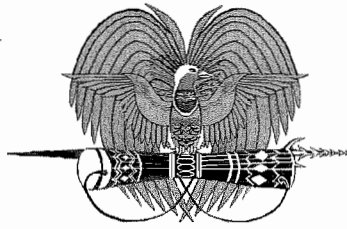


"Check against delivery"



STATEMENT BY

**HON. RIMBINK PATO, LLB, OBE, MP
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION
OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

**AT THE GENERAL DEBATE SESSION OF
THE 67TH UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

29TH SEPTEMBER 2012, NEW YORK

Mr President,
Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon,
Heads of State and Government,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Papua New Guinea congratulates you, Mr President, on your recent election as President of the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. We pledge our support to you.

I also commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz al-Nasser for the valuable work he has done over the last year.

Mr President

Papua New Guinea celebrated its 37th Anniversary of Independence on the 16th of September.

Prior to that and despite various challenges, Papua New Guinea was able to successfully complete the General Elections in a fair and peaceful manner, which culminated in the convening of our 9th National Parliament and the formation of a new Government. We thank those close friends and development partners that have assisted us in this process including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, China, the United States, Great Britain, European Union, the United Nations and the Commonwealth.

As a young developing nation we are proud of our constitutionally-based Government and evolving democracy.

While our peoples have subsisted over centuries, our short modern history continues to be a testament to the will of our people to maintain and continue consolidating our burgeoning democracy in accordance with the Rule of Law, which is the basis on which just and fair societies are built.

Mr President

Papua New Guinea's key development priorities in the next five years are contained in our Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP) which is aimed at achieving the long-term national roadmap under our Vision 2050.

We will need to strengthen our economy to be more resilient to global market shocks by diversifying trade, investment and reviewing development cooperation that will ensure our people's basic needs are met.

Papua New Guinea is also increasing investment in our children's future security and success by the provision of free and quality education from elementary to secondary level and further subsidizing education from Grade 12 to tertiary-level. This will enable us to achieve MDG 2 on Universal Basic Education which will enhance our nation building.

We are also rehabilitating and developing major infrastructure such as roads, ports, airports, schools and hospitals as key drivers of sustainable development.

We are also increasing funding support to ensure delivery of basic health and social services country-wide. Revitalization of our institutional and human resources capacity to take the country to higher development level is also a major development priority.

Mr President

My Government has prioritized combating corruption at all levels of Papua New Guinea institutions and society and in doing so we have adopted the principle of "zero-tolerance"!

Papua New Guinea is setting up an Independent Commission Against Corruption to enhance implementation of the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC).

Such legislation and policy efforts will improve good governance resulting in effective basic service delivery and provide access and opportunities for participation in national development by all relevant stakeholders.

Mr President

Our economy is growing at a rate of around 8 percent annually. Our improved economic performance is underscored by political stability, sound macroeconomic management and the development of the first-ever largest Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project. The revenue from the LNG will further increase in the growth of our economy.

A Sovereign Wealth Fund is being set up to professionally manage the revenue from the LNG project and other extractive industries and which are to be re-invested for our future.

We also hope to share this wealth with our Pacific neighbors in the appropriate manner.

A strengthened economy will improve our social indicators especially to address our literacy levels, high maternal and infant mortality rates, law and order enforcement, ageing public sector workforce and declining state of our country's infrastructure.

Mr President

Papua New Guinea adopts the United Nations Secretary-General's "Five Year Action Agenda" on sustainable development; enhanced human security; enhancing core values of the international community; support for nations in transition; and working with and for Women and Youths that was launched on 25 January 2012.

Papua New Guinea continues to benefit from a strong UN presence through its delivery of various development programmes, which we highly value. We have been implementing the "One UN – Delivering as One" concept since 2006, as a "Self-Starter" country. So far, this is working exceptionally well for Papua New Guinea.

We are also grateful that the United Nations has heeded our call and synergized its Development Assistance Framework 2012 – 2015 with our Medium Term Development Plan. But we can all do more together.

We urge donor partners to abide by the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action. Through the Pacific Islands Forum, we have adapted the Cairns Compact to better coordinate development assistance as well as ensure aid-effective delivery.

Mr President

We welcome the UN's proactive engagement with the Pacific region and thank the United Nations Secretary-General for his visit and commitment. We are encouraged that contacts with the UN system and personnel are to be strengthened in the years ahead.

