



The Republic of Vanuatu

Statement by

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PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU**

BEFORE

THE SIXTY SIXTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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"The Role of Mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means"

(Check against delivery)



Mr. President
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr President,

Vanuatu joins with other delegations in congratulating you on your election to preside over the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly. My delegation extends our full cooperation and believes that with your leadership, we will conclude a successful Session.

Please allow me to also acknowledge the leadership of your predecessor, H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss, for his exceptional leadership and for the considerable and important achievements of the previous Assembly Session.

In the same spirit, I take this opportunity on behalf of my Government to congratulate H.E. Ban Ki-Moon for his re-election to the post of the United Nations Secretary General and to also commend him for his vision, leadership and his tireless efforts in working towards achieving the common interests of all humanity.

Mr. President,

I would also like to profit from this occasion to congratulate the Government and People of the Republic of South Sudan on the birth of their new nation on 9th July this year. Vanuatu recognises the sovereignty of South Sudan and offers the young nation our full support.

Mr. President,

This year's General Assembly session theme, "The Role of Mediation in the Settlement of Disputes by Peaceful Means", calls for more creative and feasible peaceful multilateral solutions to many of our longstanding disputes that unless resolved peacefully, will have far more reaching global consequences. Settlement of disputes by peaceful means is central to the United Nations system, as enshrined in the UN Charter and in numerous international conventions and treaties. In this context, we, like many others, encourage our brothers and sisters in Israel and Palestine to continue peaceful negotiations that will ensure regional and global stability. We also call upon



the United Nations to revisit the framework with which it fulfils its mediation mandates and develop closer partnerships with mediation actors within regional groups. And to succeed, and as responsible nations of this global village, we must continue to cultivate an environment that thwarts seeds of bitterness, hatred, and vengeance.

Mr. President,

In establishing the United Nations in 1945, many nations great and small, entrusted with it the responsibility to assist in maintaining international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations and promote social progress, better living standards and human rights.

Sixty six years after the founding of this multilateral organisation, the world we live in, however, is far from the ideals for which its inception was intended. Across the globe, people from all walks of life continue to be subject to colonial rule, death threats, arbitrary detention and torture and worse, are killed for exercising their rights to freedom of expression. Untold crimes against humanity and other human rights atrocities still remain.

Mr. President,

While we reaffirm our faith in multilateralism with a conviction that bilateral diplomacy cannot substitute multilateralism, we also believe our nations have a greater need for a more robust multilateral system that is swift and efficient in responding to a multitude of challenges; challenges that the members of this highly esteemed system, acting unilaterally, would be hard done to defeat. We are delighted to note that one of the four priorities of the President of the 66th session is to continue the work of the reforms within the UN.

In that context, the establishment this year of the Change Management Team (CMT) within the organisation, in particular, is a step in the right direction. This initiative comes at a time when members of this establishment are calling on the United Nations to play a more prominent role in a period of rapid change and financial limitation to build a culture of transparency, accountability, good governance, enhanced democratic participation, and achieve efficiency and result.



As regards the UN Security Council, Vanuatu is steadfast in its belief that reform measures must provide for a democratic and a geographical strategic representation, in both the permanent and non-permanent membership to reflect the realities of this century. We continue to lend our invaluable support to the candidacies of many countries vying for membership within the non-permanent seat at the Security Council. We hope sustained reforms will help to boost the Security Council's peace-making role and to increase efficiency and transparency in promoting the universal standards and common values and customs which form the basis for global security and development. Let me at this juncture acknowledge the work of the peace keeping and nation building missions of the UN in supporting new countries like Timor Leste, South Sudan, and others in their nation building.

Mr. President,

The 9th September 2011 marked the ten year anniversary of the twin tower bombing that wreaked havoc in the city of New York and claimed more than 3,000 lives. Such acts of terrorism can never be justified, whatever the causes they claim to be advancing and whatever grievances they claim to be responding to.

Despite international efforts to counter terrorism, major threats remain. Indeed, the world cannot sit ideally by, watching the forces of evil threaten humanity's right to peace and security. Terrorism cannot and must not be allowed to flourish. Vanuatu condemns, in the strongest possible term, all forms and manifestations of terrorism and calls on all countries to join forces to fight against its evil ideologies, activities and financing, to make the world of tomorrow a safer place. All countries must work closely in eliminating this scourge.

