



SOLOMON ISLANDS

STATEMENT BY

**HONOURABLE MANASSEH SOGAVARE, MP
PRIME MINISTER**

AT THE

**71st SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
GENERAL DEBATE**

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Please Check Against Delivery

Mr. President,

It is indeed an honour to see a fellow Pacific Islander elected for the first time as President of the 71st Session of the General Assembly. His Excellency Peter Thomson, brings to the position his experience, personality and leadership qualities that are known to this hall. Solomon Islands assures you, Mr. President, of our support and cooperation during your term in office and look forward to working with you on our common agenda as one of your Vice Presidents.

Our appreciation goes to your predecessor, His Excellency Mogen Lykketoft, whose term in office coincided with the adoptions of three development frameworks, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. President Lykketoft worked tirelessly in strengthening the role and authority of the General Assembly. He has put in place an open, inclusive and transparent process in the selection of a new UN Secretary General. The new Secretary-General is expected to take up office, come January 2017. For the first time in seventy years, the General Assembly interacted with all aspiring candidates. We wish all candidates all the best in their bid for the position and leave an open invitation to the incoming Secretary-General to consider visiting the Hapi Isles.

Mr. President,

His Excellency Ban Ki-moon's tenure as Secretary-General comes to a close at the end of this year. We join others in paying tribute for his exemplary leadership at the helm of our organisation. The Secretary-General has over the years worked for the benefit of all and has been the voice of reason, particularly on the issue of climate change. He remains the first and only Secretary-General to have visited Solomon Islands since we joined this august body 38 years ago. It was also under his term, that the UN country presence in Solomon Islands was upgraded.

We have every confidence that his successor could further upgrade Solomon Islands UN country presence to a fully-fledged country office. We remain steadfast in our commitment to work with the Secretary General in the remaining four months ahead and thank him for his sterling service to Solomon Islands and humanity.

Mr. President,

Last year was a year of Agreements and adoption of frameworks, this year must be about operationalising the Agreements and implementing frameworks. It is in this regard, Solomon Islands welcomes this Session's theme, "The Sustainable Development Goals: A universal Push to Transform our World". We commend you in putting together an implementing SDG Team in your office. We look forward to working with you in unlocking the Means of Implementation in realising the full and effective implementation of the SDGs.

I am indeed proud to say, Solomon Islands has begun work in domesticating Sustainable Development Goals by integrating them to our 2016-2035 National Development Strategy (NDS). The NDS provides a clear, coherent and harmonised whole of government approach in delivering on our national policies and programmes.

Mr. President,

This week's High Level Meeting Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants was an opportunity to also examine the issue of climate displaced populations and environmental migrants with a serious eye. The international community must do more in assisting Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) to manage populations displaced by climate change via a global mechanism. Current treaties are inadequate to address people forced out by climate change. We call for a legal framework to address and protect the rights of forced climate migrants and compensate climate impacted populations for the loss of their livelihood.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands is the current chair of the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF). PIDF is a bold attempt to address the issues of sustainable development through a structured and inclusive approach with the tripartite leadership of government, the private sector and civil society. PIDF offers a seamless link for the Pacific Island Countries to the High Level Political Forum processes envisaged under 'The Future We Want'.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands welcomes the Paris Agreement. I congratulate COP 21 Presidency, France for his leadership in restoring trust and confidence in the multilateral system. We now have the Paris Agreement with legal obligations to implement the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. I am pleased to announce Solomon Islands has ratified the Paris Agreement and submitted our instrument of ratification two days ago.

We are all duty bound to strengthen the Agreement and make it work. We however, remain concerned that ambition under the Paris Agreement remains alarmingly low to limit warming to well below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial level.

