



**79<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT 3**

**FIJI NATIONAL STATEMENT**

**His Excellency Ratu Wiliame Maivalili Katonivere, President of  
the Republic of Fiji**

**Thursday, 26 September 2024**

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**The President of the United Nations General Assembly,**

**Your Excellency Philemon Yang,**

**Secretary General, Antonio Guterres,**

**My Fellow Leaders,**

1. I bring you greetings from the people of Fiji.

2. I would also like to offer sincere congratulations to you, Mr President, on your election to your high office. We wish you well in the discharge of your important duties.
  
3. As it is my first United Nations General Assembly, I begin by reiterating the words of the 1<sup>st</sup> Prime Minister of Fiji, the late Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara in his inaugural address to this Assembly, in 1970 – may I quote...

*“We do not live by bread alone, and it is only from the firm base of sound moral and spiritual standards that we can go on to meaningful economic progress...Quality should not take second place to quantity especially when we are estimating a society, its life and accepted values. Quality is measured by standards, and these standards must be observed by larger nations as well as by smaller...But it is for the United Nations to set the standards and to disseminate them widely...” (Unquote)*

4. This Statement was made when the United Nations was celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with the theme *"Peace, Justice and Progress"*.
5. In this Assembly, 54 years later, the theme of this 79<sup>th</sup> Session ***"Unity in diversity, for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for everyone everywhere"*** – echoes similar sentiments.
6. It resonates with us in its importance, its relevance from when Fiji first joined the United Nations, and its urgency, in today's precarious global context.
7. Climate change. Sea Level Rise. Pandemics. Poverty. Unsustainable Development. Conflicts. Inequalities. Injustices everywhere. The challenges are daunting.
8. From Gaza, to Sudan, Ukraine, Afghanistan and beyond – conflicts rage on, as humanitarian needs escalate.

9. These are the challenges, we have been fighting since time immemorial.
10. It is the background, against which the United Nations was established in 1945.
11. Today, the rapid evolution of technology, has made us more connected than ever before in history.
12. However, the more connected we are, the wider gaps between the rich and the poor, the developed and the developing world.
13. Small Island Developing States who are on the front lines of climate change and sea-level rise, continue to grapple with the impacts of climate-induced disasters, with devastating consequences for the ecosystem and for vulnerable communities.

## **Fellow Leaders,**

14. This year, at least 72 countries whose combined population, comprises almost half of the world's total population, have already or will soon select their own leaders at the polls.
15. The world is in need of courageous leaders who are willing to garner the political will, and mobilize the resources; to bridge the divide, and seek solutions that benefit humankind.
16. **We have two choices before us – to give up and go home!  
OR to stay the course, renew, redouble our efforts, re-  
think and reform – together!**
17. The choice we make, will be our legacy.
18. We chose the latter, not for ourselves, but for those coming after us.

19. Strong international cooperation, diplomacy, and a commitment to upholding the principles of the United Nations are not only important but indispensable.
20. It is time to go back to the basics. The foundation and purpose of the United Nations Charter.
21. We must invest in the empowerment of humankind and the protection of human rights.

**Fellow Leaders,**

22. **Next year the United Nations turns 80.**
23. The United Nations is only as strong as its Member States.
24. For 79 years, the global community has placed its trust in multilateralism, and in the United Nations to foster cooperation, uphold human rights, and promote global stability.

25. We now live in an age of distrust, fueled by the increasing disconnect between people's expectations and the inadequate responses of the multilateral system.
26. It is our collective responsibility to counter mis-information and dis-information.
27. **Trust** is a pre-requisite for effective multilateralism.
28. The continued success of multilateralism is critical. There is more to be done to ensure the voices of all countries are heard.
29. An inclusive and responsive multilateral system must be able to respond and adapt to the challenges of today.
30. The stakes are high, for developing countries including Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries that continue to be "left behind" in the development race, as we grapple with multiple crises.

31. Despite our limited resources, the unfairness of the global governance system, and obvious inequalities, Small Island Developing States continue to forge ahead.
32. We don't have the luxury of time nor can we justify inaction.
33. Building economic resilience is a requirement for sustainable development in Small Island Developing States.
34. Recovery from the frequency and magnitude of climate-related shocks, including disasters, are a costly affair.
35. Mobilizing the upfront funding needed for adaptation remains a challenge, as resources are focused on recovery and reconstruction.
36. The adoption of the **Multidimensional Vulnerability Index** for Small Island Developing States opens a new chapter in the ongoing effort to safeguard the future of vulnerable developing countries.



