



**Papua New Guinea Country Statement  
to the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations  
General Assembly High-Level General Debate**

**by**

**His Excellency Mr. John Rosso, MP**

**Deputy Prime Minister and**

**Minister for Immigration,**

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**Special Envoy of**

**His Excellency Mr. James Marape, MP,**

**Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea**

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**New York , USA**

**“Check against delivery”**

**His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis, President of the General Assembly; His Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations; distinguished Heads of State and Government; Excellencies; Ladies and Gentlemen;**

It is my honour and privilege to address this august Hall for the first time, as Deputy Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea and on behalf of my Prime Minister, Hon. James Marape, and the Government and people of Papua New Guinea.

I congratulate you, **Mr President**, and the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago, on your successful election to preside over the new term of the General Assembly's work.

With your extensive diplomatic experience and unique perspective from a fellow Small Island Developing State, your chosen theme on peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability with multilateralism at its core, resonates well with us.

I wish you well in your mandate and assure you of our full support.

May I also thank your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Csaba Korosi, for ably leading our collective work this past year, in a challenging environment. We wish him well in his future endeavors.

Let me also extend our appreciation to Mr. Secretary-General for his strategic foresight, dynamic and action-oriented leadership to shape a better, peaceful, prosperous and shared future for humanity and the planet, through the primacy of multilateral cooperation in this United Nations.

**Mr. President,**

Today, we meet with a global backdrop of development indices, at national and international level, all pointing in the wrong direction and the road ahead is not easy for all of us.

These therefore requires our individual and collective partnerships, for our people, for prosperity and the planet.

For Papua New Guinea, we continue to face a daunting situation to building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic aftermath.

This is compounded by the worsening climate crisis; the socio-economic and supply-chain adverse impacts of the unacceptable war waged against Ukraine; the financial and economic burdens arising from the existing unfair and archaic international financial system; and our own domestic challenges, including economic growth, debt sustainability, and providing our peoples basic needs and social protection.

We are, however, encouraged by the world coming together here to discuss and explore opportunities and solutions to surmount our shared development challenges.

Fellow leaders, mere rhetoric talkfest and hollow-sounding promises are what we must avoid.

But rather, let us use this opportunity to ensure that we put in place concrete, result-oriented and workable ways and means that will help support effective, timely and sustained delivery of the basic needs of our citizens and the development aspirations of our countries while protecting our environment.

**Mr. President,**

My Government has, decided to take a bold, decisive and pragmatic leadership and ownership, to address, head-on, our own development challenges in critical areas such as economic growth, health services, education, law and justice sector and infrastructure, including Information and Communication Technology for e-Government, as well as how we deal with the external shocks to our country and our people.

These issues are now addressed through Papua New Guinea's new five-year (2023-2027) Medium Term Development Plan Four, launched in July this year, with a theme of "National Prosperity through Growing the Economy", and twelve Strategic Priority Areas (SPAs)<sup>1</sup> of focus for our national development.

It also clearly identifies the measures, including funding, needed to attain our development priorities and aspirations.

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic Economic Investment; Connect Papua New Guinea Infrastructure; Quality and Affordable Healthcare; Quality Education and Skilled Human Capital; Rule of Law and Restorative Justice; National Security; National Revenue and Public Finance Management; Digital Government, National Statistics and Public Service Governance; Research, Science and Technology; Climate Change and Natural Environment Protection; Population, Youth and Women Empowerment; and Strategic Partnerships.

**Mr. President,**

We are embarking on growing our economy from the current thirty-one billion dollars<sup>2</sup> per year to 57 billion dollars<sup>3</sup>, by 2030, and aim to create an additional one million jobs countrywide.

This will be catalyzed by diversification of our economy from the non-renewable sector driven by mining, oil and gas to complementary support from the renewable sector, including notably in agriculture, fisheries, the service sector, and concrete support for our small to medium-size enterprises (SMSEs) in the informal and formal sector and providing the infrastructure, necessary, together with investment in education and health, and special economic zones with incentives for productive investment, to propel our country forward.

This national development plan, together with our overall long-term Vision 2050 strategic development roadmap, provides the cornerstone for the future we want.

These will deliver, for us, on improving the quality of life for our people, the country's prosperity, peace and security, and better environmental protection and climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as enable Papua New Guinea to become an upper middle-income country by 2030 and to improve by 2050 our human development index global ranking.

Our Medium Term Development Plan Four also integrates and reaffirms my country's strong commitment to accelerate and deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which at present remains a serious concern for us, because of the global polycrisis impact domestically and our own national challenges.

