

# UNGA79

H.E PRESIDENT WAVEL RAMKALAWAN'S

GENERAL DEBATE PLENARY SPEECH

25<sup>th</sup> September 2024

NEW YORK

*Theme: Leaving no one behind: Acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations.*

**Mr President,**

**Mr Secretary-General (*if in the room*),**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished delegates,**

**Congratulations, Ambassador Yang, on your election as President of the General Assembly for this seventy-ninth session. I wish to also thank Ambassador Francis for his diligent leadership during the seventy-eighth session.**

**Mr President,**

**As the highest representatives of the peoples of the world, we meet here every year in this institution which promises to deliver peace, progress and prosperity for all.**

**We must be frank.**

**Frank in our assessment of what we are doing for the people that we represent and their interests that we serve.**

**For my people of Seychelles, we must be critical of our approach to the challenges of today, and plan for the challenges of tomorrow.**

**The world is less secure than even just one year ago.**

**Where we hoped that existing conflicts could be resolved, we find ourselves in a situation more**

tense and precarious. Flames stoked by competition and distrust threaten to engulf those who have no part in these conflicts - leaving us gripped by a fearful atmosphere of instability, exacerbated by the worry of expanded warfare.

We are in danger of losing sight of the values that bring us together.

That transcend borders and cultures.

That are understood in all languages and present in all ideologies.

**We must revert to our foundational principles of dialogue and cooperation. Without a stable foundation, we cannot build our vision of a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.**

**Our focus is diverted from the challenges requiring our urgent and undivided attention. Challenges affecting the core of people's lives and equally requiring solutions with people at their centre:**

**The climate crisis;**

**Ending poverty and hunger;**

**Ensuring that all have the indisputable right to a decent and dignified life.**

**Our people have entrusted us to work together to find solutions.**

**Mr. President,**

**Seventy-nine years ago, the permanent members of the Security Council conferred upon themselves the great responsibility of ensuring international peace and security. To cooperate in good faith to save future generations from transgressions of the past.**

**With this great responsibility comes the expectation that gross violations of the UN Charter be dealt with resolutely, and impartially. We place our trust in them to act in the common interest, to prevent conflict and preserve human dignity.**

The consequences of conflict are felt beyond the direct and intolerable suffering of victims in warzones and those displaced by fighting. In such an interconnected world, we are all subjected to inflationary pressures, elevated commodity and energy prices, and other disruptive effects.

Widened and prolonged conflict risks affecting smaller states like Seychelles trying not to get caught in the crossfire. It is not our intention to lecture the world powers nor attempt to prescribe solutions to complex issues. We simply wish to remind you of your duty and be reassured that geopolitics will not supersede human rights and international law.

Since its formation in 1946, the Security Council has remained largely unchanged. Most of Africa was under colonial rule then.

Seychelles joins the call for the UN and the Security Council to deliver the reform being appealed for by so many – with the objective not to hinder its work, but to bring inclusivity and perspective.

It is time to correct one of the many injustices to which Africa has been subjected. Permanent membership of the world's primary peace-keeping institution is a necessity.

The consideration by the Council of critical issues such as sea-level rise brought by Malta last year,



and the broader climate-security nexus, has proven that it is capable of reflecting new realities. The proposal by the United States to include a rotating seat for small island developing states is a welcome and progressive one that arrives not before time.

**Mr. President,**

Climate change remains the foremost challenge facing humanity, and failure to address its effects will devastate current and future generations.

As a small island state, Seychelles understands what it means to be vulnerable. A vulnerability that cannot be ignored in the future we see for ourselves.

**We are on the front lines of the climate crisis, which poses irreversible threats to our people, our economy, and our way of life. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and the degradation of our oceans are stark reminders of the urgent need for global action on climate change.**

**We have all made commitments, pledges and promises to achieve large-scale reductions of emissions to keep the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. To boost adaptation to deal with extreme weather disasters and build resilience to address future impacts.**

**But words are nothing without deeds and we have to act urgently, in unity, to make the necessary transition to a more sustainable future.**

**It is a choice – conscious, and intentional - to continue down this path and decide that business-as-usual in pursuit of short-term gains, is acceptable.**

**World military expenditure has increased for the tenth consecutive year, reaching 2.5 trillion dollars in 2023. This makes even the highest estimates of the funds - 100 billion dollars needed for loss and damage - seem modest and insignificant.**

