



SOLOMON ISLANDS

STATEMENT BY

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PRIME MINISTER OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

AT THE

DEBATE OF THE 78<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THEME: “REBUILDING TRUST AND REIGNITING GLOBAL  
SOLIDARITY: ACCELERATING ACTION ON THE 2030 AGENDA  
AND ITS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS TOWARDS  
PEACE, PROSPERITY, PROGRESS AND SUSTAINABILITY FOR ALL”

22 SEPTEMBER 2023

## **Salutation**

Mr. President,

Your Excellencies Heads of State, Heads of Governments

Ministers, Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

## **Introduction**

I bring greetings from the people of Solomon Islands to this August Chamber.

We reaffirm our commitment to the principles of this 78 years old organization, for a world of peace with shared prosperity, progress with partnership, and a sustainable future with dignity and liberty.

Mr President,

The people of Solomon Islands extend our congratulations to a fellow Islander from Trinidad and Tobago, His Excellency Ambassador. Dennis Francis on your election as President of the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

We also acknowledge your predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Csaba Korosi for his stewardship throughout the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly. I wish him every success in his future endeavors.

I too would like to join the international community in conveying, on behalf of the people of Solomon Islands our deepest condolences to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Morocco and Libya respectively. We pray for speedy recovery and that the Almighty give strength and comfort to those who have lost their homes or loved one.

## **Theme**

Mr. President,

The choice of this year's theme is very interesting given our current state of world affairs and is one that resonates well with Solomon Islands. Eight years ago, in this very Hall, we made a pledge to save our planet, eradicate poverty and address the climate crisis.

Collectively we resolved to adopt the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in our bid to ensure that "no one is left behind". The Paris Agreement is also a testament of that unified resolve.

However, today the health of our planet has declined and poverty has increased. We are also presented with a runaway climate crisis that threatens our very existence and questions our resolve.

These multiple predicaments coupled with the toxic mix of geopolitical power posturing, conflicts and economic downturn has interrogated our collective commitment to the very purpose of our organization and the effectiveness of multilateralism in our fast changing world.

Taking stock of our achievements, it is unacceptable that 85 percent of global Sustainable Development Goals are either off track, regressed or stagnant. The gravity of this situation cannot be ignored, especially for LDCs and SIDS.

The theme presented not only highlights the failure of multilateralism but raises the immediate need for us to restore our trust and reignite our solidarity by upholding our global commitment within the principles and spirit of the UN Charter.

Mr. President,

The theme further presents an opportunity for us to take stock of our own shortcomings and to see where we can breathe new life into the 2030 Agenda. If it means re-engineering our method of

collaboration, and raising our ambition to bolster and accelerate global action in the next seven years, then we must start today.

### **LDC and SIDS**

As a LDC we are heartened by the international community support to extend our preparatory period to graduate in 2027. We thank you for your solidarity and support. Solomon Islands remains committed to have our Smooth Transition Strategy in place by the end of 2024.

We are reviewing our 2016-2035 National Development Strategy, and have prioritized infrastructure resilience, digital connectivity, technology transfer, investment, trade and energy reforms to ensure our graduation is resilient, sustainable and irreversible. This is our effort to salvage and rescue the 2030 Agenda.

To propel our economic recovery and build our resilience we need bilateral and multilateral support to advance our development aspirations and address our vulnerabilities. In that vein we once again reiterate our call for an enhanced UN in-country presence

Mr. President,

We therefore call for the immediate implementation of the six priorities of the Doha Programme of Action 2022 – 2031 and translating these commitments into reality. We also welcome

Solomon Islands inclusion in the pilot phase of the Early Warning Systems through the ‘Resilience Building Mechanism’ and look forward to the utilization of the iGrad facility to support our transition initiatives towards graduation.

The world’s commitment to multilateralism must be strengthened. Solomon Islands call for a stronger political will from the ‘haves’ to grant LDCs with non-reciprocal trade arrangement and Generalized System of Preference arrangement. Good neighborly relations means caring and striving for all, the 47 LDCs account for only 1 percent of global trade.

We acknowledge and value South- South cooperation because it is less restrictive, more responsive and is aligned to our national needs. We applaud the People’s Republic of China for their initiative in accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through their Belt and Road Initiative, Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilisation Initiative. During my discussion with President Xi Ji Ping in July 2023, Solomon Islands and China reached an understanding to establish a comprehensive strategic framework that aims to achieve our National Development Strategy and the 2030 Agenda through these transformative initiatives.

