoming the successful outcome of the 2010 Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, Forum Leaders also welcomed the announcement by the United States of its intention to ratify all Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga.



Forum Leaders at their meeting last August encouraged all States to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty (CTBT) as a practical step toward nuclear disarmament, and noted the practical value and potential of the CTBT verification system, including for earthquake and tsunami warning networks in the Pacific. This is extremely critical in light of the devastating tsunami almost a year ago today that hit Samoa, Tonga and American Samoa, and the ensuing series of strong earthquakes and tsunami warnings that have continued to afflict our member countries, with a severe and most recent earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Notwithstanding the size and national obligations and circumstances, our respective Forum members value and are proud of our contribution to UN peacekeeping efforts. For my own country, we are proud to contribute to UN Peacekeeping missions in East Timor; Haiti; Sudan; Bosnia; the Peace Monitoring Group and Transition Team in Bougainville; and in the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands.

Terrorism is an offence to humanity and against the core values of the United Nations. We must be resolute in our national and collective efforts to combat terrorism in all its forms. For my own country, I reaffirm our strong support for the relevant Security Council resolutions against terrorism. These resolutions provide clear signal of our determination to suppress terrorist activities, including training, international movement and financing.

**Mr President,**

We all present here today have recounted the various stages of our progress to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. For our island countries, our increasing vulnerability to threats and challenges, underscored by the impacts of the global economic, financial, fuel and food crises, are exacerbated by the current and impending impacts of climate change, as well as our inherent limited capacity to cope.

But this is not to say that we have not made progress in achieving any of these goals – with respect to MDG 2, the primary education systems of the Pacific region are characterised by high enrolment, with six of our countries currently displaying Net Enrolment Ratios of over ninety percent. Most, if not all, our Pacific island countries are expected to meet the goal of gender equality in education by 2015. We have been able to achieve these given that we have localised the global indicators by adjusting them to suit our local circumstances and priorities.

While we remain concerned about the pace of our progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we are committed to accelerating progress towards achieving the MDGs by 2015. The *Port Vila Declaration on Accelerating the Achievement of the MDGs* that was adopted by Pacific Forum Leaders at their meeting in Vanuatu last month recognises that the MDGs are extremely important, as too the incremental path taken towards achieving those goals - a path that should recognise and accommodate the special circumstances and challenges we face in the Pacific. The *Port Vila Declaration* also highlights the importance of mainstreaming the programme of support for sustainable development of Small Island developing States, which



is captured in the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) and the MSI, as an accelerant to achieving the MDGs in the Pacific and addressing the specific vulnerabilities that we face.

To ensure the success of the *Port Vila Declaration*, we call on the support and collaborative action and commitment of the international community and development partners, particularly in improved understanding and ability to address our vulnerabilities; and in improved coordination of efforts towards achieving the MDGs.

Progressing the Pacific's work with respect to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is closely and inextricably linked to the Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (MSI). The development and endorsement in 2005 of the Pacific Plan by the Forum Leaders underpinned the critical need for creating stronger and deeper linkages between our countries, and in identifying sectors where the region could gain the most from through sharing resources of governance and in the alignment of policies. As a living document, the Pacific Plan enables the articulation of the MDGs based on the unique features of the Pacific region. Responding also to the need to reinvigorate efforts to do the same things better and smarter, Pacific Leaders adopted in 2009 the Cairns Compact of Development Coordination - a strategy for strengthening development coordination and resource effectiveness, and aims to accelerate Pacific island countries achievement of the MDGs.

**Mr. President,**

While we believe that we have made some excellent progress in effectively implementing the MSI at national and regional levels, we also acknowledge our shortcomings, some of which are beyond our control. The growing vulnerability of our Pacific island countries are exacerbated by the impacts of the global economic crisis, climate change and natural disasters, and these affect our abilities to respond.

**Mr. President,**

Climate change remains the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific. Continuing and concerted efforts by Forum members are being made at national, regional and international levels to address the impacts of climate change on Pacific communities and peoples. The degree of urgency for real commitments to emissions reduction must be commensurate with the science and associated impacts of climate change on the most vulnerable communities. This cannot be viewed in the short term impacts to traditional industrial growth or political tenure, but in the longer term sustainability of economies, societies and peoples the world over. A meaningful legally binding agreement on emissions reduction must be reached urgently and without delay.

