



SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

Statement by the Hon. Rick N. Houenipwela, MP

73rd UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE

“Making the United Nations relevant to all people: Global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies.”

Friday, 28th September, 2018

New York

Madam President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me, on behalf of My Government and the People of Solomon Islands, to convey our warmest greetings, to you Madam President and the members of this august Assembly.

Our warmest congratulations to you Madam President, on your election as President of the 73rd session of the General Assembly. I am confident, that under your leadership, you will ably guide our deliberations during this current session. Madam President, I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation during your tenure in Office.

I also commend and thank your predecessor His Excellency Miroslav Lajčák, for his sterling stewardship of the 72nd session of the General Assembly, and, we thank him for his leadership.

Solomon Islands also joins other members in mourning the loss of the Late Kofi Anan, Former Secretary General of the United Nations and a proud son of Ghana and Africa. We acknowledge his immense contributions to the work of our organisation. The Late Kofi Anan was truly a global statesman.

Madam President, I welcome the theme chosen for this session. It reflects the ultimate goal that this august body strives to achieve. *"Making the United Nations relevant to all people: Global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies."*

This is indeed a powerful theme. It speaks of a united world, with both equal responsibilities and equal opportunities. It also speaks of the need to be united in achieving peace and tranquillity amongst all our Nations and peoples.

Indeed, Madam President, the implementation of the SDGs requires a unified global partnership and the concerted joint efforts of all stakeholders to mobilize all available resources to achieve these SDGs.

It recognises that by being together we can conquer the inequities of today that have befallen us, be it man-made or natural. It also reflects the preamble of the UN Charter which speaks powerfully of our mission to *'reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small.'*

Our preamble clearly articulates the principle of universality, for all peoples and all nations regardless of their size.

Madam President, the world has, unfortunately, entered an era, in which the foundation and strengths of multilateralism is being challenged and undermined by unilateral state posturing and manoeuvres.

We have seen a proliferation of insular focussed policies by some countries, causing them to renege on their commitments under various international frameworks and treaties.

The United Nations allows us to consolidate our collective resolve and solidarity for maintenance of international peace and security, promote sustainable development, advance respect for Human rights and promote the rule of law.

SDGs

Madam President, Solomon Islands reaffirms its commitment to achieving the SDGs by 2030.

To this end, we have incorporated the SDGs into our National Development Strategy 2016-2035.

We also welcome the mid-term review of the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.

It is my hope, that the outcomes of the review will provide the impetus needed to reinvigorate the special case for SIDS going forward. The review should also ensure that all partners and stakeholders, together with SIDS, address, more effectively, challenges faced by SIDS and take full advantage of the opportunities through genuine and durable partnerships.

Solomon Islands acknowledges, that achieving the SDGs will be an arduous and challenging task. However, it is a path that we must trek. We welcome all the assistance and support from our development partners towards this cause.

LDC

Madame President, this year Solomon Islands met two of the three criteria for LDC graduation, for the second consecutive time. The Committee on Development Policy recommended that Solomon Islands graduate from the list of LDCs. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), has also recommended that this august body consider and endorse our graduation accordingly.

While my government appreciates the report and its recommendations, I must point out that as a post-conflict state, Solomon Islands will require the development of appropriate prudent macroeconomic and finance policies to maintain the threshold indicators upon which the recommendation for graduation is premised.

It is therefore my fervent hope that this Assembly will grant Solomon Islands an opportunity to properly assess the potential impacts of LDC graduation on key sectors which sustain our economy. A predictable and workable strategy that would put us on a continued upward trajectory, will need to be developed as well.

I call on the United Nations system to support us in these assessments and in the development of appropriate strategies that would assist us to boldly move forward with confidence.

The Solomon Islands Government respects the process of graduation that is based on an agreed rules-based system and will endeavour to graduate from the LDC status. However, any appropriate and relevant assessment undertaken of the country must be well-conceived, thorough, and consultative. As you are aware, graduation from LDC status of SIDS such as Solomon Islands will not

improve our vulnerabilities. To that end, we are pleased to know that a special taskforce has been established to ensure a smooth transition of SIDS from LDC.

Climate Change

Madam President, whilst we in Solomon Islands are not subject to threats of an armed invasion, we are nevertheless continuously being invaded by a common enemy that we call "Climate Change".

Climate change is the greatest threat facing humankind. For us in the Pacific Islands this threat is existential. The resulting climate change related extreme weather events means that Solomon Islands is more susceptible to natural disasters of greater severity.

