



STATEMENT
BY
H.E. MR. WAVEL RAMKAWALAN
PRESIDENT
OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES
AT THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE 77TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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77th SESSION OF UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ADDRESS BY MR WAVEL RAMKALAWAN, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SEYCHELLES

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Theme: A watershed moment: Transformative solutions to interlocking challenges

*Mr President of the United Nations General Assembly,
Mr Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Seychelles congratulates you, Mr President, on your election as President of the seventy-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly. We also extend our profound appreciation to your predecessor, Mr Abdullah Shahid, for his leadership during the preceding session.

I wish also to express our gratitude to Secretary General Antonio Guterres, for his efforts to pursue a Common Agenda for the United Nations, at a time when faith in the multilateral system needs, more than ever, to be restored.

Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We perhaps need to be reminded that multilateralism gives each one of us the opportunity and the means to solve complex challenges that we cannot overcome on our own.

Never have we faced challenges of such magnitude.

A world in deep crisis.

Climate inaction.

The aftermath of the pandemic.

Food insecurity.

The rising costs of energy.

The war in Ukraine.

We have reached an inflection point. One that compels us to question the trajectory of our multilateral order, as the perils to our collective wellbeing are acute and numerous.

Faced with a multiplicity of interrelated challenges that many of us are least responsible for, but most affected by, the plight of states in vulnerable situations has never been more pronounced. Many of us in the developing world have had to revise our 2030 aspirations due to lost progress.

Mr. President,

Economic inequity is the biggest impediment to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The blueprint for a better and sustainable future requires financial resources that many of us simply do not have, or are unable to access, since development cooperation modalities fail to consider vulnerability as a barrier to durable development.

Time and again, SIDS have consistently reiterated the call for a globally-accepted vulnerability assessment put forward in 1992 by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Our island nations have experienced the greatest economic loss from the pandemic, with economic contractions averaging 7 percent. Yet very few of us were able to access the meagre 6 percent of COVID-19 funding allocated to developing countries.

We cannot continue to rely on temporary solutions to address the systemic faults within the existing development cooperation mechanisms. If this is to be a watershed moment, we must put into practice real solutions that focus on addressing vulnerabilities and building resilience to ensure socio-economic sustainability. We need the international financial institutions and multilateral development banks to look beyond the Gross National Income benchmark.

There is broad consensus that a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) offers a specific approach that will complement and improve the efficacy of development cooperation, permitting countries in vulnerable situations to access concessional financing and address their needs.

I therefore welcome the Interim report of the High-Level Panel on the MVI, and hope that progress on universally-accepted and inclusive indicators that capture vulnerabilities of all developing states can be accelerated ahead of the 2023 deadline.

Mr President,

The current food and energy crisis, exacerbated by the conflict in Ukraine, poses a threat to sustainable growth globally, necessitating integrated systemic responses.

The challenge for us in Africa is how to guarantee that trade contributes meaningfully to food security.

In this regard, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has a vital role to play by stimulating intra-trade amongst ourselves by ensuring that we redistribute food produced from regions with a surplus to regions facing deficits.

The solutions to our food security can be achievable. We firmly believe that harnessing the potential of the blue economy by tapping into fisheries and aquaculture resources can be a viable option to address food and nutrition insecurity that prevails at the moment.

Mr. President,

Food and energy security must be apprehended within the context of climate change.

We are at the cusp of an ecological collapse spurred by climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, largely instigated by irresponsible human activities and unfettered emissions.

A situation which greatly threatens the inalienable right of all humans to a healthy environment.

The IPCC reports have made clear that the window of opportunity to effectively address climate change is rapidly closing, with dire consequences for humanity and ecosystems. Failing to act decisively and urgently now, will lead to untold costs. With those least responsible for this calamity having to bear the heaviest price.

As floods, heatwaves and fires in the western world dominate the news and our social media feeds, let us not neglect nor forget that the impact of slow onset events like sea-level rise pose an existential threat to SIDS.

We need bold actions not unfulfilled promises and pledges.

In defining this watershed moment, individual interests must converge into collective benefits.

And we must also confront the gross injustice of having citizens of states least responsible for the unravelling climate-induced disaster pay for the loss and damage caused by others.

Even as we bear the impact of climate change, our environment is suffering immensely from the consequences of pollution. Seychelles can attest to this fact, as our shores and sea have become encumbered by plastic waste.

I am nonetheless heartened that a historical agreement to establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee with the mandate to forge an international legally-binding agreement to end plastic pollution was achieved at UNEA-5.2.

Hopefully, this will raise ambitions in other areas of environmental protection, including in the protection of biodiversity.

The pressure that human activities are exerting on biodiversity are tipping the scale towards mass extinction across the globe.

Therefore, the UN Conference on Biodiversity (COP15) will be critical for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. If the world is to achieve the Framework's ambitious targets, ensure that the SDGs are met and tackle the interrelated planetary crisis we must invest in the means of the Framework's implementation.

Mr. President,

Related to this is the issue of the oceans which surround us.

Healthy oceans are critical to life on Earth.

As a foremost proponent of the Blue Economy paradigm, Seychelles has taken bold steps to sustainably harness our ocean for the benefit of our people.

By implementing our Marine Spatial plan, we have not only set aside 30 percent of our Economic Exclusive Zone for protection and sustainable use, but also helped consolidate progress towards our commitments under the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, as well as the SDGs and CBD.

The MSP exemplifies how climate action, ocean conservation, sustainable development and building resilience can be achieved by a SIDS with immutable special circumstances in an integrated manner.

Building on this, Seychelles has committed to protect at least 50 percent of its seagrass ecosystems by 2025, and 100 percent by 2030, greatly contributing to ecosystem preservation and carbon sequestration.

We call on other littoral and oceanic states to be as bold in their ocean commitments.

As we progress in the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, it is imperative that we invest in science best approaches and forge strong partnerships needed to achieve a better understanding and protection of the ocean.

Beyond the preservation of our natural environment, such holistic measures can be applied to the myriad of interlocking challenges that we are facing as a global community. It will take our combined will, conclusive action, and uncompromising respect for the founding principles of the United Nations to secure a better future for all.

Mr President,

Last but of no less importance is the situation in Ukraine. The Ukraine-Russia conflict is of great concern to us. It poses a grave threat to global security and world peace, with serious ramifications for the entire community of nations.

My country's stance on the peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy is universally recognised.

In this regard, the Republic of Seychelles strongly supports the call of the Chair of the African Union and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission urging the parties concerned to establish an immediate ceasefire and to resume negotiations in order to preserve the world from the consequences of planetary conflict and to find a permanent and mutually acceptable solution to the conflict.

Mr President,

We must find common ground for the sake of humanity and our planet.

In attempting to utilise this critical moment in history as a turning point to bring about real positive change, the choice is clearly with every one of us to decide whether our actions will lead to shared prosperity or mutual destruction.

Let us be reminded of our moral responsibility as world leaders to take bold and decisive steps that will truly bring about transformative solutions.

We share only one planet, and our fates are indivisible.

Let us secure a better future together.

I thank you.