

General Debate of the 60th Session of the United Nations General
Assembly

United Nations, New York
21 September 2005

Check against Delivery



Vanuatu

Statement by

Honourable SATO KILMAN
Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Vanuatu

21 September 2005

Vanuatu Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Mr. President
Mr. Secretary General
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates

I bring you warm greetings from the people of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. President,

At the outset, I wish to congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I assure you of my Government's support to the work of the United Nations under your stewardship. I take this opportunity to also acknowledge with deep admiration the sterling dedication of your predecessor Mr. Jean Ping who so meticulously steered the work of the 59th Session to its conclusion. I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary General for his active role and resilience in continuing the work of United Nations reforms.

Mr. President,

Annually, we come to this Assembly to reaffirm our faith and confidence in upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter. This year has been even more important with Leaders meeting again five years after the Millennium Summit to take stock of the Millennium Development Goals. While we have adopted the outcome document, we are however extremely disappointed with the omission of numerous paragraphs. The farcical ending to the negotiations dilute the quality of the final document and the United Nations must in future avoid becoming a rubber stamp for the powerful.

The world is at the crossroads and our meeting takes place at a most critical juncture. Around us civil and political strife, wars, poverty, diseases, famine, drought, natural disasters, terrorism, minority oppression, and environmental degradation are affecting the lives of millions of people. The sacrilege of the human suffering is unbelievable and painful to bear.

The United Nations must be able to do more and to respond more promptly to these situations. It must do this by improving its preventative capacity mechanisms to minimize the devastating impact on the people's livelihood and to ease their suffering.

The questions we must then ask is are we really doing enough for our peoples? Or is this all about impressive speeches, rhetoric and grandiose plans that pretentiously detract from the real issues that need addressing? My Government is quite disillusioned by the lack of genuine and goodwill support we are offering the United Nations.

I reiterate the message my Government gave to the 59th General Assembly and I quote *"The Achilles heel of the current structure is the imbalance of power play in the United Nations system. It has become so chronic that it has weakened the multilateral focus, cohesiveness and internationalism of the United Nations."* The principles of democratization and good governance so actively advocated and championed by some members must be reflected in the reorganization and decision-making process of the United Nations system.

If we are to get back on track the United Nations must be rejuvenated. It must be reinvigorated to resume its legitimate and central responsibility in addressing the causes of conflict, maintaining peace and security, and promoting the development agenda. But to do this the Organization's processes and decision-making must be transparent and truly democratized. Some of us preach strongly on democracy the world over but yet are unable to practice and enforce these values when it really matters. We are now on the threshold of a new beginning so let us not allow this new opportunity pass.

Mr. President,

At the High Level Summit I said the nucleus for any reforms of the United Nations must begin with tolerance and respect. Only enforcing these values will we come to realize the true meaning of justice, equality and human rights. The diversity of the developing world has presented huge challenges for us all however the strong nations must be able to muster the political will to effect changes. The big players need to transform their philosophy and mindset because these have been the hindrances to creating an equitable system of good governance within multilateral organizations such as the United Nations.

The United Nations remains indispensable to future peace and prosperity. Globalization has brought nations together-we are interlinked and interdependent and this requires global cooperation and governance from all responsible members of the Organization. Understandably, there are vested interests from the powerful but this requires genuine cooperation and goodwill, and the convergence of those interests and the United Nation's role in that regard must remain fundamental to ensure compatibility with the international legal framework.

My government fully supports efforts to reform the United Nations system to ensure a stronger and more effective organization. On this note my delegation wishes to share the views of other delegations on the need to review the membership of the Security Council that will better reflect fair representation of its members without affecting the authority of the Council. A more representative Council will bring openness and transparency, create confidence, and ameliorate understanding and cooperation. A restructuring of the Security Council membership is long overdue. Diversity is essential here.

Mr. President,

I agree that terrorism presents one of today's three main scourges – the others being poverty and disease - on humankind. My Government condemns these callous and inhuman acts of choice that have taken the lives of innocent people. There is no just act of terrorism. We agree that we must work collectively in eliminating this deadly menace from the face of the earth. But the fight against terrorism must be balanced and targeted to ensure resources are equitably channeled into meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

The global economic situation today discriminates against many of the developing economies. Unfair trading practices and imposition of intrusive policies on national economies affect the economy by opening it up to unfavorable conditions that only favour the stronger nations. These negative trends marginalize nations and peoples. Marginalization then breeds and incites resentment, fueling hatred that eventually creates fertile grounds for extremism to grow and flourish.

We have agreed on the establishment of the Peace Building Commission but I hope more work can be done in combating the spread of terrorism, in particular in identifying areas where international support and understanding is required. It is rather insidious injecting so many resources into curing the problem without really preventing it from emerging. The world therefore needs a spirit of Pacifism if real peace is to prevail and to achieve this the United Nations needs moral leadership – leaderships that focus on security and dignity for the human person.

