



SOLOMON ISLANDS

STATEMENT BY

**HONOURABLE MANASSEH MAELANGA, MP
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**

**BEFORE THE
GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
SIXTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

It is indeed with much pride the Government and people of Solomon Islands join me in congratulating a fellow Islander, His Excellency Ambassador John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda, on his election as President of our 68th Session. As one of your Vice Presidents, we assure you of Solomon Islands support and cooperation during your tenure in office.

I take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, President Vuk Jeremic of Serbia whose leadership, guided us through some 300 plus resolutions, adopted the Arms Trade Treaty and convened a number of High Level thematic debates. Solomon Islands also wish to acknowledge our Secretary-General, His Excellency Ban Ki-moon for his service and commitment to our global agenda.

Let me take this time to also welcome Kiribati, whose permanent presence in New York completes the Pacific Small Island Developing States' (SIDS) presence in a single city.

Mr. President,

My delegation welcomes, this Session's theme "*Setting the stage for the Post-2015 Development Agenda*". The world has changed since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were launched. Populations have grown, cities have increased and consumption and production patterns have pushed us to our planetary boundaries. Solomon Islands MDG national score card remains mixed. We have progressed on some fronts and remain off track on others.

Mr. President,

The Post-2015 Development Agenda offers us an opportunity to change the way we do business. Solomon Islands in this regards, seeks a new spirit of partnership that will reform the global economic architecture. My sub-region in the Pacific supply 60% of the world's tuna. Over three decades the Pacific Islands have developed fisheries institutions, legal and management frameworks. With international support we can supply the world with fish. Solomon Islands as Chair of Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency and Chair of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement calls for a new mindset that provides Pacific Island States with the space and capacity to develop its domestic industries and restructure distant water nations fishing fleets in the region.

The Pacific Fisheries Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) has allowed us to realize our development aspirations. Two new fishing industries have established themselves this year in Solomon Islands. We remain firm that the VDS remains the center pillar in all our fisheries negotiations.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands welcomes your proposal of convening a third thematic debate on sustainable energy during this session. We note, 1.3 billion people have no access to electricity, and half of them live in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The Istanbul Program of Action recognizes that access to affordable, reliable, renewable energy is critical for accelerating sustainable inclusive economic growth, increased, social equity and a sustainable and clean environment.

Expanding energy access to our rural populations and reducing energy costs are Solomon Islands national priorities. I am pleased to announce, Solomon Islands joined the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) last month. We hope to work with IRENA in unlocking some of our hydro energy potential. I am pleased to say; already we have a working relationship with the World Bank and Asia Development Bank on hydro projects.

We are also in discussion with the Clinton Foundation on harvesting geothermal potential. Once this lifts off the ground it will be a private – public sector partnership.

Bilaterally a number of partners including Republic of China, Italy and Japan have people centered solar programs in the country. These programs continue to light up our community schools and villages. Renewable energy also improves public service delivery to our rural populations and empowers Solomon Islanders to make sustainable choices in life.

Globally the Pacific SIDS is helping itself to fill gaps left by global renewable energy databases, where information on the Pacific is lacking. Working with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission on Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), a Pacific renewable energy database will be developed. The vision is to enhance Pacific inclusion in international energy dialogue and provide sufficient data to inspire new global partners to focus more on, on the ground investments and less on studies.

Mr. President,

Infrastructure development is critical in opening more opportunities for our rural populations. We acknowledge New Zealand, for the construction of our second international airport and other partners such as Australia and the European Union for the wharves, airfields and roads. These structural investments allows Solomon Islands to enhance its trade and strengthen the unity of the country.

Climate change remains a global issue that needs a global solution. We join all SIDS and LDCs in conveying our concern on the slow progress of climate change negotiations. The alarming pace of climate change, is posing unprecedented threats to humanity's survival. In May this year, carbon dioxide concentration has reached a new threshold of 400 parts per million (ppm). For Solomon Islands what this means, is the livelihood and well being of our people is now under threat. Coral stop growing at 500 ppm.