We are determined to ensure that our new development roadmap is a springboard for progressive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in a more comprehensive, focused, resourceful, and accountable way.

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<sup>2</sup> 110 billion Kina per year

<sup>3</sup> 200 billion kina per year

## **Mr. President,**

Papua New Guinea has prioritized health, as a core national development agenda, as spelt out in our new Fourth Medium Term Development Plan and the National Health Plan 2021 to 2030, supported by relevant policies<sup>4</sup>.

It underlines our commitment to “Universal Health Coverage” and “Quality and Affordable Health Care” by focusing on people and their environment, engaging with social partners and sectors and increasing access to quality and affordable health services.

This followed our 2020 national review of the health system that highlighted:

- The need for review and reform of policies and laws on health issues in the country and for a stronger health system to cater for our peoples basic health needs and to achieve Universal Health Coverage by 2030;
- It underscored the importance of multi-stakeholder approach to strengthening existing partnerships and building new ones to mobilize resources, appropriate technologies and financial support, including capacity building and training opportunities to deliver the health outcomes we need for our people and our country;
- The necessity to ensure effective governance and accountability in the health sector, including transparency and proper oversight in procurement procedures and processes and delivery mechanism which are vital, including for eliminating overhead costs and malpractices in the health sector.

For us, major health challenges remain in the prevention and control of communicable and noncommunicable diseases, and on reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health. Tuberculosis (TB) also remains a serious concern in the country, and we continue to witness increasing lifestyle and cancer-related deaths in recent years.

However, the health review and reforms and strategic prioritization has made positive impacts, including in transforming our national health system and focus on training more medical staff including and doctors and nurses, but much more work remains to be done. We therefore welcome development partnership in the health sector, which is crucial for us given the limited health-related experts, institutional and systemic capacity and

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<sup>4</sup> Health workforce, health financing, HIV, tuberculosis (TB), malaria, women’s health, health infrastructure and health promotion.

resources that continue to challenge the effective delivery of health care and services to our people, especially the rural majority.

We look forward to harnessing the outcomes of the just concluded three health-related High-Level Meetings to support our recovery from the pandemic and to deliver on SDG 3 in the country.

**Mr. President,**

The importance of partnerships for national development, including on the SDGs, especially in a challenging global situation such as today, cannot be overstated.

We therefore welcome genuine and durable partnerships from all stakeholders at all levels in supporting our development priorities and aspirations, including for the SDGs.

In our view, however, development partnerships should be based on equal footing rather than a donor-recipient lens that undervalues recipient countries contributions. This will help build trust and confidence and enhance effective development partnership.

For Papua New Guinea, strategic development partnership is recognized in pillar twelve of our new Medium Term Development Plan Four.

We call on all our development partners to ensure that their official development assistance to Papua New Guinea is aligned, under this framework, with our own national development agenda priorities that averts unnecessary parallel efforts and for cost-effective partnerships for mutually beneficial outcomes to be achieved.

Let me also use this occasion to acknowledge and thank all our valued development partners<sup>5</sup> for their constructive partnerships and support for my country's development efforts. We look forward to further strengthening the cooperative relations going forward.

**Mr. President,**

Financing for development remains a serious challenge for us, as it is for many other developing countries, including from the pandemic aftermath.

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<sup>5</sup> Australia, New Zealand, the United States, China, Japan, India, United Kingdom, France, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Israel, United Arab Emirates, European Union, the United Nations system, World Bank, IMF and ADB, and our Pacific regional and sub-regional organisations,

The growing divide between countries that can access affordable financing for development, and those that cannot, is a serious concern that must be addressed swiftly, if we are genuine about leaving no one behind.

We also note the outcomes of the high-level meeting on financing for development and the SDG Summit held at leaders level earlier this week and strongly support the call by the UN Secretary-General for a US\$500 billion annual SDG Stimulus to support developing countries.

This is most timely and relevant given the challenging development circumstances the world is currently facing. If realized, accessing such funding support to developing States should be at speed, scale and less onerous.

**Mr. President,**

For my country, we need around twenty-six billion dollars<sup>6</sup>, in the next five years, to grow our national economy to reach our development aspiration of fifty-seven billion dollars<sup>7</sup> per year economy, to take us progressively into the future, including delivering on our SDGs commitment.

According to the international financial system and other pundits, Papua New Guinea is rated to be at a high-debt risk given our debt to GDP ratio. We recognize this concern; however, we need to fund our development framework and its effective implementation to cater for our growing population demands.

