

**78<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly  
Statement by  
H.E. Odo Tevi**

**Permanent Representative of the Republic of Vanuatu to the  
United Nations**

**26 September 2023**



**Mr. President;**

**Mr. Secretary-General;**

**Distinguished Delegates;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I have the great honour to deliver this address on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Vanuatu.

**Mr President,**

At the outset, let me sincerely congratulate you on your well-deserved election as President of the 78<sup>th</sup> Session of this August Assembly. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Vanuatu delegation during your tenure.

I commend your predecessor, H.E. Csaba Korosi for the many remarkable achievements of the General Assembly under his leadership during challenging times.

May I also congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres for his determined and skilful leadership of the United Nations to promote peace, security and development.

## **Global Context**

**Mr President,**

We are meeting at a time of unprecedented global crises and uncertainty. We are failing to address the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. We are hurtling from one emergency to the next, unable to address global shocks from new

## **Vanuatu Situation**

**Mr President,**

### *2030 Agenda*

We are halfway through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with worrying lack of progress. Decades of development gains have been undermined and, in some cases, reversed by COVID-19, climate change, and rising inflation threatening the success of the 2030 Agenda.

**Mr President,**

In its accelerated development path, Vanuatu leads a holistic and transformation approach, focusing on economic, social, and environmental development, national well-being indicators, as well as building a peaceful society based on democratic institutions and human rights. Putting the SDG agenda into action is not merely government priority. It is an inclusive national undertaking across all state institutions, including the civil society.

In the lead up to the 2030 deadline, the Vanuatu Government this year convened a six-day National Summit of the people from 25 to 30 July 2023 where all stakeholders including academia, corporate, Youth Leaders and Civil Society representatives across Vanuatu revisited and committed their efforts to implementing The People's Plan 2030 – Vanuatu's development road map.

**Mr President,**

### *Climate Change*

As we renew efforts to double down on our commitments to the 2030 Agenda, we must acknowledge that Climate Change is the defining existential challenge of our time and has proven to set back decades of development progress. While our countries are the smallest contributors to global climate change, we find ourselves on the frontlines of the crises.

On March this year, Tropical Cyclone Judy hit the archipelago of Vanuatu, followed by Tropical Cyclone Kevin just two days later. The twin cyclones affected about 66% of the total population. Assessments estimated the total effects amount to around 43% of GDP and the total recovery needs were estimated to be around 77% of GDP.

Leading into COP28, we once again emphasize the absolute imperative of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. Global efforts in this regard remain woefully inadequate as reflected in the recent IPCC Sixth Assessment Report. This Report confirms that we are dangerously close to overshooting the 1.5 degree limitation goal. Drastic actions are required in this critical decade to course correct. We need to not only fulfil the commitments that we have already made but also increase ambition to close the mitigation gap in line with available science. Not addressing it is a death sentence to small states like Vanuatu.

Given the existential threat imposed by climate change, Vanuatu, together with a core group of 18 countries took the resolution seeking an advisory opinion on climate change from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to the General Assembly which was adopted by consensus

Vanuatu's experience with cascading natural disasters has prompted the need to incorporate Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in developing planning to ensure that national development framework is risk informed. We have come to realise that DRR must be mainstreamed into the SDGs to ensure effective implementation and resilience.

**Mr President,**

*COVID-19*

COVID-19 has exerted considerable fiscal pressures on our country's economy. The tourism industry was hit hard, losing approximately 9.1% of revenues. Significant GDP contractions led to large fiscal deficits, leading us to maintain temporary fiscal measures, such as tax cuts and other spending, supporting response to the pandemic. These temporary support measures come at the expense of building fiscal buffers to withstand against future shocks.

We need to strengthen regional and international cooperation, global solidarity, coordination and governance at the highest levels through a multi-sectoral approach to prevent, prepare for and respond to pandemics and other health emergencies in the future, particularly in developing countries.

**Mr President,**

*Financing for development*

Besides the inherent natural disasters that affect Vanuatu each year, the interlinked global crises are also placing immense pressure on the local economy. Bilateral and domestic resource mobilization alone cannot avenge the impact of the global crises. We face an enormous financing gap to solve the climate emergency, whilst ensuring poverty reduction and sustainable development. So, to close the SDG financing gap, all financial sources must contribute towards significant, rapid and exponential scaling up of investments towards the SDGs. The reform of the international financial architecture to respond to the global challenges is therefore very crucial.

Access to grant-based finance for transformational adaptation development is an ongoing challenge, exacerbated by restrictive eligibility criteria for accessing development funding. In this regard we see the proposed Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) as a welcome development. We look forward to its adoption at the General Assembly later in the year.

Just like many developing countries, debt sustainability remains a priority issue for us. Debt relief or restructuring will create the necessary fiscal space to grow and focus on other priority needs. We also need support from donor partners to access technical assistance and build capacity to allow for better debt management and increased debt transparency. In this regard we welcome the formation of the IMF/World Bank Sovereign Debt Roundtable as a framework for discussing options for debt resolution.

**Mr President,**

*Economic Embargo*

I wish to reiterate that the imposition of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, against developing countries constitute a major impediment to economic and social development and seriously hinders dialogue and understanding among countries. Such actions not only undermine the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the International law but also severely threaten the freedom of trade and investment. In this vein we continue to call for the uplifting of economic embargo on the Republic of Cuba.

**Mr. President,**

*Conclusion*

Today we face unprecedented and interlocking crises. The multilateral system is under greater strain than at any time since the creation of the United Nations. Effective multilateral responses are urgently needed to prevent and resolve conflicts, manage economic uncertainty and rescue the sustainable development goals.

Amidst the recent challenges posed on the UN Charter, it remains our compass. Let us work together for a better world.

I thank you!