Recognising the importance of effective coordination and implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts at all levels, and particularly at the national level, Forum Leaders endorsed a set of principles that would guide Forum Island Countries and development partners in this regard, bearing in mind existing and ongoing efforts in the region. These such principles are consistent with the Cairns Compact and the Pacific Islands Framework for Action



on Climate Change, and reflects Forum Leaders' recognition of the important role that regional and international arrangements contribute in supporting national adaptation and mitigation through the enhancement of capacity and access to resources.

I am also pleased to say that ahead of the Cancun climate change meetings this November/December, the Government of Kiribati will be hosting the Tarawa Climate Change Conference in November 2010, and will expect to bring together representatives of countries vulnerable to impact of climate change, as well as representatives of major economies.

**Mr President,**

Allow me at this juncture to make a few remarks pertinent to Vanuatu's position on a number of issues. We meet here in this esteemed assembly to once again renew our commitment to the United Nations and to the principles enshrined in its Charter. However, the need to reform the UN remains imperative to ensure it effectively responds to the needs of its members. In this regard, I wish to commend the Secretary General for advancing the work of the reform of the Security Council. We note the work done by the Chair of the intergovernmental negotiations on the question of equitable representation and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. And so we join all like-minded states to encourage the UN to pursue equitable reforms in its institutions, in order to minimize the democratic deficit in the multilateral arena.

My government also joins all other Heads of Governments who are member of the UN Family in congratulating the Secretary General of the United Nations, in bringing into reality the four years efforts in creating the office of UN WOMEN a new entity formally established by the UN General Assembly as of July of this year. This decision gives more prominence to women and their place in our societies.

**Mr. President,**

Vanuatu celebrated its 30 years of political freedom last July, relatively this year also marks the end of the second international decade of decolonization. My Government wishes to question the progress on some important processes of self-determination. It's disturbing to think that we may be "legitimizing" practices that contravene the very principles this Organization has been founded on. Are we to assume that decolonization issues stay unnoticed in years to come so as not to unsettle the status quo?

Issues relating to decolonization and severe human rights violations must be effectively addressed impartially. In this connection, we call upon the UN to strengthen its efforts in working towards full decolonization of territories which are still under the control of administrative powers. Where there are serious reports of human right violations, there must be stronger UN role in investigating all allegations of human atrocity. We are reminded that the noble task of our multilateral organization is to reaffirm our commitment and respect in fundamental human rights, and in the dignity of the human person.



We are encouraged to see emerging nations such as Kosovo rising from the turmoil of restraint, to take up their position in the midst of the independent nations of the world. It is in the spirit of democratic freedom that justice must prevail for those peoples whose rights for political freedom have continued to be suppressed by colonial and illegitimate administrative powers. These include those countries whose political freedom to claim their rights for territorial sovereignty under the United Nations Convention on Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) are suppressed by colonial administrative rule and those whose political freedom to rightfully claim for an extended continental shelf under UNCLOS are suppressed by colonial administrative rule.

As we applaud calls for a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, my country also calls for the lifting of the embargo on Cuba that will enable the good people of Cuba to improve their livelihoods.

**Mr. President,**

My country, including other LDCs of the Pacific, has consistently argued in this forum, that the mechanisms and criteria for assessing graduation eligibility must not be isolated from the permanent and inherent vulnerabilities of our countries. It is unrealistic for the UN agencies to look at the progress and make projections without taking into consideration issues of permanent vulnerabilities and capacity to sustain growth in our countries. Indicators of most MDGs clearly demonstrate little progress in human development. Climate change and volcanic eruptions and other disasters will continue to be a big factor that will inhibit human development in our islands. These factors are critical, and we therefore re-iterate our position that they must be carefully weighed in the vulnerability graduation criteria.

**Mr. President,**

In the case of our very close neighbour, Fiji, my Government believes that all players are interested in seeing a positive political progress in Fiji, which must continue to be genuinely engaged with the good people of Fiji. We have learnt that multilateralism offers some constructive innovations in diplomatic practice, but it may also complicate conflict resolution by accelerating tension between actors.

Finally **Mr. President**, in the spirit of reconciliation through the Pacific way, I call upon all international and regional diplomatic actors to assist in ways that will not polarize the region. Instead, our diplomatic approaches should help to give genuine dialogue and engagement a more credible opportunity. There should be genuine and renewed commitment to foster relations in the Pacific region; one that would promote larger freedom, regional cooperation, friendship and integration as envisaged in the Pacific Plan document.

In conclusion I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all our development partners for the support they are providing in building our economies. I believe more can be done to assist in addressing the rising challenges confronting the island countries of the Pacific region.

I thank the general assembly.