Today, the lack of progress on disarmament and non-proliferation, cornerstones of global security is disturbing. The World's nuclear powers must fulfil their vows to meet their Non-Proliferation Treaty obligations to take decisive and practical steps towards irreversible disarmament. Only then will proliferation of arms reverse.



My people welcome the strenuous efforts by President Obama and other world leaders working together on the frontier to advance negotiations on de-nuclearization. The most recent events in Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster clearly shows that whatever safeguards are in place, there can be no absolute guarantee that these can withstand the unforgivable ferocity of mother nature. These are important lessons for us.

Mr President,

Four years after the Global Financial Crisis began in 2007, the economies of many developed countries continue to struggle, stirring financial markets worldwide with fresh fears of impediments, defaults and possible recessions.

For small developing countries like Vanuatu, the rise in food prices, high fuel costs, soaring commodity prices, fears of a global recession as well as other unforeseen effects from the global financial instability and uncertainty that remains in many developed countries are having multifaceted effects.

These developments, coupled with the on-going effects of climate change and natural disasters continue to threaten the economies of small island nations as well as undermine all efforts toward meeting Millennium Development Goals and to ensure that sustainable development is achieved.

Vanuatu has made some progress towards achieving MDG goals but much more needs to be done, by pooling our own resources at the national level and engaging the international community to coordinate efforts to achieving our MDG goals.

Mr. President,

The convening of this year's thematic group on NCDs is indeed timely. In my country, it is estimated that approximately 75% of deaths each year are related to NCDs. Furthermore, the



immediate causes of the NCD epidemic – tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, and harmful use of alcohol – are becoming increasingly widespread in our society, especially in urban areas. These self-inflicted diseases are therefore becoming a major barrier to our socio-economic development, and to achieving healthy Islands and the MDGs. At this point in time, my country is undertaking for the first time, a national NCD STEPS Survey to determine and better understand the burden and extent of NCDs and their determinants in our communities, so that we can better target our intervention efforts in future. Early this year, Vanuatu launched its revised NCD Strategy and Policy (2011 – 2016) to guide our implementation efforts in the ensuing years. We have also implemented over the years many key NCD strategies to empower our people to increase control over their health and its determinants, with the assistance of our development partners such as WHO, AusAID and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

Mr. President,

In terms of economic performance, Vanuatu's economy grew at an unprecedented average rate of 6% between 2003 and 2008. Economic growth has since, suffered economic growth declines, mainly as a result of exogenous shocks felt during this on-going global financial crisis. This has negatively impacted on government revenues in the last few years, adding further strains on the economy. That said, the need for significant increases in financial support from development partners remain pressing. The announcement at the G-20 London Summit in 2009 for a considerable increase in credit facilities was welcomed news. However, the reassertion of these financial commitments and swift action needs to be rigorously followed up by the donor community.



Mr. President,

The previous assessment of Vanuatu's development status as an LDC, by the United Nations Committee on Development Policy, has shown a progressive pace in development. While graduation may be imminent, I must underscore before this august assembly that most challenges of Small Island Developing States are permanent. Challenges of smallness, distance to major metropolitan markets, extreme vulnerability to natural disasters and of climate change, sea level rise and vulnerability to tsunamis, all constitute the permanent characteristics of our island nations. It is therefore important for the United Nations to ensure that multilateral mechanisms for graduation and transition package must not be detached from these permanent realities. We are delighted that the President of this 66th session has vowed to pay special attention to vulnerable states like ours.

Mr. President,

Climate change and ocean acidification remain the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific, particularly for small low lying Pacific Islands. High greenhouse gas emitting industrialized countries must start to embrace and accept the common but differentiated responsibilities in the historic contributions to climate change.

As the former Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, I, along with my fellow leaders of the Pacific Island nations, particularly welcome the historic visit of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to the Pacific. I call on the UN to undertake more senior missions to the Pacific region to establish more comprehensive understanding of how susceptible the people of the Pacific are to the adverse impacts of climate change and sea level rise as embodied by the case of Kiribati.

I call on leaders of advanced nations to renew and honour their pledges to finance in particular efforts to assist most vulnerable communities address their adaptation needs to ensure island nations survive the impending global disaster climate change may afford. An increased global fund to strengthen capacity building efforts of vulnerable communities in particular to integrate climate change into economic policies and actions is pressing.



