



SOLOMON ISLANDS

STATEMENT BY

**THE HONOURABLE LAURIE CHAN
SOLOMON ISLANDS FOREIGN MINISTER**

AT

**THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE 59TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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Check Against Delivery

Mr. President,

At the outset, allow me on-behalf of the Government and people of Solomon Islands to convey to you our warm and sincere congratulations on your election as president of this session of the United Nations General Assembly. May I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, our colleague the Honorable Julian Hunte, Foreign Minister of Saint Lucia for his able and sterling stewardship in making the 58th session proactive and responsive to the challenges faced by this august Assembly over the last twelve months.

I also wish to express our deep appreciation to the United Nations Secretary General, His Excellency Kofi Annan for his focused leadership in steering the work of the Secretariat through the difficult and sometimes uncharted waters, over the past year.

Mr. President,

Only four years into the new millennium, the complexity of on-going and new challenges has redefined the international system resulting in uncertainty and imbalances in certain parts of the globe. Ensuing debates over multilateralism versus unilateralism in the resolution of crisis situations epitomized the complex nature of events during the past year. This makes the calls by our Secretary General for institutional reforms - (two years ago) - more urgent than ever before.

Solomon Islands -looks forward to the recommendations of the high level panel of eminent persons, in particular, to proposals that will revitalize and give new momentum to the United Nations. These reforms must ensure that the United Nations is flexible and responsive to the needs of our time. To this end, Solomon Islands fully supports the proposed enlargement of the Security Council and reaffirms its call for Japan and Germany, to become permanent members of the Security Council, while the enlargement should affect both the permanent and non-permanent membership categories. It is also our fervent hope and desire, to see that the Secretariat reflects the diversity of its membership. In this regard, whilst it should continue to recruit the best, opportunities within the Secretariat must be availed to small island countries on the basis of in-country rather than externally conducted assessment examinations.

Mr. President,

As you are aware, this year the United Nations family marked the 10th Anniversary of the ethnic genocide in Rwanda. The occasion called on the UN to play a more proactive role toward ensuring that such tragic events are not allowed to ever happen again.

No more than four years ago, my own country Solomon Islands experienced the hardships of a conflict situation when tensions erupted between two of the many ethnic groups in the country. In response, Solomon Islands sought assistance from every possible institution, including the Security Council. In this regard, I am pleased to say that our sub-region –

through the Pacific Islands Forum - under its security mechanism as enshrined in "the Biketawa Declaration" responded to Solomon Islands' nine-one-one (911) call.

This regional security mechanism is in harmony with the spirit of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. The Mission led by our bigger regional neighbour Australia and strongly supported by New Zealand and other Pacific Islands Forum member countries went beyond mere restoration of law and order and security. In a spirit of Pacific cooperation and partnership (between Solomon Islands and Pacific Islands Forum member countries), a long-term approach of strengthening the country's state institutions was set in place, thus allowing the processes of healing, reconstruction, rehabilitation and nation building to continue the course of unifying Solomon Islands' less than half a million (but diversified) people who speak some eighty different local languages.

The success of the Regional Assistance to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in promptly stabilizing the country within a period of three months - collecting some 3,700 weapons without a shot being fired - presents a fine example of the significance of regional co-operation to resolve conflict situations. On this note, I wish to pay tribute to all our Pacific neighbors, UNDP, Human Rights Commission, WHO, European Union, the Republic of China (on Taiwan), Japan, United Kingdom, International Red Cross and the civil society – who have assisted and are continuing to assist in the process of our country's on-going recovery and rehabilitation.

I must also underscore my belief and conviction, that in order for peace to be achieved it must be desired, and, importantly, might I add, a workable mechanism must be there to ensure its realization and sustenance. In this regard, my Government is fully convinced that the positive results achieved by our partnership with RAMSI could be sustained through our recently adopted National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Strategy (NERRDP) which provides a blue print for an integrated process of development and nation building for the common good of all our people.