We are taking leadership and ownership of our domestic resource mobilization, including financing our development priorities, through measures such as:

- Tax reforms and enhanced internal revenue collection;
- Strengthening governance laws and policies to tide illicit financial flows;
- Addressing systemic issues on foreign exchange;
- Reviewing and revising our domestic laws and policies to ensure that our natural resources development in the extractive industry is on fair, just and equitable terms;
- Incentivizing public-private-partnership; and
- Supporting SMSEs in the informal and formal sectors.

This has enabled us to provide our core funding for development, which is complemented by a small fraction of external financial support from our development partners.

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<sup>6</sup> 90 billion Kina

<sup>7</sup> 200 billion Kina

We are also working with the IMF and other bilateral development partners to move from a deficit budget to a balanced one to cushion the impact of debt servicing on the delivery of our development needs.

**Mr. President,**

We must ensure that the financial resources needed to progress our national development agenda, including for the SDGs, are accessible, affordable, and delivered on a sustained basis that is predictable for countries to access.

We also welcome development financing partnerships through debt-for-nature-swaps, as an important tool to address our debt issues whilst conserving our natural ecosystems. We cannot afford to sacrifice our peoples development needs by merely conserving our natural resources without appropriate incentives to cater for their needs.

Let me also underscore that it is not enough to demand countries to fix their domestic systems to support their development financing.

It is also crucial that we must effectively and urgently address the existing shortcomings of the international financial system that continue to be a bane to the financing for development needs of developing countries like my own.

We therefore join other countries and the Secretary-General to call for the urgent and comprehensive reform of the international financial architecture to address the economic and financial challenges facing developing countries, especially Small Island Developing States, including my own.

**Mr. President,**

Papua New Guinea further calls on the international financial institutions and development partners to use the final report and recommendations of the High-Level Panel on the Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) as a tool to adequately account for the key factors of vulnerability such as the adverse impacts of climate change and natural disasters into their decision making rather than rely on GDP/GNI per capita as sole measure of a country's development.

We also strongly support the Bridgetown Initiative, as a part of the reform of the global financial system to improve the response to the climate crisis and the particular development challenges, including access to affordable financing and debt relief.



**Mr. President**, an ongoing concern for my country in the context of financing for development is the unintended consequences arising from anti-money laundering laws.

As a small economy that is primarily cash-based, anti-money laundering laws impede development growth in my country. We need to ensure that the application of one-size-fit-all anti-money-laundering laws does not continue to be a hinderance to the economic growth and sustainable development of small developing countries, like mine.

This, however, does not imply our derogation of duties in upholding the rule of law but rather to ensure the financing we need for our national development does not become a victim of anti-money laundering laws.

**Mr. President**,

The ongoing extreme and increasingly tragic weather and slow onset events multiplied across the world, which Secretary-General Guterres aptly called "the era of global boiling has arrived", emphasizes to all of us the critical need to confront and address the climate crisis swiftly.

From our highlands region to the coastal lowlands and offshore in our island communities, the ravages of the climate crisis, as seen in natural disasters, droughts, sea-level rise and food insecurity, and also their impact on our economy continues unabated despite our negligible greenhouse gas emissions.

This provided the backdrop to our own Second National Climate Summit held last week in our capital with our development partners, on what we must do, nationally and with other stakeholders, going forward.

We applaud the UN Secretary-General's strong and dedicated leadership on climate change, including for the Climate Ambition Summit held earlier this week.

We also commend United Arab Emirates and Egypt, as incoming and outgoing COP Presidents, respectively, for the ministerial meeting on Loss and Damage and look forward to further engage on it at COP 28.

**Mr. President,**

For Papua New Guinea, like many of our fellow Pacific Islands countries, let me reiterate our position that climate change is a key priority for us, as this remains the single greatest existential threat to the lives and livelihoods, security and wellbeing of our peoples.

The critical importance and urgency to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees through rapid, deep and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions cannot be overstated. This is critical to the survival of small island nations.

This is why Papua New Guinea strongly supported our Melanesian neighbour, Vanuatu's landmark General Assembly resolution adopted last March on an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on climate change and look forward to its outcome.

As host to seven percent of the world's biodiversity, Papua New Guinea has an important role and our evolving national plans, policies, legislations and partnerships on climate change underscores this strong commitment.

This is reflected, yet again, in our new Medium Term Development Plan Four, Strategic Priority Area Ten on Climate Change and Natural Environment Protection.

