



**SOLOMON ISLANDS**

**STATEMENT BY**

**HONOURABLE MANASSEH DAMUKANA SOGAVARE  
PRIME MINISTER OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**

**AT THE OPENING DEBATE OF THE SEVENTY SEVENTH  
SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**THEME: "A WATERSHED MOMENT: TRANSFORMATIVE  
SOLUTIONS TO INTERLOCKING CHALLENGES"**

**23 SEPTEMBER 2022**

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

## **Introduction**

Let me first convey on behalf of the government and people of Solomon Islands my warmest greetings to you Mr. President and to the members of this General Assembly. It is indeed very humbling to stand here today to address this august 77th General Assembly as sovereign equals.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Your Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on your election as President of the Seventy-seventh Session of the General Assembly. I assure you of Solomon Islands support and cooperation during your tenure in office.

I also commend and thank your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, for his assertive leadership of the General Assembly during an unprecedented period in our history.

Solomon Islands is a member of the family of Commonwealth countries, and a Realm State so on behalf of the government and people of Solomon Islands, I express our profound grief on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and convey our heartfelt

and deepest condolences to His Royal Highness, King Charles III, the Royal Family and the government and people of the United Kingdom. Her Majesty will always be remembered as an inspiration, a figure of stability, dignity, and grace. May God bless King Charles III's reign as Head of the Commonwealth and all Realm countries.

### **Geopolitics, the Pacific Region, and Solomon Islands**

Mr. President,

The shifting international system has generated renewed strategic interests in the corner of the world we regard our home - the Pacific, with super and middle powers coming together seeking to strengthen their presence in the Blue Pacific Continent. Solomon Islands sees the global system as interlinked and interdependent.

The recently adopted 2050 Strategy of the Blue Pacific Continent approved by Pacific Leaders and launched here in New York yesterday, defines the Pacific region's priorities and strategic interests. The strategy offers opportunities that can be leveraged to benefit our people. The large Ocean Island states that inhabit the Blue Pacific Continent share a common sense of identity and purpose. All partners that wish to work with Pacific countries must align with this strategy.

Mr President,

The right to establish diplomatic relations between sovereign nations is a universal principle shared by all members of the United Nations. Solomon Islands had been unfairly targeted since formalizing diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China just over 3 years. We have been subjected to a barrage of unwarranted and misplaced criticisms, misinformation and intimidation that threatens our democracy and sovereignty.

Solomon Islands has been vilified in the media since formalizing its relationship with China. This decision was reached through democratic processes by a democratically elected government. Our decision to establish relationship with PRC is consistent with the United Nations 1971 Resolution 2758 observed by most countries in this esteemed Assembly, and which also articulates the 'One China Policy' that Solomon Islands respects. I reiterate the call for all to respect our sovereignty and democracy.

Mr President,

Solomon Islands has adopted a "Friends to all and Enemies to None" Foreign Policy. In implementing this policy, we will not align ourselves with any external power(s) or security architecture that targets our or any other sovereign country or threaten regional and international peace. Solomon Islands will not be coerced into choosing sides.

I am reminded of the wisdom conveyed by the late President Nelson Mandela during an interview with Ted Koppel which is relevant to our situation, and I quote:

“One of the mistakes which some political analysts make is to think their enemies should be our enemies...Our attitude towards any country is determined by the attitude of that country to our struggle...”

Solomon Islands has no enemies – only friends. Our struggle is to develop our country. We stretch out our hand of friendship and seek genuine and honest cooperation and partnership with all.

Mutual respect for national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference into the internal affairs of any country is universal and paramount. As a sovereign nation we embrace and zealously guard these principles.

### **Global flashpoints and conflicts**

Mr. President,

Looking at the wider region, the Taiwan Strait is one of the world’s busiest trading routes used by international shipping. We call on all countries to be sensitive and not inflame tensions that can threaten the unity and security of any country. Any miscalculation could threaten international peace and security and could have disastrous consequences on global trade.