We are heartened to see at our Secretary-General's proposal of convening a climate change Summit next year. We hope the Summit will not be a talkfest but garner the necessary political will from member states to increase their level of commitments in reducing and phasing down Green House Gas (GHG) pollution commensurate with science. That Summit remains our best hope in avoiding climate change impact from reaching the irreversible level. We once again register our regret on countries that historical responsibility unilaterally taken decisions to opted out from their multilateral obligations.

Mr. President,

The world will celebrate 2014 as the "International Year of SIDS". The SIDS Conference is scheduled to be held in Samoa next year. We count on the world to enable SIDS to eradicate poverty, build resilience and unleash the potentials of our youths. This means an enhanced implementation of the Barbados Program of Action (BPOA) and the Mauritius Strategy (MSI) towards an evidenced based outcome.

In seeking a sustainable future for our people, last year we announced we will establish a National University. I am pleased to say we have launched Solomon Islands National University in April. A second university, the University of the South Pacific also completed all formalities and is expected to begin construction of its Fourth Campus in one of our Provinces. The development of human capital will allow Solomon Islands to build a knowledge-based society and have more job ready nationals to meet our development needs.

Mr. President,

This week the international community convened the inauguration of the first High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In preparation for the High Level Forum, Pacific SIDS formed the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF) this year. Solomon Islands is one of the founding members of PIDF. PIDF is an alliance of states, non-state and the private sector actors focusing on the green economy in the context of sustainable development. PIDF intends to speak with a united voice in the High Level Forum. Pacific SIDS looks forward to working with the High Level Political Forum.

Mr. President,

I am pleased to announce, Solomon Islands began a new journey two months ago. The ten year old Solomon Islands – Pacific Islands Forum’s Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) led by Australia, supported by New Zealand and Pacific SIDS went through a transitional phase. RAMSI, provided for under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, is now a police only assistance. The success of the transitional phase belongs to our people and our region. On this note I take this opportunity on behalf of the Government and people of Solomon Islands to express our profound gratitude and appreciation to all our regional neighbours, tangio tumas (thank you very much).

Mr. President,

Multilateralism remains a cornerstone of Solomon Islands foreign policy. Country ownership remains a foundation of any cooperation and program. This year under UNDP’s leadership, United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the Pacific 2013-2017 was launched. The USD\$292 million programme covers 14 Pacific countries and territories, all with the same priorities. We call on the UN to align itself with Solomon Islands National Sustainable Development Strategy 2011-2020. It is for this reason over the years we have been calling for enhanced UN country presence. We renew the call to upgrade UNDP’s country office from Deputy Resident Representative level to Resident Representative.

Peace, just and stable democracy is critical for sustainable development. Solomon Islands continue to invest in strengthening its governance system. A Political Party Integrity Bill is being tabled at our national parliament. The Political Party Bill aims to give more power to our electoral commission to properly manage our national election process. We are also putting in place a sustainable, cost effective and inclusive voting registration system. This is an expensive exercise, we have sought partnership from the United Nations, European Union and Australia. We thank our partners for their ongoing support to our electoral reform programme. This assistance compliments work done on e-governance. Solomon Islands this year established a Metro Area Network as a single secure network connecting 85 government offices. We hope this will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the government’s machinery.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands would like to see a strong United Nations. We are encouraged by your commitment to see real progress on reforming and revitalizing two of our principal organs, the Security Council and the General Assembly. We assure you of our support on these two endeavors.

My delegation also welcomes the modernization of the Secretariat's building, the conference rooms and the renovation of the General Assembly. We are also pleased to note that UN Competitive Exams will be held in my Capital in next two months. This will be the third year running. I thank the Secretariat in particular the UN Human Resources Department for its out reach and sincerely hope selected nationals will contribute to the diversity of the UN secretariat.

Mr. President,

The changing global realities have seen the emergence and expansion of South–South cooperation. Solomon Islands established two new diplomatic Missions this year, in Cuba and Malaysia respectively. On 18 April this year, Solomon Islands raised its flag in Havana. We also welcome Cuba becoming a Pacific Islands Forum Post Forum Dialogue Partner three weeks ago. Similarly in Malaysia last month, Solomon Islands first resident Ambassador presented his credentials. We intend to strengthen our ties with the wider Asia and Pacific region including ASEAN and India.