The threat of sea level rise, as well as inundation and salination of arable land, the destruction of biodiversity, including through a warming ocean and acidification, are ingredients for the causation of food security concerns and increase the risk of potential conflicts.

In light of this threat, Solomon Islands calls for collective global leadership in climate change action and for strengthened commitment towards positive outcomes in COP24 in Katowice, Poland, this year.

Solomon Islands joins other Pacific Islands States in strongly urging the largest emitters of Green House Gasses to take urgent actions in reducing this harmful emission. Reduce now or regret later.

In the ongoing dialogue on the Climate challenge, appropriate financial support to SIDS address their loss and damage resulting from destructive effects of climate change, must be seriously considered.

In our efforts to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and meet our intended nationally determined contributions (NDCs), Solomon Islands remains committed to transitioning to the use of renewable energy.

On behalf of my government and people of Solomon Islands, I extend our gratitude to our partners, including the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, the Green Climate Fund, the Economic Development Cooperation Fund of Korea and Australian Development Assistance, for their financial assistance and support towards the Tina Hydro Dam project. This project when completed will cater for some 80% of the Capital, Honiara's power consumption needs.

I acknowledge the bilateral assistance provided by the Governments of Italy, Spain, Austria and Luxemburg towards the Pacific Small Island Developing States, including Solomon Islands, to support renewable energy projects. We look forward to continuing the partnerships in the coming years.

Madam President, adequate and quality infrastructure is a prerequisite for positive economic and inclusive growth. Investment in infrastructure projects positively impacts on a majority of the population and enhances accessibility to goods and services, both private and public.

In this connection, Solomon Islands is grateful to the Government and People of Japan in the transformative development of major infrastructures such as the

Honiara City main roads, Honiara Sea Port and the proposed upgrade of Honiara International Airport.

The opening of the second international airport in Munda, and the undersea fibre optic cable are also game changing infrastructures, for which the people and Government of Solomon Islands are grateful for this valuable assistance from Australia and New Zealand.

Cooperation

Solomon Islands has benefited through South-South cooperation on capacity development programs with countries such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Cuba, including the potential to explore other innovative opportunities such as pharmaceutical solutions.

The People of Solomon Islands are forever grateful to all our development partners for the genuine and durable partnerships. We will collaborate and increase efforts going forward.

Oceans

Madam President, as a large ocean state, the issue of conservation and proper management of ocean resources, is an important priority for Solomon Islands. We will actively engage on matters concerning the management of oceans.

With regard to oceans management on the high seas, my Government welcomes, the recent first intergovernmental conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), concerning areas of Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction.

A successful outcome of fair and equitable framework will again prove the relevance of this organization and its convening powers.

At the regional level, Solomon Islands subscribes to the Blue Pacific Initiative which sets the context for the development of our regional priorities.

We believe that maintaining the wellbeing of the oceans should be a key priority as acknowledged in SDG14. Restoration of fish stocks, implementation of science-based management measures, monitoring, control and enforcement are but some of the measures which Solomon Islands is promoting through domestic and regional arrangements.

At the national level, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that we are in the final stages of developing an Ocean policy that will rationalize, enhance coordination and support implementation of all ocean-related legislations and policies. The development of the National Policy is a voluntary commitment that we announced at last year's ocean conference.

Madam President, security concerns have become more complex. It now involves activities beyond traditional definitions. Some of these now include new threats such as climate change, cybercrimes, transnational organised crime and so forth.

Therefore, it is now more important than ever, that we work more closely and collectively with the international community to address these security concerns and threats.

This year we witnessed constructive engagement towards better managing relations along the Korean peninsula. The UN must continue to ensure that conflict prevention and resolution remains a central plank to its work as mandated by the UN Charter.

Solomon Islands recognises that the stability in the Middle East is critical to world peace. A peaceful Middle East will lead to a prosperous world.

Solomon Islands also continues to call for peaceful settlement and supports the two state solution in the Israel and Palestinian conflict.

In the Pacific, security concerns are driven by external factors, human security and climate change challenges. In recognising the importance of our changing security landscape, Pacific Islands Forum Leaders undertook to build on the positive platform established by the Biketawa Declaration. This culminated in our adoption earlier this month of the Boe Declaration, at the recent PIF Summit in Nauru.

As we continue to work towards the goal of global peace, the need to actively engage in peacekeeping remains.

Madam President, although small, Solomon Islands is contributing towards achieving global peace and security, through participation in the UN's peace keeping program. So far Solomon Islands has contributed 12 officers towards the United Nations African mission in South Sudan.