**Mr. President,**

Papua New Guinea is indeed pleased to note that we have made much national progress on the climate change front, which we take pride in, given our efforts, so far, in implementing our targets under the Nationally Determined Contributions.

At the Climate Ambition Summit, Papua New Guinea announced our national commitments towards the 1.5 degrees global temperature goal and for climate justice.

In brief, these included inter alia:

- Our milestone achievement in June 2022 of our 2050 Net-Zero target;
- The completion and launching earlier in the year our 2022 – 2030 National Adaptation Plan (NAP) on climate-resilient agriculture, infrastructure and transport and health sector responsiveness to climate sensitive diseases; and
- The political commitments to use our marine and terrestrial natural resources to address climate change, including for just transition to renewable energy.

**Mr. President,**

We therefore call again on, firstly, high carbon emitting States, and developed country economies, to do better, much more better.

Secondly, developed countries must urgently deliver on their climate finance commitment of USD \$100 billion per year, and ensure that the distribution of these funds is equitable, accessible and timely.

Thirdly, for international financial institutions and development partners, including the Green Climate Fund, to ensure that countries like mine have timely access to climate finance for mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage in order to accomplish just transition, and ensure resilience against the effects of climate change.

Fourthly, we welcome international support for investments in downstream processing of our natural resources to make the transformation we need to further support our enhanced climate ambition for the global temperature goal and for climate justice.

At the Pacific regional level, Papua New Guinea, urges the international community to contribute to the Pacific Resilience Facility, a regional financing facility set up to address disasters and climate change threats in our Blue Pacific Continent and thank our development partners who have contributed to it.

**Mr. President,**

As a maritime nation, Papua New Guinea's commitment to protecting and sustainably using the ocean and seas and its resources remains steadfast.

Our Medium Term Development Plan Four Strategic Priority Area Ten on Climate Change and Natural Environment Protection, underscores this point.

Not only does the ocean serve as a vital source for carbon sink but it is also our main source for economic benefits, revenue generation and daily sustenance of food and income for our peoples and communities. As an example, our waters supply 18 percent of the global tuna catch and 15 percent of the global tuna trade.

We therefore strongly supported and welcomed the milestone adoption in June this year of the new global treaty on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond natural jurisdiction (BBNJ).

We are pleased to have contributed to ensuring important areas<sup>8</sup> for us were accounted for in the Treaty such as high seas pockets, extended continental shelf, rights to fisheries and capacity building and transfer of marine technology.

**Mr. President,**

The BBNJ Treaty also complements our own National Protected Areas Policy and National Oceans Policy as well as our Pacific regional 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

We thank Singapore for the strategic and able leadership, as President of the process, and commend also the international community rallying to support the BBNJ Treaty successfully after nearly two decades of intensive negotiations.

We look forward to the Treaty's early implementation. We are therefore encouraged and impressed by the high number of countries that signed the BBNJ Treaty four days ago at the UN treaty event. We commend and congratulate those countries.

Papua New Guinea will sign the new BBNJ treaty once our domestic procedural and legal processes are completed.

**Mr. President,**

Papua New Guinea also supports the convening of the next UN Conference on SDG 14 on ocean and seas, led by France and Costa Rica.

We are also supportive of the global efforts for a new binding global instrument on plastic pollution to further protect our marine ecosystem and will do our part to see this to a successful conclusion and eventual implementation.

Also as an integral part of our stewardship of the ocean and seas, my Government hosted the biennial Eight Pacific Tuna Forum, sixteen days ago, supported by our fellow Pacific countries, including our regional and sub-regional organizations, the private sector and academia, where the current status of the tuna industry in the region and its sustainability was discussed.

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<sup>8</sup> The high seas pocket, protection of our rights to our extended continental shelf and fisheries, capacity building needs assessment, scholarships and training and marine technology transfer, and the special circumstances of small island developing States.

**Mr. President,**

Papua New Guinea, like many other small island developing States is increasingly concerned with the rising sea-levels related to climate change that is threatening the lives and livelihoods of not just our coastal communities and the country's land territories and consequent economic and other losses but more fundamentally the human rights of our people affected by sea-level rise.

Existing international law does not address this serious concern. We welcome the ongoing important work of the International Law Commission on this issue and we are committed to contributing further to it.

In view of this, Papua New Guinea, together with our fellow Pacific Islands Forum members, are progressing efforts for another landmark Forum (PIF) Leaders Declaration on "Statehood and protection of persons in the face of climate change-related sea-level rise". We look forward to its adoption later this year by our Forum Leaders.