As we prepare for COP17 Climate Change Talks in Durban, my government urges all delegations to work tirelessly to commit to a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. Durban must advance all aspects of Climate Change negotiations and devise strategies to operationalize COP16 decisions if any concrete, balanced and ambitious outcomes were to yield results.

Mr. President,

Colonialism and all forms of imperialism must be addressed by the United Nations. For one of the reasons why the United Nations system was created was “*to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples*”. Therefore colonial rule is obsolete and must be addressed with new drive and vision. The United Nations as well as the international community must continue in their efforts to address issues of decolonization in those non-self-governing territories who are still yearning for

freedom. The mandate of the Special Committee on Decolonization must be strengthened and all means should be accorded to the Committee to allow it to magnify the suppressed voices of the peoples in all non-self-governing territories who are still under the control of administrative powers, especially where serious human rights violations are reported.

My country, Vanuatu, was the last in the Pacific region to be decolonised. Since our independence in 1980, we have continued to speak out for the inalienable rights of the colonised indigenous peoples of Oceania and in certain parts of the Asian region where either administrative or colonial powers still retain authority.

Mr. President, my government also calls upon the United Nations to ensure that demands for French Polynesia’s right to self-determination, are not rejected. We along with many other Pacific nations support calls for the re-inscription of the French administered territory with the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization. This would be the first major step in the process of their self-determination. Vanuatu encourages the French administered territory of French Polynesia, and in the same spirit that of New Caledonia to continue to seek meaningful



dialogue with France in order to find ways to ensure that freedom of the colonised peoples of Oceania is fully realised.

Embedded amongst the core principles of the UN Charter, this Organization must guarantee universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all the oppressed. The universal pursuit of democratic reforms, good governance and adherence to human rights conventions have often concealed the sufferings of many peoples denying them their right to decide their destiny without fear and reprisals. The United Nations must step up its efforts to exercise their freedom from the tentacles of foreign rule, a misgiving so troublesome in these modern times.

Mr. President,

One day, I said one day, all the indigenous peoples of Oceania and beyond must reach their destination of freedom, a destination promised to all humanity, a right that the Creator endowed upon on all peoples, and a right that no earthly power can deny where they could live and be self-ruled in free association with the international community of nations.

Mr. President,

Let me take this opportunity once again to re-iterate in this eminent UN assembly, our serious concerns over the infringement by foreign forces on the political freedom of many of our nations today, a right denied to the people of the land to exercise their freedom to control their lands, a freedom denied by the injustices of the global world order that demarcated many of our lands, dividing peoples, families, cultures, and disconnecting the traditions of our ancestors. Denying the right for a country to exercise its political freedom over its maritime territorial boundaries, preventing the indigenous people of a country to exercise their culture and traditional linkages with integral part of its lands, sovereign since time immemorial, remains one of the biggest crimes of our times. We are therefore calling on the United Nations to ensure our fundamental rights can be exercised in all parts of our territory.



Mr. President,

As the world unites in addressing some of the major challenges of our time, the lifting of the economic embargo on Cuba, is long overdue. Denying the good people of Cuba to fully participate in the global economy is inhumane, and it is high time the Cuban people are allowed to enjoy their rights and freedom as an independent and sovereign nation.

It is time that we all revisit the aspirations and the ideals with which the United Nations system was created and to join forces to weed out injustice, colonialism, poverty, hunger, war crimes, terrorism and the likes in the hope of creating a peaceful and secure world for generations to come. All nations, great and small, must respect each other's sovereignty. For this is the way to achieve trust and ensure a dignified confidence amongst all friends gathered around the table of United Nations.

I also welcome Fiji's commitment to full and democratic elections by September 2014. As a Pacific neighbour this announcement is timely.

Mr. President,

I would like to profit from this opportunity, in conclusion, to express my gratitude to Vanuatu's development partners for the support they are providing in building our economy. I believe more can be done to assist small vulnerable island countries like Vanuatu address the rising challenges confronting them.

Leaders of the world, the resounding echoes of history drum in our ears reminding us of what must be done tomorrow. The global forces that drive change towards the future must beckon towards a world where peoples of all races, ethnicity, creed, beliefs, faiths, cultures, traditions, and origin, can live in harmony and peace, as brothers and sisters. Peace be with you all.

God Bless the United Nations



God Bless You All

I thank you.