



SOLOMON ISLANDS

STATEMENT BY

**HONOURABLE MR. GORDON DARCY LILO, MP
PRIME MINISTER**

**BEFORE THE
67th UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
GENERAL DEBATE**

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Mr President,

On behalf of the Government and people of Solomon Islands, I wish to congratulate you on your election as President of the 67th session of the UN General Assembly. I also commend your predecessor, His Excellency Nassir Abdullaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar for his fine leadership during the last session. I also thank the UN Secretary General, His Excellency Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts in advancing security, development and human rights - the three pillars of the UN Charter.

Mr President,

Global security remains a serious challenge today. States are increasing their military capabilities and arms sales have tripled in the last year reaching record levels. Closer to home, in the Asia Pacific region, new cold war lines are being drawn and low intensity territorial disputes are brewing. This situation provides the option of unilateral action which undermines the rule of law at the international level. These challenges now demand an effective multilateral institution which responds meaningfully in real time to uphold the rule of law. In this regard, Solomon Islands welcomes this year's theme "*Adjustment and Settlement of International Disputes or Situations by Peaceful Means*". It is our desire that states that find themselves in international disputes would adhere to the rule of law and work towards ensuring global peace.

Mr President,

Solomon Islands emerged from an internal conflict some ten years ago. A regional peace initiative known as Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands – or RAMSI, has helped restore law and order and created an environment for nation building and development. Our gratitude goes out to all our regional neighbors.

A National Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was set up in 2009 to investigate the causes of the conflict has submitted its report early this year. The commission has facilitated the national reconciliation and healing process. The government has established a working group to carefully consider the recommendations in the report.

Solomon Islands commends the UN General Assembly for convening the High Level debate on the Rule of Law this week. The Rule of Law is fundamental in guiding the conduct of actors and addressing the realities within national and international jurisdictions.

Mr President,

Since regaining peace and stability, Solomon Islands has achieved some social and economic progress. For example, economically, the country has enjoyed steady growth in the last five years. External reserves continue to improve and as of February 2012 it stands at 10 months import cover. In addition, Solomon Islands is one of the eleven countries identified by the World Bank in 2012 as having the most improved "ease of doing business" across several areas of regulation. An Economic Core Working Group has also been established to coordinate donor assistance and is playing an important role in public finance reforms including debt management and in creating fiscal buffers that enable us to cushion external shocks.

In the health sector, I am pleased to report that we have almost eradicated malaria from two of our nine provinces. Infant mortality has significantly decreased from 80 to 35 per 1000 live births and maternal mortality rate has also decreased from 500 to 200 deaths per 100,000 live births. The government and its development partners continue to fund medical and health centers to deliver the services needed by our people.

Mr President,

Major improvements in the law and order situation has resulted in the reduction of major crimes and created a safer environment in the country.

We have also successfully hosted a number of international events such as the FIFA Oceania Football Tournament, the Festival of Pacific Arts and most recently the visit by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. We have regained our image of the country known as "the Happy Isles."

As part of our efforts to address governance issues, Solomon Islands has intensified its national consultations to determine the appropriate mechanisms to improve political integrity and stability. National consultations have been conducted to obtain feed-back from the community on the required institutions and processes. Strengthening governance is expensive and needs international partnership. I take this opportunity to thank the UN Department of Political Affairs for its assistance towards our electoral reforms.

Mr President,

After almost ten years, RAMSI is now in its transitional phase. The government is working closely with RAMSI to ensure a smooth transition as the responsibility for security and development is placed back in the hands of the government and community. My government will engage with various stakeholders including UN bodies to consolidate the gains that have been made so far and in building a resilient state.

Solomon Islands continues to strengthen its relationship with the United Nations. This year we opened a second diplomatic Permanent Mission in Geneva. We are also pleased to see that the World Health Organization office in Honiara upgraded from a liaison office to the level of Resident Representative. We request UNDP to follow suite. I believe a stronger UN presence at the country level will further enhance understanding of the country's development priorities and challenges. The United Nations will only be strengthened with a Secretariat that represents the diversity of its membership.

Mr President,

On Fiji, Solomon Islands recognizes the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Fiji. Solomon Islands will continue to dialogue with Fiji and calls on the region and the international community to support Fiji's "Engaging with the Pacific" process and its road map to the 2014 general elections. We welcome Fiji's commitment to have its general elections in 2014.

Solomon Islands has also strengthened its mediating role at the sub-regional level through the Melanesian Spearhead Group – or MSG. The MSG is made up of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and FLNKS. Within the MSG Secretariat, a peacekeeping unit has been established. Solomon Islands and the other MSG members believe that the United Nations remains the bedrock of international peace and security.

Mr President,

The promotion of human rights is fundamental to creating a culture of peace and security. Solomon Islands welcomes the on-going inter-governmental process to strengthen the effectiveness of human rights treaty institutions during this session. We recognize the universality of human rights and call for the elimination of double standards and politicization of human rights violations.

On the situation in the Middle East, I believe the UN is uniquely placed to provide a comprehensive solution to the region's complex issues including the current situation in Syria. It is a region that deserves freedom, democracy and long-term security. Solomon Islands continues to support the work of the Quartet and the office of the Secretary General in defusing tensions and advancing political discussion on a two-state-solution for Israel and Palestine.

Mr President,

There is no justification for the killing of innocent civilians wherever it may occur. We therefore join the international community in expressing our deep concern on the sad events in Benghazi.

On non-self-governing territories in the Pacific, Solomon Islands supports New Caledonia's aspirations for self-determination. I wish to inform this Assembly that last month, members of the MSG undertook a second ministerial visit to the territory to monitor progress under the Noumea Accord.