With Cuba we have some 100 medical students, the first graduates are expected in 2014. We thank Cuba for the cooperation.

Mr. President,

For more than two decades the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly call for the lifting of the more than five decade old economic blockade imposed on Cuba by our friend and partner the United States of America. Confrontational lines will need to be replaced with dialogue and cooperation. We cannot look to the future if we cling to the past. We hope a forward looking policy is embraced by the United States of America in easing the blockade.

Turning now to bilateral cooperation with Papua New Guinea, my Melanesian neighbour. Papua New Guinea continues to provide opportunities for young Solomon Islanders in terms of employment and scholarships. Visa free work scheme were launched and trade relations continue to grow to new heights.

In my sub region, the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) made up of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands is one of the most diverse regions of the world. A quarter of the world's language hails from the more than 8 million people. Enhance free trade have unified the culturally rich diverse populations. Today the Group is exploring other economic, security and political cooperation.

On Fiji, Solomon Islands welcome the progress put in place by the Government of Fiji for the people to freely express themselves through parliamentary elections scheduled for 2014. Solomon Islands notes the adoption of Fiji's new constitution and wish the Government and people of Fiji every success in determining its own future.

Mr. President,

The inalienable right to self determination is a key pillar of the United Nations. On New Caledonia, members of the MSG group continue to support the Territory of New Caledonia's self determination process in accordance with the UN Charter, relevant Human Rights instruments, and the Noumea Accord. On the territory of French Polynesia, I take this opportunity to thank the General Assembly and all Pacific SIDS in adopting by consensus the resolution on the Self Determination of French Polynesia in May this year. The question of the Territory of French Polynesia and the Territory of New Caledonia is scheduled to be discussed by the Fourth Committee next week.

On human rights, Solomon Islands recognizes that all states bear the responsibility to protect their citizens. We believe, all states must take feasible steps in ensuring the rights of their people are protected. Solomon Islands in this regard, condemn all human rights violation against civilians wherever it may occur.

On the Middle East, we continue to watch with horror the daily carnage and the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria. We note with concern the preliminary findings of the UN Investigation team confirming the use of chemical weapons. Solomon Islands welcomes the Russian and United States initiatives to destroy chemical weapons in Syria and further support all efforts in seeking a diplomatic and political solution to the civil war. On Israel and Palestine, we support all international efforts for the two states to resume negotiations and achieve a just, lasting and sustainable peace.

Solomon Islands remains an arms free state. We note the use of conventional and unconventional arms in the wrong hands threaten international peace and stability. Solomon Islands welcomes the recently adopted Arms Trade Treaty and hope major players of arms trade sign up to the international framework. This will strengthen the treaty, Solomon Islands continues to follow and assess the treaty's progress.

Mr. President

On the question of the Republic of China, Solomon Islands call for the Republic of China's meaningful participation at United Nations specialized organizations. We would like to acknowledge Republic of China's recent participation at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Assembly as guest of the Organization's President. We recognize this as a first step. We continue to seek observer status for Republic of China both at ICAO and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These requests mirror observer status, the Republic of China currently enjoys at the World Health Assembly.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands continues to serve in the UN Executive Board. We welcome UN Women's new Executive Secretary, Madam Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and assure her of our cooperation. We note with concern UN Women 2013-2017 Strategic Plan is under funded. We call for political and financial support for the Plan. We support the Executive Director's call that priority be given to the economic empowerment of women in rural areas. We hope the Executive Board can also address UN Women representation vacuum in the Pacific. Gender violence remains an issue in Solomon Islands and joins the international community in condemning sexual violence.

We continue to seek an inclusive society, Solomon Islands in partnership with an Australian entity we organized national games for persons with disability in Solomon Islands and other events. We still have a long way to go in creating a disability friendly society but we remain determined to do this.

Mr. President,

Let me close where I began. The Post-2015 Development Agenda is our shared agenda, we must remain united and work as one, with one aim, to deliver one set of goals, under a single process with a common but differentiated responsibility. The present and future generation depend on what we do today.

Thank you Mr. President.