37. Mainstreaming **Multidimensional Vulnerability Index** into existing practices and policies will help ease the economic burden for Small Island Developing States, when needed the most.

**Fellow Leaders,**

38. Cultivating a **culture of peace** is now more urgent than ever.

39. The Blue Pacific Continent knows the value of peace, having lived through the horrors of its absence.

40. Our Oceans and its diverse and vibrant lands have been a theatre of the two World Wars, and a testing ground for the most dangerous weapons – the impacts of which are still felt today.

41. Yesterday, 25<sup>th</sup> September, there was a unilateral test firing of a ballistic missile into the Pacific Ocean.

42. We urge respect for our region and call for cessation of such action. Under Principle 4 of the Ocean of Peace as was endorsed by the Pacific Leaders in Tonga last month, our statements reinforce the Pacific's peaceful example to uphold international law and urge others to refrain from actions that undermine peace and security in the Blue Pacific.
43. Under Principle 12, the Ocean of Peace sets and champions rules of responsible, peaceful and deconflicting behaviour.
44. Fiji may be a small State, but through our leadership and stewardship roles in the region, we make a profound contribution to regionalism and multilateralism.
45. Fiji's first-ever **Foreign Policy White Paper**, builds on the three interconnecting themes of Fiji's foreign policy: **sovereignty, security and prosperity**.

46. Fiji's **National Development Plan 2025 - 2029** envisions empowering the People of Fiji through Unity, based on the pillars of economic resilience, people empowerment and good governance.
47. True to the spirit of multilateralism, our bilateral, regional and multilateral development partners are a key part of our efforts.
48. We commit to the principles of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, and to the Pacific leaders vision of a prosperous Blue Pacific Continent.

**Fellow Leaders,**

49. As a large Ocean State, Fiji is a proud advocate for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
50. Fiji has signed and will ratify the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), in the lead-up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> United Nations Oceans Conference in France.

51. Fiji has ratified the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, which aims to eliminate harmful subsidies that contribute to Illegal Unregulated Unreported fishing.
52. We call for concerted efforts at the World Trade Organisation, to finalize Part Two of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement that address subsidies to overfishing and overcapacity.
53. Fiji reiterates the importance of understanding the vast ocean space, guided by science, and data, in order to undertake risk-informed decisions.
54. As the global community prepares for the Climate COP in Baku, Azerbaijan, we call on countries to work together with the United Nations to implement the outcomes of the Global Stock-take undertaken at COP28.

55. Deep, rapid and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in line with 1.5 degrees celcius must be vigorously pursued, and accelerated.
56. The phase-out of unabated coal power, transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems will contribute to the achievement of net zero targets by 2050.
57. Both adaptation and mitigation financing require a substantial increase.
58. We call on States to commit to finalising the new collective quantified goal (NCQG) and address glaring gaps in climate finance.
59. The momentum from COP27 and COP28 on the **Loss and Damage Fund**, and **the Santiago Network** must be accelerated in order to protect vulnerable communities who stand to lose the most from the climate crisis, particularly in Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries.

60. By 2050; around 240 of our coastal communities will be displaced due to sea-level rise. 42 communities are in urgent need of relocation.
61. With the limitations of the multilateral climate financing architecture, Fiji has established the world's first national Relocation Trust Fund to support our relocation costs.
62. We have issued domestic and international green and blue bonds, piloted low-cost parametric insurance products for rural communities, and engaged the private sector in climate resilience building.
63. We call on our development partners to support our efforts.

**Fellow Leaders,**

64. The **Pact of the Future**, adopted at the Summit of the Future earlier this week, opens pathways to new possibilities.

65. **The world deserves a future of peace, dignity, and prosperity. It is never too late!**

**Mr President, Excellencies,**

66. Fiji's commitment to multilateralism is unwavering.

67. We will continue to work closely with the United Nations and all Member States, to advance efforts towards building a better, safer and fairer world for all.

**Vinaka vakalevu and I thank you**

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