Mr President

The challenge for Papua New Guinea is to ensure that the development of our natural resources is sustainable and the benefits are effectively translated into the improved livelihoods of our people. This will assist us to meet our Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially the 22 Indicators and 90 national targets that we have set ourselves to achieve.

We acknowledge that it will be a challenge to attain all the MDGs by 2015 but note there has been measured progress in the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger (MDG1) and reduction of child mortality (MDG 4). We are taking full ownership of the MDGs.

With the support of our development partners such as the European Union and the United Nations, Papua New Guinea is to trial the Millennium Villages concept this month.

We recommit ourselves to work with our international partners including the UN and we reiterate that the MDGs need to be the priority while we discuss the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Mr President

Papua New Guinea continues to scale up its efforts to further strengthen human rights protection and its advancement in the country. We are working closely with UN agencies and our other development partners in the furtherance of these objectives.

To date, we have reported to the Human Rights Council on work done relating to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in July 2010. We have also reported to the Human Rights Council under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.

Additionally, reports of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women in 2012 and the Special Rapporteur on Torture, and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 2010 are being considered by the Government.

Mr President

Papua New Guinea is committed to gender empowerment and equality. We recognize women and girls, not only as key national development partners but whose inherent human dignity must be respected and safeguarded. This is a central pillar of our Constitution and a core value of our national development roadmap.

A testament to the success of this measure is that more girls are enrolling in primary and upper levels of education with an increasing high retention level. More women are also increasingly employed, recognized and given higher responsibilities in our public and private sectors.

In fact, we achieved a historical milestone that is unprecedented in our political history by electing, for the first-time ever, three women National Parliamentarians at any one-time, in our recent National Election. This positive trend is also increasing at our lower levels of government.

We also recognize the critical importance of protecting our women and girls from violence and discrimination. Papua New Guinea is taking a proactive approach through education, advocacy and legislation to prevent gender-based violence. We have made violence against women and girls a crime punishable by law. Partnership with all stakeholders including our development partners and civil society forms an important part of gender empowerment and equality. We commend the support of substantial funding announced at the margins of the Pacific Islands Forum level from Australia as well as other development partners including New Zealand, United States and the UN.

Mr President

Having acceded to the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we are now in the process of ratifying the Convention. Papua New Guinea is also working with our Pacific Islands Forum member States to host the Pacific Islands Forum Disability Ministers Meeting from 3 – 4 October 2012 in Port Moresby.

We are also working towards setting up an independent National Human Rights Commission and are in the process of withdrawing the seven reservations on the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocols. In this context, we are partnering with Australia to address human trafficking and people smuggling issues in our region.

Mr President

The theme of the Rule of Law at National and International levels for peaceful settlement of disputes that you chose for this General Assembly Session and the successful High-level meeting you convened four days ago is indeed timely and commendable. Papua New Guinea fully subscribes to the principles of the rule of law.

Papua New Guinea subscribes fully to disarmament and non-proliferation to a secure and peaceful world. We urge nuclear armed nations to denuclearize and those striving to go down this path to refrain from it.

The Pacific region remains a nuclear weapons free zone and we urge other UN Member States that have yet to sign and ratify the Rarotonga Treaty, which prohibits nuclear weapons in the region, to do so.

Papua New Guinea remains concerned with the continued proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). The recent impasse on the negotiations on a global Arms Trade Treaty to regulate this remains a concern.

We therefore urge member countries to continue work to conclude this Treaty.

Mr President

Papua New Guinea supports the g7+ Forum for its efforts to strengthen peacebuilding and Statebuilding in fragile and post-conflict countries and commend Timor-Leste for their leadership.

As part of our national commitment to fostering global peace and security, Papua New Guinea has commenced contributing to the UN Peacekeeping Operations and is expanding its contribution.

Mr President

Papua New Guinea remains committed to the sustainable development agenda, especially on climate change with respect to mitigation and adaptation.

We are committed to working closely with the global community under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and subscribes to the Rio+20 Outcome Declaration on the “Future we Want”.

Papua New Guinea recognizes the pivotal role of the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) for sustainable development. As a founding member of GGGI, Papua New Guinea pledges to work together to ensure desired outcomes. We commend the Republic of Korea for this important initiative.

Mr President

In conclusion, we support the call made by the UN Secretary-General for the reform of the United Nations systems.

We again call for the reform of the UN Security Council in both the Permanent and Non-Permanent category to reflect the geopolitical realities of today.

Thank you.