Solomon Islands appeals to developed countries to scale up the ambition of their respective Intended Nationally Determined Contribution in order to protect the integrity of the Paris Agreement. We hope in Marrakech we can do more in placing the Paris Agreement on firmer foundation by taking concrete steps in closing the pre 2020 ambition gap. Solomon Islands therefore, urges countries who have not ratified the Doha Amendment under the Kyoto Protocol to do so as soon as possible. I also welcome the decision taken by the Parties to the Montreal Protocol last December to phase down the production and consumption of Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) under the Treaty.

We hope big emitters and industrial countries see the urgency of preventing a runaway climate change and ratify the Paris Agreement to enable its early entry into force.

Mr. President,

This year, scientists reported that five of our islands were claimed by the sea due to human induced sea level rise with six others severely eroded. The acceleration of sea level rise and ocean acidification remain serious concerns for us. Delaying action to tackle climate change comes at a cost and we in the SIDS and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are unnecessarily put in harm's way by the lack of commitment to act by some.

Mr. President,

The Solomon Islands welcomes and supports the Moroccan COP 22 Presidency for his initiative to convene a facilitative dialogue in unlocking the means of implementation to operationalise the Paris Agreement.

Solomon Islands further welcomes the decision of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to disburse USD 2.5 billion by December 2016. Solomon Islands is in the midst of securing GCF to fund one of our hydropower projects. We remain grateful for partners like Japan, United Arab Emirates, Italy and Republic of China for their ongoing renewable energy assistance to Solomon Islands.

Mr. President,

I am pleased to announce that Solomon Islands just deployed five Police officers for UN peacekeeping duties. We intend to step up on our global responsibility and send more officers to other Missions abroad in the near future.

On the regional front, the Solomon Islands registers its gratitude to all 15 Pacific Islands Forum members including Australia and New Zealand for their steadfast partnership and commitment to Solomon Islands over the last thirteen years. The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is winding down and will exit in June 2017. Solomon Islands is engaging with various partners including Australia and New Zealand on post RAMSI arrangements.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands remains committed to SDG 16. We have conducted national reconciliation outreaches and would like to thank the UN for availing Peace building fund for utilization in Solomon Islands. Currently, we are undertaking legislative reforms as well as land reforms including, investing in nation building economic investments. We are committed to unifying our rich culturally diverse population.

Mr. President,

On the issue of oceans, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Solomon Islands is developing a national ocean governance framework. The framework will rationalise and enhance coordination and the implementation of all ocean related legislations.

Solomon Islands has some of the world's most diversely rich marine species and is a member of the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI). CTI affords us a coordinated approach to marine and coastal management with the leadership of the government, and focus on people-centred natural resource management.

We are mindful of the growing global attention on oceans and welcome the Assembly's decision to convene the UN Conference on Oceans and Seas next year. Solomon Islands also support the establishment of a new agreement to deal with biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

There is no single ocean entry point in the multilateralism system. I call for the establishment of a World Ocean Authority. The ocean authority will coordinate all ocean related treaties, entities and programmes and move beyond the current sectoral approach to a single holistic and comprehensive framework.

Mr. President,

Fisheries contributes significantly to the economies of the Pacific. Tuna has integrated economies of the Pacific into the global markets. This year, Pacific Small Islands Developing States celebrated Tuna Day here at the United Nations. I hope it becomes an annual event and will explore the possibility of bringing a resolution to the General Assembly to declare the 2nd of May as World Tuna Day internationally.

Solomon Islands is a member of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA). We believe in rights based approach to fisheries management that guarantees resource owners, their fair share of benefits. The Vessels Day Scheme (VDS) is one such rights based mechanism. It has significantly increased the economic returns from our tuna.

Mr. President,

I am pleased to note, that one of Solomon Islands four submitted continental shelf claims, to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, is now awaiting decision by the Commission.

The joint Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands claim on Ontong Java Plateau concluded its interaction with the Sub Commission in August this year.

Solomon Islands would like to acknowledge the efforts of the joint delegation, and thank the Department of Ocean and Legal Affairs assistance through its Trust Fund. We encourage all who are blessed with resources to contribute to the Fund.

