



THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU

Statement by

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**PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU**

BEFORE

THE SIXTY EIGHT SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY

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**Mr. President**

**Excellencies**

**Distinguished Delegates**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

The Republic of Vanuatu is very pleased that we are meeting under your Presidency and therefore wishes to associate itself with other esteemed delegations in congratulating you and the members of your Bureau on your election to lead us through this 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

**Mr. President,**

On Syria, we have seen internal conflicts transformed into international disputes that require solutions from this august body. This session has heard intense debate on the protracted conflict affecting the Syrian people and undermining the regional and international peace. We join many other Peace loving nations to call for an end to the conflict and for the UN to do more to strongly enforce the international ban on the use of Chemical Weapons. On the other hand, we commend the United States of America and the Russian Federation for taking a strong leading role in the issue of Syria and in addressing the Chemical weapons issue in Syria.

We are concerned that these conflicts have often derailed the international focus from addressing much needed agenda such as our common Millennium Development aspirations. It is unfair that countries resorting to such illegitimate acts could trigger wars that could costs monies, while the rest of the peace-loving countries and their peoples suffer in terms of its opportunity costs as moneys spent could be diverted into more better and effective use.

**Mr. President,**

It is here in this platform that Leaders of our Nations have spoken their hearts freely to find common solutions in a bid to inspire the Community of Nations who believe in international Peace and international security. Our main objectives are to take collective decisions to address a spectrum of international issues, some of which require urgent action such as the issue of climate

change. It is here that we have called for the recognition of the rights of women, children and the disability who are caught up in conflicts and violence. It is here, Mr. President, that we have called for help on behalf of those who have been discriminated against because of their color, religion, or of their political convictions.

For the Republic of Vanuatu, this podium is the only international platform on which we have year after year since 1981, spoken out against colonialism and neo-imperialism in all its forms. And again today, I stand here once more, on behalf of the entire population of our archipelago to speak for those who are still living in the colonized territories. We know, Mr. President, that decolonization is still incomplete. Yet we have seen the incremental but positive steps taken by the Special Committee on Decolonization in its 2013 sessions recognizing the inalienable right of the French Polynesia to Self-determination. We also applaud the work of the Committee in maintaining the discussion and dialogue on the question of New Caledonia. Let me at this juncture therefore thank the Government of France for their cooperation in moving the decolonization process forward. It is important to maintain this dialogue with clear intentions to help the Kanaky people to attain their independence. I encourage in the greatest possible respect all parties to ensure that the process to achieve freedom remain on track. We in the Melanesian Spearhead Group are appreciative of the work of the Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front as the Chair of the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

**Mr. President**, the Republic of Vanuatu only emerged from colonialism and achieved its political Independence from the Condominium powers 33 years ago. And based on our struggle for independence, we share the journey and the litany of heartaches and ushered dreams of many of our brothers and sisters whose human rights to larger political and civil freedom are still bound by tentacles of imperialism and colonialism.

**Mr. President**,

I would like to reiterate our call delivered last year here in this podium that the United Nations Secretariat must always be impartial and avoid selective implementation of the General Assembly resolutions and Security Council Resolutions concerning the rights of all peoples who desire to be free from colonialism or any form of imperial venture.

We can all talk about issues of terrorism, financial and economic crises and climate change and reach some level of understanding on the seriousness of these challenges and the measures that must be taken to address these issues. We can all talk about good governance and rule of law and respect for human rights. But when it comes to the issue of the rights of the people of West Papua, our voices are muted even in this podium.

I want to congratulate the Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon who emphasized in his visit to Asia in 2012 that the UN will do all to ensure that human rights will be respected in West Papua and I quote: *“whether you are an independent state or a non-self governing territory or whatever, the human right is inalienable and a fundamental principle of the United Nations.”* Unquote.

Now we as members of the United Nations must call for these words to be translated into concrete action. Mr. President, my Government, calls upon the United Nations to appoint a UN Special Representative to investigate alleged human rights in West Papua and its political status in light of the controversies surrounding the UN Temporary Executive Authority administration in the 1960s. Ever since the controversial Act of Free Choice, the West Papuans have been consistently denied any sort of recognition by the United Nations. It is clear from many historical records that the Melanesian people of West Papua were the scapegoat of Cold war politics and were sacrificed to gratify the appetite for the natural resources which this country possess. Today they are still the victims of ignorance of the UN.

**Mr. President**, if the UN Representative, Mr. Ortiz Sanz had described the West Papuan issue as a cancer growing “on the side of the UN and that his job was to remove it”, it is very clear today from what we have seen that this cancer was never removed but simply concealed. One day, this cancer will have to be treated. We must not be afraid if the UN had made some mistakes in the past. We must admit our mistakes and come out stronger. For when we are weak and admit our mistakes and take corrective action, then we are strong and vibrant.

