



PAPUA NEW GUINEA COUNTRY STATEMENT

BY

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SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE PRIME MINISTER

AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

AT THE

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"Check against delivery"

Your Excellency Madam María Fernanda Garcés, President of the General Assembly;

Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations;

Excellency's and distinguished delegates.

Today, I am pleased to, address the General Assembly on behalf of my Prime Minister, the Honourable Peter O'Neill, and the Government and people of Papua New Guinea,

Madam President,

I congratulate you and the Government and people of the Republic of Ecuador, on your election as the first woman leader from the Latin American and the Caribbean region to preside over this august Assembly.

You can count on Papua New Guinea as a committed partner to support your work during your Presidency.

I would also like to thank the outgoing President Miroslav Lajčák for his excellent work this past year.

It is also important to commend the leadership of the Secretary-General for reform of the United Nations and its systems, the UN being an organisation that is so fundamental to the peace, prosperity and security of the world.

Madam President,

This is an exciting year for Papua New Guinea as we host the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum known as APEC.

By doing so, our country is emerging on to the global stage like never before.

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Madam President,

This is an exciting year for Papua New Guinea as we host the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum known as APEC.

By doing so, our country is emerging on to the global stage like never before.

Located in the Pacific Ocean, we are part of a vast Blue Continent of island nations linked by sea.

We also border with Southeast Asia and are within sight of Australia.

We have more than eight million people, the biggest economy and the largest land mass of the Pacific island countries.

We are joining with our Pacific sisters and brothers in a mighty regional endeavour to protect the ocean and its bounty, and to bring prosperity to our peoples.

Nations near and far are learning that our country, Papua New Guinea, is a great treasury of riches.

We have the third biggest rainforest in the world after Brazil and the Congo. We are guardians of a third of the global supply of tuna, the fish that feeds the world.

Our land is home to vast storehouses of gold, silver, nickel, oil and gas.

We are one people forged together from more than 1000 tribes. With more than 800 distinct languages we are the most linguistically diverse nation on earth.

Yes, we have issues that all developing countries face but we are not letting them daunt us as we strive for progress and prosperity.

This year, we are taking a giant stride as we host the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum.

The APEC economies encompass 39 per cent of the world's population and 48 per cent of the world's trade. It involves the United States, the People's Republic of China, Japan as well as other significant economies.

APEC itself is, in many ways, a regional example of attempts to achieve what all the members of the United Nations are working so hard to accomplish.

Many issues are on the table either formally or in informal meetings on the sidelines:

1. Prosperity through free trade-- the founding rationale for APEC

Plus

2. Cleaning up and protecting the natural environment;

3. Inclusiveness so that none of our precious human beings are left behind;

4. Embracing the digital economy;

5. And-- very importantly, gender equality.

International trade is an important engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty eradication as well as a critical source to finance development and achieving sustainable development.

As APEC host we have opportunities like never before.

It is the largest international event in our country's history.

We are well prepared for the Leaders' Summit in mid-November 2018, and the world will see the stunning APEC Haus, an outstanding architectural creation inspired by local culture.

We thank all APEC member economies for their material and organisational support, and particularly

1. Australia

2. Canada

3. China.

4. Indonesia

5. Japan

6. New Zealand

7. Singapore

8. South Korea

and 9. the United States, and others too many to mention

To add to the Pacific island flavour of the event, we have invited Pacific Island leaders to come to our country during this time.

Through APEC we have opportunities to attract trade and direct foreign investment. It will continue to provide us with access to the knowledge and experience of leading economies and to have dialogue with APEC economy leaders in attendance.

This capacity building support in our country will lead directly to business growth and the creation of more jobs for our people.

However--given our small and open economy which is subject to external forces --we join in the calls for the respect for and strengthened rules-based, multilateral trading system.

Hosting this event is a huge challenge for a developing country such as ours.

But, **Madam President**, people can sometimes paralyse themselves by focusing only on their perceived shortfalls or their problems.

But we decided to give it a go.

This also applies to our view of the United Nations and its work.

Of course we must acknowledge and work to eliminate the great problems we are confronting.

But when doing so, let us all keep our eyes on the prize, our vision of peace, security, a return to a pristine environment, and an ongoing prosperity.

The key to overcoming these varied challenges lies in "We the peoples of the United Nations".

Let us work on being united, being stronger together, in a system based on mutual respect, friendship, dialogue and multilateralism.

Unity is the answer. It is the greatest power on the planet.

Madam President,

Two weeks ago, Papua New Guinea celebrated her Forty-third Anniversary of Independence as an unbroken democracy.

We continue to consolidate our economic and structural reforms supported by responsible monetary and fiscal policies aimed at a balanced budget.

With recovering global oil and gas prices and several new major energy and mining projects well advanced, we are optimistic about our future economic outlook.

Madam President,

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a solid pathway that holds much promise for the international community. The choice to enjoy its full potential lies in our hands.

At the Pacific regional level, earlier this month in Nauru, our Forum leaders reaffirmed our collective commitment. The call for collective action is in the Boe Declaration, a copy of which was delivered by

Pacific leaders to the Secretary-General of the United Nations yesterday.

At the national level, we recognise the importance of putting in place the basic building blocks needed to enable successful, inclusive and participatory sustainable development.

Both Australia and New Zealand, our good friends, have eloquently addressed this august Assembly on issues facing our region and the world, and the requirements and obligations for collective action.