We encourage all efforts to enable the Kanaks to assume leadership in determining their future. Solomon Islands also joins its regional neighbors in supporting the re-inscription of French Polynesia on the United Nations decolonization list. We also support other peoples within the Asia-Pacific region that aspire for self-determination and independence.

Mr President,

On LDC issues, I welcome the work done by the General Assembly on strengthening the smooth transition process for countries graduating from the LDC Group. In working towards graduating from the Group, we are embarking on a number of development initiatives.

Under the Istanbul Program of Action, Solomon Islands is pursuing three high valued national investments.

Firstly, with support from New Zealand, a second international airport is being constructed in the Western Province.

Secondly, the submarine-fiber optic project is expected to come on line by 2014.

Third, Solomon Islands is in the process of establishing two tertiary universities, the Solomon Islands National University and the University of South Pacific Solomon Islands Campus.

These national projects place Solomon Islands on a path to transforming its economy and ensures inclusive and equitable economic growth take root in the country. We have done so by un-locking domestic and regional resources through the establishment of a debt strategy in partnership with the private sector and the Asian Development Bank.

Mr President,

Furthermore, we are taking steps to maximize returns from our natural resources. On fisheries, as a party to the Nauru Agreement, we have closed-off pockets of high seas between our exclusive economic zones in a bid to protect and manage fish stocks. In that regard, we have adopted the Vessel Day Scheme or VDS to guarantee equitable share of benefits. We hold the position that the VDS must be embodied in bi-lateral and multi-lateral fisheries agreements. We call on all distant-water-fishing nations to respect this principle position.

In the mining sector, we are now a member of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative or EITI and we continue to develop policy and translate it into local laws and regulations. Mining presents a major opportunity to broaden our economic base. In this regard, we will be granting mining leases to a major nickel mining company before the end of the year. It is estimated that the company will produce around sixty-nine thousand tons per year and generating significant job opportunities.

Mr President,

At the Rio+20 Summit we charted a new course to develop an improved paradigm for advancing and measuring the three pillars of sustainable development. The full and timely implementation of the Rio+20 Outcomes is crucial. As we approach 2015, we must accelerate efforts to achieve the MDG targets within the remaining three years.

Solomon Islands is implementing its National Development Strategy (2011-2020). We call on our development partners to align their assistance with the priorities outlined in the Strategy.

The proposed post 2015 development agenda must take into account the shortcomings in the implementation of the MDGs. The SDGs must be economically rationalized, rural focused, community based and time bound. We look forward to working with the experts who will be establishing the framework. Solomon Islands is pleased to be one of the fifty countries that UNDP will consult to develop the post-2015 global development agenda. We request that this consultation process should also mainstream Small Island Development States issues into the 2014 SIDS Global Conference.

Mr President,

In relation to climate change, I join my AOSIS colleagues in re-iterating that climate change is an urgent and irreversible threat to humanity. Solomon Islands is deeply troubled by the current low ambition level pledged by developed countries. There is a discrepancy between what has been pledged and what is necessary to stabilize temperature increase. This means mitigation must be prioritized at the COP 18 in Doha and green house gas emission levels meaningfully increased.

We need to have certainty that we are working towards a temperature increase no more than 1.5 degrees celsius and not a 3 to 5 degrees celsius world. This is to ensure the survival, viability and sustainable development of SIDS and LDCs. We deeply regret that some countries have opted out of the Kyoto Protocol, some have refused to take a second commitment and others have remained undecided on taking a second commitment.

At the national level I am pleased to announce that in June this year, Solomon Islands launched its national climate change policy which mainstreams climate change into all sectors of the country.

The Solomon Islands is a country with rich biological and cultural diversity. It is a member of the Coral Triangle Initiative. This year, twenty two Pacific Islands countries and territories converged in Solomon Islands to showcase their cultural diversity and heritage. The region has rich indigenous cultures, biological and cultural diversity which makes it an indigenous-bio-cultural hot spot. This hot spot remains fragile and exposed to threats and needs international support. We will be seeking ways and means of having this initiative featured on the global agenda.

On Security Council reform, reform must keep pace with the changing global realities. We support the call to make the Security Council more representative, relevant and effective. After four sessions, we are concerned about the slow progress of negotiations. We hope to see progress during this session.

Mr President,

On the question of Taiwan, My government recognizes Taiwan's flexible, moderate and rational foreign policy which continues to promote friendly cross-strait relations. Solomon Islands continues to support Taiwan's meaningful participation in the UN system, including its aspirations to be a member of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and UNFCCC. Although not a member of ICAO, Taiwan manages more than a million flights, 40 million passengers per annum. Similarly, Taiwan is the 22nd largest emitter of greenhouse gas but it is not a member of UNFCCC. I firmly believe that it is our shared responsibility to engage Taiwan in our efforts to advance sustainable development and address climate change.

With regards to Cuba, I thank the Government and people of Cuba for support provided to our medical students. We join the international community in calling for the immediate lifting of the US economic and trade embargo against Cuba. Solomon Islands encourage the US to respect the good neighborly principle.

Mr President,

Finally, regarding gender equality and empowerment of women, I would like to thank the UN member states for your confidence in electing Solomon Islands to the executive board of UN Women. I also welcome the call by the Secretary General to convene the 2015 Global Conference on Women. Solomon Islands further acknowledges Australia's 320 million dollars regional assistance to support gender programs for the Pacific Island Countries.

Women play a very important role as peace makers and leaders in Solomon Islands society. Our gender challenge has grown with time. Today we have national gender programs that support empowerment. We look forward to working closely with Australia and the other Board members in advancing the cause of women and girls.

Mr President,

In closing, Solomon Islands is committed to working closely with you in establishing an inclusive, transparent and effective multilateral system. I would also like to assure you of our support towards our common endeavors to build a peaceful and secure world for our children and future generations.

I thank you Mr President.