These initiative carries significant importance in promoting, implementing and achieving the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

We call on all partners to adopt this transformative partnership model. If we are to rebuild trust and reignite solidarity then let us start by changing how we engage and reforming our international financial architecture.

Our appetite for transformative change has never been higher and we look forward to working closely with all Partners who are genuine to partner with us in our path to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal.

Mr. President,

I call for the establishment of a SIDS permanent seat in decision making body within the international financial architecture to ensure inclusivity.

As a Small Island Developing State, we support the Fourth Small Islands Developing Countries Conference scheduled to be held in Antigua and Barbuda in May 2024. The gathering is expected to present a roadmap of collective action to succeed the SAMOA Pathway. We have every confidence this new partnership will be

ambitious and recommit global action to the unique and special needs of SIDS.

On the matter of the development of the Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index. Solomon Islands supports the call for the adoption of the Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) and its operationalization and implementation during this 78<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly. This is a SIDS initiative that takes into account the cross dimensional vulnerability of SIDS to recover and build back better. Therefore, the modus operandi of the International Financial Institutions must be reformed to address our special circumstances vulnerability.

### **Peace, Security and Development**

Mr. President,

There can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace without sustainable development. The world cannot achieve the SDGs with all the conflict and wars that is going on. The past seven years has shown us that.

Solomon Islands reiterate its call for the cessation of all conflict including the Ukraine war. We must restore faith in our Charter and give peace a chance. We must better understand and listen to each other more and seek a diplomatic solution to all conflict.



Wars have exacerbated our vulnerability, broken our trust and undermine our solidarity. It remains a great distraction from our development agenda. Swords must now be converted to plough. It is time we sow seeds of peace so that we can reap the fruit of progress, prosperous and sustainability.

Mr. President,

We continue to call for an expanded, democratic, equitable, transparent and accountable Security Council that represents today's realities. This include a dedicated Small Islands Developing State seat.

Solomon Islands registered our interest nine years ago to serve in the Security Council for the period 2031 – 2032. Today we continue to seek international support for our candidature and thank those who have given their support. We again reiterate our strong belief in multilateralism and reaffirm our commitment to the spirit and purpose of the UN Charter.

### **Pacific Games 2023**

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands will host the 17<sup>th</sup> Pacific Games, the region's largest and premium multi sporting event for the first time in our history from 19<sup>th</sup> November to 2<sup>nd</sup> December. Our shores will be

graced by the presence more than 5000 athletes of 24 countries and territories within the Pacific region including Australia and New Zealand. We stand united and proud to deliver on this regional commitment.

Solomon Islands' is grateful and appreciates the ongoing support from our bilateral and multilateral partners, in particular People Republic of China who has become our leading infrastructure partner. We also thank Saudi Arabia, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Korea and Japan for their support as well.

### **Climate Change**

Mr. President

Countless voices have echoed the same sentiment that Climate Change remains the single greatest threat to our people and planet. But have we seriously and truly taken heed? Ambition under the Paris Agreement remains low. We need to keep the 1.5 degrees Celsius alive and close the mitigation gap.

The Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement is critical to keep everyone honest, know where we are, what we need to do and how to keep the 1.5 goal alive. Loss and Damage mechanism needs to be resourced and operationalized. Global trust needs to be

restored to uphold the credibility of the Paris Agreement. We must walk the talk by taking drastic climate action.

Solomon Islands welcome the International Court of Justice (ICJ) deliberations on the Vanuatu initiative for Climate Justice. We must accelerate our transition to a low carbon economy and further support the Port Vila initiative for a just transition from fossil fuels. Developed countries must take the lead in financing the construction of climate resilient safe islands in SIDS. This must be a global priority.

### **Rights of Persons with Disability**

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands is pleased to inform the General Assembly that we have ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability. The National Disability Inclusive Policy and the Mental Health Policy provides the framework for implementation to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities are promoted and protected at all levels.

We are cognizant of our duty to provide enabling environment and mechanism that enables our people to exercise their fundamental rights as provided for under our Constitution.

## **Right to self-determination**

Solomon Islands reaffirm the right to self-determination as enshrined under the UN Charter. On the question of New Caledonia and French Polynesia, Solomon Islands notes with deep concern the credibility of the latest referendum in New Caledonia. We urgently call on the relevant body and stakeholders to look into this matter.

## **Embargo on Cuba**

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands note with deep concern the six-decade old embargo imposed on Cuba. This unilateral action undermines the spirit of multilateralism and Cuba's progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. We urge our friend and partner the United States of America to lift the unjust economic embargo placed on Cuba. This is an opportunity to rebuild trust and reignite solidarity. Embargoes do not auger well with the resolve of this August body to leave no one behind.