On Ukraine conflict, Solomon Islands calls for maximum restraint by all parties and a de-escalation of the conflict. We continue to hear words of war in this Hall of peace. We must be united in our resolve to seek peace and urge all parties to pursue a diplomatic solution to the conflict based on the spirit and purpose of our United Nations Charter.

### **Least Development Country Status**

Mr. President,

The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, impact of global conflicts and domestic civil unrest have jeopardized our progress on delivering against the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. It undermined our ability to graduate out of LDC status in 2024. Solomon Islands experienced negative economic growth due to the closure of our international borders since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic more than two years ago.

These circumstances have changed the landscape for our progress and sustainable development. We will collaborate with partners to undertake in-depth assessment on our readiness to graduate out of LDC status in 2024.

### **Nuclear Free Pacific**

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands joins other countries in the Blue Pacific Continent who are signatories of the Rarotonga Treaty to maintain a nuclear-free Pacific. We encourage nuclear power states who have signed the Rarotonga Treaty to take the next steps to ratify the Treaty which is aligned to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons. We reiterate our call for the total elimination of nuclear material, nuclear weapons, and nuclear-powered military assets in our Blue Pacific. Solomon Islands also echoes the concerns expressed by other Pacific countries on the proposal by Japan to discharge ALPS treated nuclear water from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant into the ocean.

### **Maritime boundaries and United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea**

Mr President,

I am pleased to inform the General Assembly that Solomon Islands has now legally formalized the delimitation of all five of our maritime boundaries with Australia, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, France, and Fiji. With the completion of all five maritime boundaries, our rights and obligations are protected under UNCLOS in perpetuity.

In this connection, the Solomon Islands government supports the ongoing work undertaken by the United Nations International Law Commission on the question of sea level rise and sovereignty. The position taken by Solomon Islands is that once the signed instruments are deposited with the United Nations, our boundaries

have achieved permanent status. This also uphold the principles of stability, security, certainty, and perpetuity enshrined in UNCLOS.

### **Post conflict and peace building**

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands is a post-conflict country and our work to address the underlying causes of this conflict is still a work in progress. Sadly, in November 2021 this progress was seriously hampered by civil unrest and rioting that exposed the country's security and economic fragility. We welcome any assistance in addressing our post-conflict challenges.

On a brighter note, Solomon Islands will, for the first time, be hosting the Pacific Games in 2023. This event will strengthen the unity of our nation and will contribute to our nation-building and peace building processes.

I take this opportunity to thank our partners that have so far assisted us in our preparation to host the games – including the People's Republic of China who funds the bulk of the games' facilities, Republic of Indonesia, Australia, Papua New Guinea, and Japan. The 2023 Pacific Games infrastructure has transformed our capital city and has opened new opportunities for our youthful population.

### **Communication infrastructure**

Mr. President,



Solomon Islands has embarked on a ‘digital transformation journey’ to enhance and modernize our telecommunication infrastructure in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 9 to link its more than nine hundred habited islands distributed over 1.2 million square kilometers of water.

Together with Australia and Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands commissioned its first submarine cable in 2019. The geographical reach of the submarine cable will be expanded with the installation of about approximately 170 telecommunication towers under a Belt and Road Initiative that will link 80% of Solomon Islands and provide our rural populace much-needed access to reliable, accessible, and affordable telecommunication services.

We also acknowledge with appreciation the ongoing support from our bilateral and multilateral partners including Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, World Bank, ADB, European Union, the Green Climate Fund, and others for supporting our infrastructure projects by building new roads, bridges, airports, wharves, and hydropower dams.

### **Climate Change**

Mr. President,

I stand here in solidarity with my Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters to continue our fight against Climate Change. The onset of extreme temperatures, heat waves, droughts, flooding, and sea level rise has

increased the vulnerability of Pacific countries to the negative impacts of climate change.

For least developing countries like Solomon Islands, vulnerability is a key hindrance to sustainable development. Currently, indicators to measure vulnerability are inadequate. Solomon Islands therefore calls on all states and partners to support the development of Multidimensional Vulnerability Index, (MVI) and looks forward to its finalization and adoption.

