

80th Session of the UN General Assembly
Statement by
His Excellency Odo Tevi, Permanent Representative of the
Republic of Vanuatu

29 September 2025



Madam President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Heads of State and Governments,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to deliver this address on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Madam President,

At the outset, let me sincerely congratulate you on your well-deserved election as President of the 80th Session of this August Assembly. I assure you of the Vanuatu's delegation full support and cooperation during your tenure.

I commend your predecessor, H.E. Mr. Philemon Yang for the great achievements of the General Assembly under his leadership during these challenging times.

I would also like to extend my sincere congratulation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres for his continued vision, wisdom and skilful leadership of the United Nations during these tumultuous times.

Global Context

Madam President,

Since the set-up of the United Nations 80 years ago, we have seen that the world continues to face a myriad of complex challenges —there are ongoing wars and violent conflicts, increased humanitarian emergencies, international laws are not respected, human rights violations increased, and poverty continues to remain. The current liquidity crisis facing the United Nations System limits the ability of the UN to address these challenges.

As we celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the United Nations Charter, let us take stock of what this founding document really means for us. The Charter is not merely a piece of history. It is a living document that binds us together in the pursuit of peace, human dignity, and shared prosperity. It is the expression of a collective promise: that disputes should be resolved by dialogue, not by war; that human rights and dignity are universal; and that nations, large and small, are equal in sovereignty.

Madam President, your theme: **Better together: 80 years, more for peace, development and human rights is crucial at this time.** The lesson of the last 80 years is clear: no nation can meet these challenges alone. Multilateralism is not a choice—it is a necessity. “Better together” is not only a theme but a guiding principle that we must work together to create a just, fair and prosperous world.

Vanuatu Situation

Madam President,

The Prime Minister of Vanuatu, in his 45th Independence commemoration speech on the 30th of July this year, called on our people to renew unity, national harmony and long-term vision—to hold fast to the values of faith, culture, and shared purpose, especially in times of challenge. That same spirit must guide our engagement in New York today- small island states like ours cannot

face climate change, global insecurity, or technological disruptions alone. Our independence reminds us that sovereignty is precious—but so too is solidarity.

In the past few years, we have experienced a number of category 4-5 cyclones which have contributed to the erosion of around 30 to 60% of our economy. Moreover, in early December 17, 2024, we experienced a devastating earthquake in our Capital that damaged our infrastructure and buildings. The cumulative effect of these disasters is huge.

Each disaster erodes our infrastructure, displaces communities, and sets back economic and social progress. Recovery is slow and our resilience is tested. The compounding nature of these crises makes adaptation and preparedness ever more urgent—and yet, as a small island developing state, Vanuatu faces limitations in resources, capacity, and access to finance.

Apart from these disasters, foreign investments in our country have been flat and this is due to a combination of factors, one of which is the unjust blacklisting imposed by some of our development partners and the difficulty of accessing funds due to the worsening of correspondent banking relationships. While these measures are often justified as steps toward de-risking, the consequences for countries like Vanuatu are severe. We call on the international community, financial institutions, and regulators to work with countries that are affected by these measures and to recognize the unintended consequences of de-risking on small economies. Solutions must include enhanced dialogue, technical assistance, and proportionate risk-based approaches that allow bona fide businesses and citizens to continue to participate in global commerce.

Despite these challenges, we are starting to see some green shoots in our economy. Our economy is anticipated to recover this year and in the medium-term. Of course, our growth prospects among other things will depend on a favorable external and domestic economic environment, and how far we can withstand natural disasters in the future.

Our development experience thus far reveals that as a vulnerable country which has graduated from least developing country's status, it is not easy to chart your own course for development. The international environment has been unfavorable for Small Island Developing States and accessing climate and development finance continues to be challenging. The securitization of development finance makes it difficult to address our most pressing development challenges.

Just like any other small island developing states (SIDS), Vanuatu relies on the current global legal order that is underpinned by the UN Charter to thrive. As a nation, we will continue to espouse for the preservation of these ideals. Furthermore, we call for the UN to urgently look deeper into the challenges of SIDS like Vanuatu and find innovative ways to assist them.

Vanuatu in the region

Madam President,

This year, the Pacific Leaders established the Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF) which aims to support climate projects that would build resilience in our economies and communities in the Pacific. This is one of the first regional-led initiatives of its kind in the world. I join our Pacific Leaders to thank our development partners that have contributed to this initiative. I call on our good friends and partners to contribute to this facility.

Vanuatu at the Global Stage

Madam President,

As you are well aware, Vanuatu, with the support of a coalition of nations, led a UN resolution which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in March 2023 calling for the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to provide an advisory opinion on climate change.

The Court delivered its historic opinion in July 2025, affirming that States have clear legal obligations to protect the environment and human rights from the impacts of this crisis.

For vulnerable nations, including Small Island Developing States, this opinion is a powerful affirmation of our long-standing call: that climate change is an existential threat, and the world has a legal duty to respond.

Now that advisory opinion is rendered, Vanuatu will take a follow up resolution this year to the UN General Assembly to affirm the findings of the Court and propose actions for the opinion to be operationalized. I call upon all the UN member states to support this crucial resolution.

Taking climate change to the ICJ via the General Assembly, is not a silver bullet for increasing climate action, but only one tool to get us closer to the end goal of a safe planet for humanity. That

is why, beyond the ICJ, we are also supporting other tools to battle the existential threat of climate change.

We call on all States to join the group of nations proposing to include Ecocide as the fifth independent crime of the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court, and thank the nations of Fiji, Samoa and the Democratic Republic of Congo for their existing support in this regard.

Vanuatu maintains that better prevention of future environmental destruction is as fundamentally important as mitigating and adapting to existing damage. We believe that criminalisation of the severest forms of environmental destruction at the international level **can and should** play a crucial role not only in deterring harm but also in protecting rights for present and future generations.

Human Rights and decolonization

Madam President,

The imposition of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, against developing countries is unfair and unjust. It undermines the social and economic development of these countries. Such measures are in violation with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. In this respect, we call for the uplift of the economic embargo on the Republic of Cuba.

While the United Nations Charter establishes human rights as a fundamental pillar of the Organization, human rights challenges continue to persist globally. In the Pacific region, the human rights of indigenous peoples are yet to be adequately addressed and remain a matter of ongoing concern. We acknowledge that in the recent Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Communiqué, member states have agreed to a roadmap to address human rights concerns in the region.

The decolonization process within the United Nations framework requires enhanced momentum, and it is imperative that sustained dialogue be maintained among all stakeholders. In this regard, Vanuatu notes the ongoing dialogue conducted between the indigenous leaders of New Caledonia and the Government of France in Paris this year. This dialogue has resulted in a road map, and we hope that this is a start for parties concerned to work collaboratively in finding the best way forward toward a peaceful and progressive future for the people of New Caledonia, in accordance with the principles of self-determination established in the UN Charter.

Conclusion

Madam President,

Eighty years on, the Charter calls us to action to safeguard international peace and security, to strengthen multilateral cooperation, and to ensure that the United Nations continues to serve as a beacon of hope for present and future generations.

By returning to the spirit of the Charter - equality of nations, respect for rights, and shared responsibilities we can meet today's challenges and build a future where no state, large or small, is left behind.

Thank you.