I take this opportunity on behalf of the people of Solomon Islands to thank Cuba for its support to our health sector through the training of our medical doctors over recent years.

## **Our Ocean**

Mr. President,

Two days ago Solomon Islands signed and became amongst the first signatories to the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of areas Beyond National Jurisdiction a subsidiary to the United Nation Convention on the Laws of the Sea.

Solomon Islands in collaboration with the Pacific Island Forum Fisheries Agency will host a Summit on the implementation of SDG 14.4 next year in Honiara. This will be done in coordination with UN Special Envoy for the Ocean. The Summit will showcase Pacific leadership in Tuna fisheries management. The outcome will feed into the third UN Ocean Conference in June 2025.

We note the ongoing work of current intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. This is critical to maintaining the health, productivity, and resilience of our ocean and is in line with 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

## **Nuclear issues**

Mr. President,

The Pacific has been a victim of power politics long before we became a member of this organization. The Battle of Guadalcanal is recorded in history as one of the fiercest battle of World War 2, a war that was not of our making. The lack of urgency eight decades ago to remove these UXOs comes at a great cost to Solomon Islands in finance and lives.

On this juncture I would like to thank the Government of the United States of America for their continued assistance to the efforts to date. However, more needs to be done to address this threat. I call on responsible countries to remove the UXOs and compensate lives affected and lost.

Since the inception of the United Nations in 1945, the Pacific Islands remained a stage for power projection by developed nations. As a consequence, from 1946 to 1996, approximately 300 nuclear devices were tested in the Pacific, including in the Marshall Islands, French Polynesia and Kiribati. Did we have a say in this?  
WE NEVER DID!!

Mr President, these countries and their people must be compensated commensurably.

Mr. President,

The nuclear footprint of big powers in the Pacific is intrinsically carved into our history and genes. Certain populations to this day continue to suffer from health issues because of nuclear testing and dumping in the Pacific.

As a signatory to the 1985 Treaty of Raratonga, Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, our commitment to keep our Blue Pacific Continent nuclear free is non-negotiable. We ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty earlier this year which is a testament to our conviction and principle for a nuclear free Pacific. We remain concerned on the development of military nuclear investment within Pacific region and its potential to trigger nuclear arms race and its implication for our nuclear free status.

### **Fukushima nuclear waste water**

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands stands with like-minded Pacific islanders and is appalled by Japan's decision to discharge over a million tonnes of treated nuclear wastewater into the ocean.

We note IAEA's assessment report is inconclusive and that the scientific data shared remains inadequate, incomplete and biased. These concerns were ignored. If this nuclear waste water is safe it should be stored in Japan. The fact that it is dumped into the ocean shows that it is not safe.

The effect of this act is transboundary and intergenerational and is an attack on global trust and solidarity. So the message is clear **OUR LIVES, OUR PEOPLE DO NOT MATTER!!**

The increased warming and acidification of the ocean against the discharge of treated nuclear water over a period of 30 plus years poses worrying risks for our people's well-being and future.

We call on Japan to explore other options in addressing the treated nuclear wastewater and to immediately stop discharging it into the Pacific Ocean. If we are to rebuild trust and reignite global solidarity, we must be honest and frank in protecting our oceans which is the lifeblood of our people.



Mr. President,

I am morally and ethically obliged to speak for humanity, the voiceless, and our children's children. We are the ocean, it is our past, our present, our future. It is the foundation of our very existence, it is our identity.

Please stop the discharge of nuclear treated water or history will judge us.

### **Conclusion**

Mr. President,

In framing the future we want we need a reformed rule based international system that is future ready and responsive to today's reality. A change of attitude and approach is needed. The need to understand and reach out to the vulnerable is critical.

We must restore our faith in the UN Charter and end all wars. Renew and reaffirm our focus with vigor matched with resources to deliver on our 2030 Agenda.

Mr. President,

We only have one life to live.

So let us right the wrongs of the past by rebuilding trust and reigniting solidarity to accelerate action on the 2030 Agenda and

its sustainable development goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all.

I close by paraphrasing Winston Churchill.

Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duty and so bear ourselves that, if humankind and United Nation last for a thousand years, men and women will still say: This was their finest hour.

Iu mi Tugeda (together) for a better United Nation.

To God be the Glory great things He has done.

May God bless you all and May God bless the United Nations.

Thank you.