Solomon Islands is committed to increasing our participation in UN Peace Keeping Missions. Cognizant of the important role of UN Peacekeeping missions, we call on the UN's collective support towards ensuring that the sustainability of UN programmes is not being undermined by funding shortfalls.

Having benefited from the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, Solomon Islands values the importance of peacekeeping missions.

Madam President, to sustain peace, adequate resources are required. The international community also recognise this. In this connection, Solomon Islands has benefited from the Peacebuilding Funds approved under the Peacebuilding Commission in November 2017.

Through the resources provided under the Peacebuilding Fund we have been able to facilitate dialogue involving a wide range of stakeholders on key issues including land reform, rural development, border issues, and youth and women's participation.

Recognizing the complex and ever-changing global security landscape and realities, Solomon Islands reiterates the call for the reforms of the Security Council to be inclusive by expanding its focus to non-traditional security priorities. SIDS must have a voice, through a dedicated seat in the non-permanent-seat category in the Council

NCD

Madam President, the biggest threat facing the Pacific Islands apart from Climate Change, is the threat caused by Non-Communicable Diseases. Approximately 70% to 80% of all deaths in the Pacific can be attributed to NCDs, with many of these deaths being premature.

In the Pacific, including Solomon Islands, the high prevalence of NCDs translates to an economic burden on health care systems.

Two thirds of beds at National Referral Hospital in Honiara, our capital is occupied by NCD patients. The burden that NCDs has on the productivity of the people of the Solomon Islands, and opportunities foregone to provide care for NCD patients, is an eminent socio-economic concern for an economy with a small human resource base.

The international community already acknowledged the NCD challenge to SIDS in the SAMOA Pathway. Now is the time for action.

Taiwan

Madam President, whilst, we speak of “leaving no one behind,” we still close our doors to Taiwan and continue to contradict our own principles by leaving Taiwan’s 23 million people behind.

Madam President, the implementation of the SDGs requires a unified global partnership. Taiwan is ready, willing and able to engage in and contribute to the wide range of substantive UN programmes for the welfare of humanity.

Solomon Islands continues to call for the participation of Taiwan in the United Nations specialised bodies including UNFCCC, World Health Organisation and the International Civil Aviation Authority Organisation.

Taiwan is the 22nd largest economy in the world and as such, Taiwan must be part of the global solutions in the various international frameworks. Moreover, it has a lot to contribute through its experience and technology capability.

If we are to focus on shared responsibility and promote peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies, we must give Taiwan and its 23 million people a chance. Despite the contributions of Taiwan towards the well-being of citizens of the globe, we continue to ignore the right of Taiwan to self-determination.

Madam President, the time has come for this august body to give due recognition to Taiwan as a legitimate member of the Family of Nations.

Madam President, it is important that administrating powers, the non-self-governing territories and all relevant organisations honour their commitments made under the Charter of the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. To that end and in accordance with the 1998 Noumea Accord, Solomon Islands, welcomes the referendum to be held in New Caledonia on 4th November 2018 that is both free and fair.

Solomon Islands reaffirms that human rights principles are universal, indivisible, interrelated and must be treated in a fair manner. All states have the moral duty and responsibility to uphold, respect and promote human rights

and, where necessary, take preventive, protective and punitive measures against human rights abuses and violations.

Solomon Islands recognises and respects Indonesia's sovereignty over its territorial boundaries. My Government commits to work with the Government of Indonesia on areas of mutual interest including human rights concerns in Papua and West Papua.

Madam President, Solomon Islands is committed to the principles of good governance and transparency. We have passed the Anti-Corruption Act which aims to eliminate the scourge of corruption from all levels of our society. In addition, Parliament has passed our Whistle-blowers Protection Act giving due protection to those that bring issues of corruption to the attention of the relevant authorities.

Solomon Islands is also committed to the democratic principles and processes and we are equally committed to the holding of free and fair elections in early 2019.

Madam President, Solomon Islands is an ardent believer in collective action. We are staunch supporters of multilateralism. As such we stand in solidarity with all members of this body - the pinnacle of multilateralism.

Without the UN, as a small island country, we will not be able to be heard. Other louder voices will drown ours. Our expectations from this organization will remain high. As such, adequate resources for programs and projects that will impact citizens is needed. The UN has flaws. But Solomon Islands continues to

feel the impact of the power of working together on global issues that are championed by the UN. We believe that the principles and values upon which the UN is founded remain relevant.

Making United Nations relevant to all people is not just about standing up and talking about it in this august body. It is incumbent upon us all to be seen as making United Nations relevant to all peoples in the actions we take individually and collectively.

Madam President, I thank you.