



Statement for His Excellency Russ Joseph Kun M.P.
President of the Republic of Nauru
United Nations General Assembly 78th Session
Thursday 21 September, 3pm

Check Against Delivery

Mr. President,

On behalf of the government and people of the Republic of Nauru, allow me to congratulate Your Excellency, Mr. Dennis Francis on your assumption of the Presidency of the General Assembly for the 78th session. It is always a pleasure to see another Small Island Developing State take up the Leadership mantle. Please let me assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support as you lead this august body in rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity. Allow me to also thank His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, for his exceptional stewardship during the 77th session, and note the many successful initiatives undertaken during his tenure including continuing the PGA's Fellowship Programme promoting and supporting youth engagement for the next generation of diplomats.

Allow me also to extend my sincere condolences to the Governments and people of Morocco and Libya for the recent devastating earthquakes and floods as you seek relief and recovery during this time.

Mr. President

As the new President of Nauru, it is an honor to speak here, at an institution built on the ideals of peace, justice, respect, human rights, tolerance, and solidarity -- an institution where all countries are deemed equal.

As the smallest member state of this august body, these ideals have important resonance. We are all part of an interconnected system which is increasingly growing smaller and our dependence on each other to weather global challenges increases every day. Will only the strong survive or will we work to ensure that no one is left behind? Will we reform and progress this institution to reflect the realities of today or continue in the same dated fashion – a fashion which does not reflect our current, lived realities. If we are to lift ourselves and future generations up and ensure that we are on a path to peace, prosperity, progress, and sustainability for all, we all need to be dedicated to

finding a way forward that reflects the world as it now stands. And that is a world currently riddled with inequity.

Mr. President,

A critical step in the way forward must be achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While the United Nations community was able to come together to adopt the 2030 Development Agenda in 2015, and celebrated this achievement of multilateralism at the time, we must admit that we are far from on track to achieve them – and by extension to achieve sustainable development for people and planet.

Given the resources which have been allocated at the regional and international level to achieve the SDGs, this is deeply concerning. In our view, such failure to substantially move the needle in light of the resources provided is an indication that funding is not being properly allocated or used. In our region, there are too many workshops, too many studies upon studies, too many discussions without enough support for critical on the ground projects needed. It's a small island for goodness sakes, it's like we trying to launch a rocket to the sun.

Places like Nauru where, in the face of multiple global crises, piled on top of national challenges our ability to progress, has been less than desirable. In order to shift Nauru, and others, back on track to achieve the 2030 Agenda, we need to take bold steps and create and build partnerships which are built on mutual respect among equals.

To build such sustainable partnerships, we will need a more accurate and nuanced system of categorization of vulnerabilities. Based on existing measurements for ODA (GNI and GDP), Nauru is eligible for neither grants nor loans. However, GNI and GDP alone do not sufficiently capture Nauru's vulnerabilities and so we are unable to access much needed financing to enable the implementation of national development strategies and activities. The Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) provides a practical solution to this issue and will ensure that Nauru is measured as it truly is - a struggling, small island developing state in great need of significant financial aid. Nauru calls for the adoption of the MVI by member States, including the establishment of an interim secretariat that will support its operationalization and implementation by all stakeholders, including as a criterion for access to low-cost and long-term financing based on this Index. Creating this more accurate picture of our national circumstances will be an important foundation upon which real and durable partnerships can be built. And it goes without saying that any categorization for access to aid should be applied in an even handed and non-politicized way. We have been deeply disappointed to hear that in some instances the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) categorization has been manipulated around purely political interests. This cannot be allowed to happen as it undermines the integrity of the entire system and is nothing shy of blatantly manipulation.

Mr. President,

Another pathway to accelerating action on the 2030 agenda will be recognition and incorporation of the special circumstances of Small Island Developing State (SIDS) into our work at every level.

Such an opportunity will present itself when we meet for the SIDS conference in May of next year in Antigua and Barbuda. If we are to make good on the promises for which the United Nations stands for, the next SIDS conference must deliver the transformation needed to ensure that SIDS are more resilient to external shocks. This can only be achieved through adopting a more focused, measurable, and fully resourced Programme of Action that is tailored to the circumstances of SIDS and provides practical and operational solutions to accelerate our sustainable development. The support of development partners and the international community, including funding, is critical for the next 10-year Programme of Action, as we seek to move towards resilient prosperity.

Mr. President,

Even if these strides are taken towards achievement of the 2030 Development Agenda, any progress made is at risk if we do not address the threat of climate change. The adverse impacts are no longer a “future” problem. We have seen ourselves the ever-increasing disasters; fires, typhoons, heat waves, and a burning ocean. What kind of legacy are we creating? It is essential that the global community accelerates its efforts to adapt and mitigate climate change and keep a 1.5 Celsius limit to temperature rise within reach. This cannot be said enough so I will say it again - **It is essential that the global community accelerates its efforts to adapt and mitigate climate change and keep a 1.5 Celsius limit to temperature rise within reach.**

We call on all States to take ambitious action in their implementation of the Paris Agreement and decisions under the Paris Agreement including the Glasgow Climate Pact and the Sharm el-Sheik Implementation Plan. And we note our disappointment that the goal of \$100 billion a year has not been reached and that the distribution of funds allocated has not been equitable. And so, we join the call to reform the international financial system to make climate and development finance more affordable and adequate and positioned to combat the scale of climate crises. Nauru looks forward to a meaningful COP28 in the United Arab Emirates, one that achieves the shared ambition and commitment to deliver progress and keep 1.5C within reach.