Pacific Island countries including Solomon Islands are in a constant mode of recovery from disasters. Global financial mechanisms for disaster recovery need to be established to ensure the economic burden of recovery and ‘building back better and stronger’ following rapid-onset disasters and climate related disasters are not borne solely by countries that are in serious need of support.

Considering these challenges, the Pacific region has declared a ‘state of climate emergency.’ Sadly, we are seeing more resources spent on wars than in combating climate change. This is extremely unfortunate.

Pacific countries have also established a “Pacific Resilience Facility” - a financing mechanism that aims to build resilience and reduce vulnerability of Pacific populations to the negative impacts of climate

change. A pledging session for the facility will be held during this session. We call on all partners to support the Facility.

Solomon Islands also commends the Vanuatu-led initiative requesting support from the UN to ask the International Court of Justice to provide an advisory opinion on Climate Change that has also been strongly supported by Pacific Leaders.

Mr President,

As the world continues to combat climate change, we ask all parties going into COP27, to set more ambitious National Determined Contributions, that would put our world on a 1.5 degrees Celsius pathway. We would also like to see a roadmap for ease of access, and timely disbursements of the US 100 billion adaptation finance by 2025. The discussions on Loss and Damage demand a stand-alone agenda and COP27 aimed at establishing a 'Loss and damage financing facility'.

### **Human rights**

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands embraces the promotion and respect for human rights as a fundamental freedom for all. We subscribe to Resolution 60/251 that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing, and that all human rights

must be treated in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis.

Now, I am pleased to inform this Assembly that Solomon Islands has successfully deposited its Instrument of Ratification to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

We will be submitting the Instrument of Ratification to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict within the coming weeks.

### **Sanctions on Cuba and Referendum on New Caledonia**

Mr. President,

We join the international community in reiterating the call for the lifting of the economic embargo imposed on Cuba. We commend Cuba's resilience and urge the United States of America to take the initiative and normalize relations between the two close neighbors.

I also wish to convey my deepest appreciation to Cuba for the training of our medical students. More than one hundred Solomon Islands medical doctors have graduated from Cuban medical schools over the years.

Solomon Islands also closely follows the outcome of the third referendum in New Caledonia which took place in December 2021 with an air of uncertainty. Solomon Islands subscribe to resolution A/AC.109/2022/L.22 and supports the call for all relevant parties to ensure that the next steps for the self-determination process are transparent and inclusive.

### **Gratitude**

Mr. President,

In relation to our successful fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, we express our heartfelt gratitude to our partners including Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, the United States of America and the United Nation's Agencies, World Bank and other multilateral agencies who stood with us and provided us with tremendous support and much-needed COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX facility as well as bilaterally.

Solomon Islands is also extremely grateful for employment opportunities provided by Australia and New Zealand through their respective labour mobility programs to accommodate some of the unemployed twenty thousand youths who enter our labour market every year.

### **Conclusion**

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by thanking you again for the theme for this year's General Assembly session.

Our world is at cross-roads. It is feeling the strain of divisive elements that can divide us. We must not allow that to happen. We have been weighed down by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are feeling the negative impacts of geopolitical conflicts and wars.

The time has come for our world to rally and focus on what unites us rather than what divides us – for the world will be always stronger if we are together.

We must foster friendship and solidarity through genuine and durable partnerships. We must commit to work together, with each other to ensure we can leave behind a legacy of a more peaceful, just, and brighter world for the young generations that will come after us.

Mr. President, the key questions we must each ask ourselves are, (i) what legacies do we as today's leaders leave behind for those that will come after us, and (ii), how do we wish to be remembered by generations that will follow?

I am sure we would all wish to be remembered as the generation of leaders that uplifted our world, that united our people and our countries to live together in peaceful co-existence.

Mr. President and fellow leaders, if we can leave a legacy that safeguards the survival and freedom of our future generations, we will have done our jobs well.

To God be the Glory great things He has done. Thank you.