As members of the United Nations, we all subscribe to the principles of democracy, good governance, human rights, accountability and the rule of law as enshrined in the United Nations Charter. And in the age of technology where nothing could hide from the attention of civil society and Governments, Mr. President, I ask, how can we then ignore hundreds of thousands of West Papuans who have been brutally beaten and murdered? Mr. President, The people of West Papua are looking to the UN as a beacon for hope. We are now deliberating on the issue of Syria. Let us, my colleague leaders, with the same moral conviction yield our support to the plight of West Papuans. It is time for the United Nation to move beyond its periphery and address and rectify some historical error.

**Mr. President**

Since our independence 33 year ago, the indigenous people of my country are still concerned that part of our maritime and cultural jurisdiction including Umaenupne (Mathew) and Leka (Hunter) Islands, south of Vanuatu were withheld by France. And in doing so, the people of our country were denied the right to exercise full political freedom and inherent cultural rights, preventing the indigenous people of the Southern Province of our country to fulfill and protect their cultural and traditional obligations in connecting its people to their land, sovereign since time immemorial.

These two islands are of paramount importance because they form the basis of the establishment of our unique cultural framework connecting our cultural island group known as Tafea islands. It is this cultural framework that had governed and defined who we are and our livelihood long before the administrative colonial powers began to explore and govern our shores. Sadly, today, our indigenous people continue to be denied access to these cultural and sacred Islands.

My Government calls upon the Community of Nations in this assembly to uphold the principles of respect on the rights of our indigenous people and their livelihood and for the Government of France to allow our indigenous people of Tafea to have access to their forefathers land, Umaenupne and Leka Island, in the Republic of Vanuatu.

**Mr. President**

The call by the United Nations to review the Millennium Development Goals and strategize for the post-2015 development agenda compels us to rethink our global partnership structures and national priorities and action to better achieve our goals in the post 2015 period. My country has seen some progress in achieving some of its MDG targets. However, appropriate conditions for economic growth and development must be created. An integrated and balanced approach is required in social, economic and environmental dimensions.

In order to achieve this, my Government has given an emphasis on the area of climate change, renewable energy and sustainable use of environment. We have now created a separate Ministry of Climate Change, Energy and Environment to lead the government in addressing issues in this area. We would welcome opportunities for unconditional partnership to better address these important issues. It is clear, Mr. President, that there has been much talking about the issues of climate change; however, the level of fulfillment of the financial pledges has been unsatisfactory, considering the fast pace of climate- change-induced impacts in the Small Island States. We call for more urgent actions and decisions on this front.

**Mr. President**

While Vanuatu supports this development paradigm shift, we also recognize that the new development agenda may impart its own shortcomings and therefore must be given careful consideration in its final design. It is evident therefore that this new modality must take heed of: (i) the complexity that still exists within the international aid development programmes, coupled with the risk of unpredictable financial crises that affects the delivery of aid; (ii) challenges faced by countries to attain the current MDG goals; (iii) the ambiguity and difficulty in prioritizing goals within an expanded list of priorities; (iv) the imminent graduation of my country from the LDC status and its foregoing benefits; and (v) the risk of reduced level of real aid spending per capita, affected in part by lack of increase in global development aid.

Being cognizant of these issues, Vanuatu is taking steps partly on our own accord and with the assistance of our partners to build stronger resilience against its own vulnerabilities. The

plan involves making quantum leap decisions in the country's infrastructure development, where new roads, wharfs and airports will be built and upgraded to allow for among other things greater integration of the rural population into the national economy.

I thank the Government of China, Australia, New Zealand and the Asian Development Bank for their assistance, as well as the Government of the United States for its significant investment in two major national roads in Vanuatu. We see this as investing in the future of my country, where the 60% of our population aged 25 years and younger and the significant portion of people living in the rural area will be given an opportunity to have greater access to markets and economic opportunity throughout our island archipelago.

**Mr. President**

All our development initiatives must be inclusive and not leave behind the poor and the marginalised. My country has taken appropriate actions to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment are achieved in the process of development. The actions of the Government include legislations amending gender discriminatory laws, addressing issues of domestic violence and submission of Universal Periodic Reports to ensure our compliance to the Human Rights Convention reporting framework.

Finally, Mr. President, as I conclude I wish to thank you once again for the opportunity to express my views in this forum. We have said much about many things and we will now need to match our words with action. Long live our aspirations to create a better and a more secure world for everyone.

I Thank you Mr. President