I thank the Commonwealth Secretariat for the technical support rendered to the joint delegation and hope that similar support could be extended to the remaining claims.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands recognises the fundamental right of Taiwan 23 million people to participate meaningfully in the United Nations specialised bodies. Solomon Islands find Taiwan's limited and restricted participation with the World Health Organisation system regrettable, especially at a time when the spread of infectious diseases is impacting our children and need everyone to assist. We call for Taiwan's open and free access to all World Health Organisation's meetings. Similarly, Taiwan remains unjustly on the fringes of ICAO's decision making processes, Taiwan manages more than a million flights or 58 million passengers through Taipei Flight Information Region. We also call for Taiwan's predictable and certain participation in ICAO gatherings.

There has always been two political systems along the Taiwan Strait, the reality is, the world works with one and turns a blind eye to the other. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda calls for all hands on deck, let us put the interest of humanity and work with all including Taiwan.

Mr. President,

This is Solomon Islands second year as Chair of the five-member Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG).

MSG has established a sub-regional Humanitarian and Emergency Response Coordinating Centre to respond to disasters in our sub region. The increasing occurrence of severe tropical cyclones requires timely international and regional responses to compliment nationally led disaster management responses.

MSG recently concluded negotiations on a new MSG Free Trade Agreement. The new Agreement once signed by the four states will deepen closer economic integration amongst the states.

Mr. President,

MSG continues to follow the question of New Caledonia on the United Nations agenda. We wish the people of New Caledonia all best as they prepare to decide on their political future in 2018.

Solomon Islands reaffirms its support for the inalienable right of the people of the Territory of French Polynesia pursuant to annual resolutions of the General Assembly beginning in 2013. Solomon Islands continues to request the Administrating power to work and cooperate with the UN special committee on the question of French Polynesia and hope a C24 visit will happen soon.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands is gravely concerned about the human rights violations against Melanesians in West Papua. Human rights violations in West Papua and the pursuit for self-determination of West Papua are two sides of the same coin. Many reports on human rights violations in West Papua emphasize the inherent corroboration between the right to self-determination that results in direct violations of human rights by Indonesia in its attempts to smother any form of opposition.

The principle of sovereignty is paramount in any institution whose core rationale is the respect for sovereignty. If the justification of sovereignty rests on a series of decisions that are questionable, then there is a case to challenge the legality of the argument of sovereignty as is the case of the New York Agreement and the Act of Free Choice.

Solomon Islands adds its' voice to those of other member countries and civil society organisations who are concerned about human rights violations in the Papua and West Papua regions of Indonesia. As the chair of the Melanesian Spearhead Group that includes Indonesia as an associate member and the United Liberation Movement of West Papua as an observer, Solomon Islands affirms the need for constructive engagement with Indonesia and looks forward to cooperating with Indonesia to address the violations of human rights in West Papua.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands welcomes the restoration of relations between Cuba and the United States of America. Solomon Islands continues to call on its friend and partner the United States of America to work towards completely lifting the embargo.

On South-South Cooperation, I would like to register my appreciation to Cuba for the medical scholarships offered to our students, and I am pleased to see the growing number of graduates returning to serve our people.

Mr. President

The Beijing Programme of Action remains a source of guidance and inspiration on gender equality and gender empowerment. Solomon Islands remains committed to the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the programme, which should enable the realization of gender goals and targets under the SDGs. In April of this year my Government welcomed the entry into force of the Family Protection Act. My Government's continued legal reform programme will result in laws that complement the functions of the Act.

Mr. President,

Reform of UN Security Council remains elusive. We urge you to build on the work carried out in the last Session in making the Council more accountable, representative and transparent. Solomon Islands and fellow SIDS continue to seek a dedicated seat for Small Islands Developing States in the non-permanent seat category in the Council.

In closing, the journey to implement the SDGs have begun, this Assembly will be measured on our success in unlocking the means, tools and resources to transform our peoples' lives and guarantee them a sustainable future. Let us not fail our people.

Thank you Mr. President