We call on our development partners to work closely with us in equal partnership in further strengthening the protection and sustainable use of the ocean and seas.

**Mr. President,**

At a time of challenging global and national circumstances given the evolving multiple crisis, the protection and promotion of human rights, particularly for women and girls and those in vulnerable situations, must remain central for the international community.

For Papua New Guinea, we have a strong commitment to this important issue. This is aptly demonstrated most recently by our Medium Term Development Plan Four under Strategic Priority Area Eleven on Population, Youth and Women's Empowerment.

These entails increasing the Gender Parity Index for females in education, employment and business, combating incidences of gender-based violence and to quadruple the number of women in leadership.

These priority activities will require an investment of about fifty million dollars<sup>9</sup> to deliver the needed results by 2027.

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<sup>9</sup> One hundred and forty-nine million Kina

We are also continuing to work through our Bipartisan Parliamentary Committee on Gender-Based Violence, led by seven Members of Parliament with the welcome and valued support and partnership of the European Union and the UN System, particularly, UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP under the Spotlight Initiative, which was launched in March 2020.

This addresses evidence-based approach to unequal power relations between men and women with focus on gender equality and women's empowerment.

We have made good progress in areas including reforms in laws and policies and justice system, health and community sector services, policing, medical and socio-psychological services, accessible legal support services, and shelters for Gender-Based Violence survivors. However, much more work remains to be done, and we are committed to do our part, going forward.

We are also working with the UN Human Rights treaty bodies on our outstanding report on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

We thank our valued development partners in these efforts and also welcome others to join us to strengthening human rights, in general, and more specifically, for our women and girls.

**Mr. President,**

The urgency and the need for a "New Agenda for Peace", as called for by the UN Secretary-General in his "Our Common Agenda" is timely and its importance for the peace and security of the world cannot be overstated.

Papua New Guinea strongly supports the Secretary-General's call.

This is given the sobering and increasingly worrisome disrespect for international law, including the UN Charter by certain States, the geopolitical tensions and divide, simmering and unresolved conflicts, associated human rights violations, escalating nuclear weapons threats and mistrust between and within countries.

Without peace and security, our development aspirations under the 2030 Agenda and our respective development frameworks will be that much more difficult to achieve.

This is a recipe for catastrophic outcome that none of us would want.

**Mr. President,**

Never again must we repeat the horrors of the two World Wars. We are seriously concerned about moves by certain countries for the use of nuclear weapons. Such threats are unacceptable and therefore condemned in the strongest terms.

It is incumbent on us all to rally together, in peaceful dialogue, as common humanity, under the banner of the United Nations, to responsibly address all issues.

For my country, peace and security issues are a priority and this is addressed through the Law and Justice sector under our Medium Term Development Plan Four Strategic Priority Areas 5 and 6.

Our strong commitment to peace and security has enabled us to increase funding and investment for capacity building and training in our country on the law and justice sector.

For us, our founding foreign policy of “friends to all and enemies to none” continues to be a guide in our foreign relations conduct. Our national interests are economic, trade and friendly relations with all nations. We are not interested in taking sides.

Papua New Guinea has also learned from our own internal situations the importance of peace by peaceful means. It is in this spirit that we continue to engage in our Bougainville peace process, which remains a high priority for our country.

It continues to be addressed under the parameters of our Constitution and the mutually agreed peace process roadmap that can deliver for us peaceful and lasting political solution.

We are grateful for the continuing valued and constructive support of the UN system, including the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and other development partners in the Bougainville peace process and also for the other new initiative in two other parts of our country.

On UN reforms, we are supportive of efforts towards meaningful reform of the United Nations to address today's realities and to account better for the greater good of everyone such as that in the General Assembly revitalization and the Inter-Governmental Negotiations process to reform the Security Council.

We, however, cannot afford to have lengthy and inconclusive reform processes such as that of the IGN on Security Council reforms. This must do better, much better.

**Mr. President,**

Before I conclude, as a SIDS member we recognize the important efforts towards a SIDS-specific Programme of Action for the next decade and the convening of the Fourth International Conference on SIDS in Antigua and Barbuda next May, we join other SIDS in calling on development partners and the international community, including for funding, to support SIDS chart their pathway forward for resilient prosperity and the future we want.

Finally, I reaffirm Papua New Guinea's commitment to doing our part in upholding the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations as sovereign equal with other nations.

May God bless us all and the United Nations!

I thank you, Mr. President.