We also continue to call on the UNSG to appoint a Special Representative on Climate and Security. This could improve the United Nations’ ability to address climate-related security risk including through regular reporting on the security implications of climate change. Similarly, we see the need to seek additional paths to climate action and hope that the advisory opinions to come from ITLOS and ICJ will jump start more ambitious climate action.

Finally, on this point, Nauru would emphasize that we cannot expect the trajectory of global emissions to slow down and reduce if viable, energy alternatives are not provided. Deep Seabed Minerals hold the answer with polymetallic nodules providing the alternative for big emitters to make a just energy transition away from fossil fuels and towards much cleaner and renewable energy technologies. In this regard, Nauru calls on the members of the International Seabed Authority to fulfil its obligation and finalize the Exploitation regulations that ensures collection of seafloor minerals are conducted with utmost responsibility, and respect to our marine ecosystem while providing benefits for all humankind.

Mr. President,

As a Big Ocean State, a healthy productive and resilient ocean is a pillar upon which our future rests. We are proud to have been actively engaged in the negotiations and successful conclusion of the treaty on Biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). Nauru welcomes the adoption of the agreement earlier this year and calls for international support to build our capacity to ratify and implement the provisions of the BBNJ agreement including the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resource.

Finally, we raise as we have before, the critical importance of ensuring sustainable fisheries. This includes ensuring that overfishing is not taking place, that fair prices are paid to small islands for fish taken from our water, and that we eliminate illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

Mr. President,

Nauru's long-term national vision as articulated in its National Sustainable Development Strategy outlines a future in which individual, community, business, and government partnerships contribute to a sustainable quality of life for all Nauruans. The central message of this strategy is partnership for quality of life. A key pillar will be ensuring the health of our people.

To achieve this, Nauru remains committed to a Health strategy centered on prevention. During COVID-19, Nauru followed a stringent 'Capture and Contain' strategy which saw all visitors to Nauru required to undergo testing and quarantine at the border. This strategy protected Nauru during most of the pandemic, giving the health system valuable time to establish an acute care ward to treat and isolate potential COVID-19 patients, streamline testing regimes and treatment protocols, and vaccinate vulnerable members of the community. The systems that were developed for COVID-19 are now available for future pandemic responses, should they be required. **We acknowledge and thank our partners for their support in this regard.**

However, Nauru remains vulnerable to communicable disease outbreaks. The pandemic proved the urgent need for extensive investment towards strengthening the institutional and infrastructural needs of our Nauru's fragile health system. In a post-pandemic reality, we must ensure that rebuilding efforts are centered on resilience building. We must remain vigilant in ensuring that our vaccination rates remain high and are not undermined by the spread of misinformation and fear mongering through mainstream and social media. Nauru needs support and technical expertise to develop innovative solutions to address viral risks for example, e-medicine and development and use of digital technologies for outpatient referrals, and patient records.

In this regard, we would like to thank our friends from Cuba. There is still much to be learned from their innovation in the field of health. Cuba developed their own covid vaccines. Moreover, they deploy their medical brigade worldwide, helping others. As a staunch friend, we would call for an end to the embargo imposed by the United States.

We must also recognize and thank the Republic of China (Taiwan) for their help and support to our health system. They were and continue to be a leading exemplar in good practice to responding

and containing disease. We call for their recognition their right to participate and engage with us all in this global forum on this issue and in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, leaving no one behind.

Mr. President,

Another crucial element for accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress, and sustainability for all is education.

Nauru continues to place great emphasis and investment in the strengthening and development of its education sector given its pivotal role as a key driver of sustainable development. On a national scale, Nauru aims to “Improve the quality and broaden the scope and reach of education”.

In a post-pandemic reality, the immediate concern globally and domestically, is to address the education gap. Innovation and increased and improved investment are needed urgently to improve access to and quality of education. We also are prioritizing quality infrastructure tailored to the unique needs of Nauru. This will need to be matched with relevant curricula and effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks such as benchmarking. That said, none of this can happen without our teachers. Teacher attraction and retention continue to be an issue not just in Nauru but worldwide. The demands and lack of support towards the teaching profession is manifesting in a lack of qualified teachers in our islands. We need to do more and better on this front. This could include reviewing education delivery models – including increased involvement of homes and development of inexpensive, alternate models of delivery through the communication technologies and improved ICT infrastructure in schools to better aid program delivery.

Mr. President,

We must uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and we must work together to uphold the rules-based multilateral system to secure international peace, security, and prosperity for a safe and just world for all, leaving no country behind. For that to happen the United Nations must be fit-for-purpose, nimble on the ground and meets the global challenges we face today.

I would like to share what time has taught me. Our community -- Nauru, the Pacific, the Small Islands, the international community – is more robust when we stand united. This becomes even more imperative for matters of common interest that have the prospective to profit our peoples in future generations. But we must stand united for the right things, the important things, and the hard things.

Mr. President in a nutshell, I echo the Secretary-General Guterres opening remarks, we need to renew the UN Multilateral System, reform the Security Council and redesign the international financial architecture because it is just not working anymore, and it is an outdated system that has been in place for too long. In Nauru’s case like other small island developing States, we become victims within the global architecture and compromise our freedom and voice as a sovereign State.

May God bless the Republic of Nauru and may God bless the United Nations.

Mwa tubwa kor. I Thank you.