Mr. President,

Post-Monterrey poses extreme challenges for the economic survival and socio-economic stability of many of the small island developing nations like Vanuatu and we urge our development partners to honour their commitments to reach the 0.7% target for ODA. In this context we welcome the commitments from the United States of America through the Millennium Challenge Account. We further welcome commitments by Qatar, the European Union and the People's Republic of China. We also look forward to the fruition of initiatives by France and other countries.

The pivotal role of trade as the engine for economic growth cannot be overemphasized but as many of my colleagues from the small island states and least developed countries have stated market access and special preferential treatment must be provided.

Furthermore, many of us are restricted by stiff and quite immoral conditions that inhibit new financing and development initiatives. We continue to call for trade and investment, and labour export to help grow our economies.

My Government's national development priorities focus on building the productive sector. The Government's Prioritized Action Agenda highlights the policy areas we believe are essential in meeting our development objectives and is the catalyst for Vanuatu's medium to long term strategic planning which emphasizes the need to empower our rural population through infrastructure and capacity building initiatives.

This development policy framework is consistent with achieving the MDG targets, and this development strategy is being refined to take into equal consideration our other international commitments and the Pacific Plan. Our appeal goes to our development partners to assist us in its effective implementation. A fundamental lesson from Vanuatu's reforms is that these reforms have been forced from outside without adapting to national circumstances.

From Vanuatu's perspective externally driven reforms must be buttressed by an equal partnership that respects local tradition, culture and rights of all citizens without disturbing the essential uniting mechanisms of society that have successfully held us together. Vanuatu embraces democracy and concepts of governance/transparency but these must be tailored to suit the traditional system without affecting the relevance and significance of those far-reaching principles.

On the environment we urge our development partners to actively support the effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. The challenges confronting the island states are ominous and I repeat the call for more recognition to be given to accommodate our natural characteristics and vulnerabilities. We also urge states that have not yet done so to act responsibly in ratifying the Kyoto Protocol at the earliest occasion.

On the question of shipment of radioactive materials and hazardous waste safeguards improvements and assurances should not have to await any calamities. Preventative measures must be the course of action to take. The forces of nature coupled with increased terrorism activities are too grave for enhanced safeguards to address. The world would be better off banning these shipments rather than endlessly trying to perfect safeguards approaches that at best only limit such serious risks. Complacency will be our biggest mistake.

Mr. President,

The Charter of the United Nations espouses the principles that continue to guide the Organization's efforts in the process of self-determination. This right must be progressively advanced. The United Nations must be consistent and not lose sight of the fundamental principle of self-determination for those who are working their way out from the shackles of colonial rule. Ruling and sovereign authorities must ensure this process remains on track.

In instances where the United Nations has failed to fully comply with the appropriate legal procedures it would only be proper that these be adequately addressed to allow justice to prevail for the victims. Circumventing the issues only exposes that dark history and poses serious questions on the credibility, relevance and integrity of the United Nations. Only through this open and consistent manner will past failures be redressed and provide much stronger basis for the advancement of the United Nations ideals.

These contradictions are simply a mockery to the fundamental principles on human rights and self-determination clearly enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. How can we call for human rights yet blatantly ignore the pleas of the millions calling out of justice? The United Nations cannot and must not continue to turn a blind eye on its own past failures. It is morally, politically and legally wrong to do so.

The continuing disputes raised over the implementation of UN resolutions are clear examples challenging the integrity and validity of the UN.

We cannot ignore the calls of the West Papuans in their pursuit for justice. We urge the United Nations to act responsibly in revisiting the case of West Papua. However, we are encouraged by the Indonesian Government's efforts in addressing alleged human rights abuses. We also welcome decisions empowering West Papuans to manage their own affairs in collaboration with central Government.

The United Nations must also explore avenues in working towards ending the economic embargo imposed on Cuba. Countless resolutions have been taken with no effect and the Cuban people continue to be marginalized from the multilateral trading system.

This is a critically challenging responsibility, and some may see this as an improbable task — but it must be done with genuine support and goodwill from the relevant authorities and those sovereign states.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I hope the Creator's wisdom will prevail as we continue our journey. Despite all our differences and diversities human security for all is our main goal and this should remain the focus of the United Nations agenda. The cardinal question is will members allow the United Nations to undertake serious reforms in meeting the challenges ahead? And will the Organization be capable of guaranteeing a future of peace and prosperity, reserved not only for the big players, but to be enjoyed by all? Will the United Nations become a juggernaut for the stronger nations? A famous Biblical verse reminds us on the fundamentals of building on rock, instead of sand. The future remains in our hands and the Republic of Vanuatu will play its part.

May our beloved Almighty Creator bless us all