**This is a worrying reflection of the world's priorities.**

**It is unfair for SIDS to suffer the consequences of these choices. We simply do not have the means to cope with the disastrous effects of climate change.**

**I thank those who have contributed to the loss and damage fund. The pledges made following COP28 should not be mere attempts to pacify us who have been calling for remediation. We hope to take it as a token of ongoing commitment and continued action, given the expected rise in costs of dealing with climate change. As the Secretary General said yesterday: "those who shoulder the blame should foot the bill".**

The international community cannot hope to advance sustainable development when some race ahead while others are left to struggle. No one should be left behind, lest we forsake future generations to a bleaker world.

The obligations outlined in the Paris Agreement are the lifelines that give us a chance if all States did their utmost to adhere to them. Our reliance on fossil fuels is unsustainable and detrimental. We must accelerate energy transition towards renewables and mobilise investment in the technology and infrastructure to give us any prospect of real energy security.

**Seychelles' focus remains on nature-based solutions to combat climate change while ensuring economic sustainability and environmental preservation. Our blue bonds demonstrate the potential to harness capital markets for financing the sustainable use of marine resources.**

**Mr. President,**

**Ambitious and innovative strategies of securing long term economic development are futile without finance that is accessible and sustainable.**

**The average debt-to-GDP ratio in SIDS exceeds 70%. It is crippling and impedes our development by diverting critical resources away from where**

**they are needed most: in infrastructure, education and healthcare.**

**Our vulnerabilities have been expounded, yet our borrowing costs remain high. Instead of concessions, we are penalized for our vulnerability.**

**It is time to move beyond discussion and implement real reforms in the international financial system to address the preclusion of some vulnerable countries, regardless of income status, from opportunities to meet development needs.**

**We must also recognise the humanitarian consequences of economic policies. Our work in the multilateral system is undermined by unilateral**

coercive measures that are intended to leave economies crippled and governments unable to advance dignity for their own people.

**Mr. President,**

The multilateral system remains our best hope for addressing the challenges we face. As a small state, Seychelles believes in the United Nations, for we fear of a reality with no alternative.

In a world more interconnected than ever, multilateralism is the network that links our shared values to achieve the vision that we have for our world. One that is defined by our common interests and not by our differences.



**We are here to solve problems, not exacerbate them. To listen, and not to dismiss.**

**We put our faith in this institution because we must to prove to the world that we can work for it.**

**But it is up to us to make it work.**

**In 2023 we adopted the BBNJ Agreement and this year Seychelles became the fourth State, and the first in Africa, to ratify it. We urge other countries to hasten its ratification so as not to delay its entry into force.**

**This year's fourth SIDS Conference in Antigua & Barbuda shone a timely light on the challenges that we face in a global economic landscape for which we are ill-equipped to navigate. The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS provides the blueprint for action over the next decade and we call on the international community to commit to its implementation.**

**The MVI resolution adopted here last month also represents a triumph of the multilateral system to consider new approaches to complex and evolving issues. Its data and findings deliver the empirical grounding for what we know to be true: that a single-layered approach to development is no longer accurate nor adequate.**

**A better understanding of precisely these multidimensional vulnerabilities will be crucial for the decisions that we take and, more importantly, those taken on our behalf.**

**The Pact for the Future just adopted should rightly usher in a new era of engagement based on mutual interest and mutual respect. We must use it to bridge divisions between nations on critical issues of human rights, gender equality and the rule of law.**

**One that accelerates the implementation of the SDGs and shapes the international financial system more fairly.**

One that adapts responses to global crises in a more coordinated way, and one that restores peace, with a promise to preserving it in the future.

For Seychelles, the Declaration on Future Generations should signal our commitment to safeguarding the rights of all people who will be born by the end of this century, most of whom in developing countries.

People who should not be born into hardship. We must envision a world where survival is not a struggle. A world that ensures everyone's right to prosperity.

**Basic rights should not be difficult to provide.**

**Mr. President,**

**I firmly believe that these are the foundations on which our cooperation and progress should be built. The things that our people need the most and what should guide us to building a world that is more secure and sustainable.**

**Let us strive to be the architects of a world where no one is left behind.**

**Thank you.**