Madam President,

An essential part of our development challenge is harnessing the vastly untapped potential of our increasing youth population, which today constitute almost 60 percent of our population.

Creating employment opportunities in both the formal and informal sectors is a key priority to address the needs of our youth in the country. We have hopes for the transformative nature of the digital economy, which is a game changer.

In addition, one of our greatest challenges is to protect women and girls, to ensure they have full equality in our society. This is a fundamental human right. We have a long way to go in this area.

We are determined to find ways to progress for the women and girls themselves and for the good of the nation.

In fact, our long term advancement depends on great improvements in this one crucial area.

We are working hard to do this via policies and laws, combating gender-based violence, providing business opportunities in the formal and informal sectors such as micro-credit schemes and investing in our girls and women's education at all levels of our education system. The

changes are noticeable as we have put in an additional one million more young people to schools, and in particular, girls.

We express our gratitude for the support of our multilateral and bilateral development partners, including the United Nations system in assisting in more ways than one to achieve our goals.

Madam President,

We are preparing our people to cope with the increasing dangers arising out climate, which are real for us.

Earlier this month, as I have said, at the Pacific Island Leaders forum in Nauru, we reaffirmed our strong commitment to work together combat the adverse impacts of climate change under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement and through other Frameworks for the Resilient Development of the Pacific region. The Boe Communiqué of the Pacific Leaders' Forum put our position beyond doubt.

We therefore strongly welcome the Secretary-General's Climate Summit in September 2019.

Madam President,

In February this year, Papua New Guinea experienced a tragic and unprecedented earthquake, the worst in our history.

It hit five of our provinces, killed nearly 200 people, and displaced nearly six hundred thousand others. Many others were injured and traumatised. Vital infrastructure was destroyed. The national economy slowed. Compounding our situation were two separate volcanic eruptions.

We sympathise with such other countries as Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, China and the United States, the countries of the

Caribbean and others who have been affected in recent months by natural disasters and climate change induced challenges.

We express our gratitude to our bilateral and multilateral development partners, including the UN system, Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, and others, as well as the private sector and civil society groups, who stood with us in our time of need. We are revamping our disaster-related plans.

Madam President,

We welcome efforts to replenish climate finance in the Green Climate Fund and thank the contributors for your generosity.

Improved access and in a timely manner is imperative, especially for small island developing countries, like ours to benefit from this important support to help us to mitigate, adapt and build resilience to the ravages of climate change adverse impacts and natural disasters.

Again this is a call for collective global action that all Small Island Developing States seek.

Madam President,

Our Government notes the increasing interest from the international community on the imminent Referendum in Papua New Guinea's Autonomous Region of Bougainville in June 2019, under the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

We are fully committed to the Agreement.

We have appointed, this year, the former Irish Prime Minister Mr. Bertie Ahern to preside over the work of the Bougainville Referendum Commission. We are keen for the Commission to begin its mandate soon.

We are grateful to our multilateral and bilateral development partners including the United Nations, for working together with us on this important national issue.

We want to emphasise that the work of this partnership should in no way undermine the sovereignty of Papua New Guinea over its territory, in accordance with international law.

Madam President,

We welcome the easing of tensions in the Korean Peninsula and commend efforts made by all parties involved and further encourage peaceful dialogue.

We support the moves to keep sanctions in place, not as a punishment, but as a real incentive to get rid of nuclear weapons to implement fully all UN Security Council resolutions and to bring prosperity to the peoples of the DPRK.

We applaud and support in that respect, the efforts of the President of the General Assembly to draw global attention to the dangers of the Weapons of Mass Destruction. For our part, we are working towards signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Madam President,

Let me take this opportunity to share with this Assembly the current status of the refugees and migrants on our Manus Island.

The processing centre was officially closed by my Government on 31 October 2017 following the decision of our Supreme Court in April 2016.

We are therefore working closely with Australia in resettling qualified asylum seekers, including in the US. Other migrants still remain in Papua New Guinea. Each will be addressed case-by-case.

That is our contribution to the extent possible, in partnership with Australia, to address human trafficking, people smuggling and transnational crime.

Madam President,

As a maritime nation, the oceans agenda continues to be of great importance to us as it contributes significantly to our nation's wellbeing.

We are working to ensure fair and equitable returns from our marine resources, particularly in combating illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing in Papua New Guinea's territorial waters.

We are grateful for the close cooperation of likeminded countries in WTO who are working to address harmful fisheries subsidies that foster IUU fishing.

At the Pacific Islands Forum, under our Blue Pacific Continent theme, we have agreed to:

- * secure the region's maritime boundaries
- * to work to eliminate marine litter
- * to enhance maritime surveillance to deter illicit activities.

Madam President,

As I conclude I want to draw your attention once again to our country as we prepare to host the APEC leaders' summit.

As the world increasingly turns its attention to the Pacific Ocean, we are witnessing the enhanced interest of a range of countries, such as Australia, China, France, New Zealand the United Kingdom and the United States.

As one of the nations of the Blue Pacific continent, we welcome that interest.

However, we urge all to play an appropriate role according to the accepted rules of the international order, so that the Pacific Ocean will be a zone of cooperation, of stability and security, of pristine beauty and prosperity.

And may I conclude, Madam President, by expressing the fervent hope of all our peoples that the Pacific Ocean forever lives up to its name-- the Ocean of Peace.

I thank you, Madam President.