I am further convinced, that the Pacific Plan - recently adopted by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in Apia, Samoa - represents a regional road-map for cooperation that could compliment national efforts aimed at building an improved and secure livelihood for the diverse peoples of the region. Through its creation of stronger and deeper links between countries in the region and sharing of resources, including governance and aligning of policies, the Pacific Plan could assist our countries address challenges and issues, which sovereign member states may lack the ability and capacity to address individually as a result of our countries' smallness and inherent limitations caused by economies of scale.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands notes the positive developments that have taken place in the peace process on Bougainville. We recognize the important role played by the United Nations in the peace process there, and, would urge its continuing involvement to see the process through. Solomon Islands on its part, has signed a number of bilateral Agreements with Papua New Guinea, which will support the good work that has already been undertaken toward peace.

Mr. President,

On the issue of Palestine, my delegation subscribes to the view that resolution of the Middle East conflict can only be possible through negotiations. It is in this spirit, that we call upon all parties to abide by the quartet's road-map for peace, and, urge a halt to all acts of aggression.

Turning to the global fight against terrorism, the recent terrorist attacks especially in Iraq, Indonesia, and the Beslan School in Southern Russia manifests the continuing menace and evil of terrorism at large. We have witnessed many innocent lives, including children and women, being lost due to these senseless terror attacks. My delegation offers its deepest condolences to those who have lost loved ones during these uncondonable incidents. Solomon Islands condemn in the strongest possible terms such acts of terror and fully support international efforts to combat this scourge. In this regard, I also wish to join others .in calling on the global community to support small states to build their national capacities toward ongoing efforts aimed at combating transnational crimes such as arms smuggling, drug trafficking, people smuggling, money laundering, and terrorism.

Mr. President,

The Charter of the United Nations promotes the economic and social progress of member states especially those facing special developmental problems. For a country recovering from a post-conflict situation, Solomon Islands considers international frameworks such as the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs, and, the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) as vehicles for enhancing peace and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Solomon Islands is a (SIDS) and an (LDC), where its development challenges are multifacet in nature. Unfortunately, the level of international cooperation envisaged for the programmes, either have not materialized or have been minimal. Despite this, my government is undertaking reforms that include the appointment of a National Focal Point for the Brussels Programme of Action. Hence, we are hopeful that with better coordination Solomon Islands can take full advantage of and maximize all opportunities the programme has to offer.

The issue of debt servicing continues to present challenges albeit obstacles to the development programmes of many poor developing states. Debt burdens continue to divert attention in national budgets away from the development of necessary infrastructures and the delivery of basic and essential social services. Solomon Islands therefore calls on the international community give greater attention to the issue of debts.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands attach much importance to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and these have been mainstreamed into our National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan (NERRDP). While we will use the 2005 high level event mentioned in the Secretary General's 2004 Report on the Implementation of the MDGs to take stock of our progress, we are confident that the NERRDP can serve as a road-map for the medium to long-term implementation of our commitments. The NERRDP provides a useful framework within which important issues such as economic and institutional reforms, good

governance, upholding of democracy and its values of freedom, and, respect for the basic principles of human rights can be nurtured and harnessed for the betterment and improvement of the livelihood of our peoples and society, including the sustenance of peace in our country.

Solomon Islands would like to pay closer attention to the emerging health threats it faces. In particular, Malaria remains the predominant cause of death of amongst children in Solomon Islands. The lack of data on HIV/AIDS presents a threat to the country and has the potential of having a devastating impact on its economy and social structure. With the support of the WHO, Aids Global Fund and Japan, we are determined to put in place appropriate and preventive actions.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands, which, is geographically scattered across some 1800 kilometers, comprising of almost a thousand of small islands and atolls, has an agriculture-based economy that is dependant on the environment. Sustainable management of resources is essential to guaranteeing the security of our future generation.

The recent hurricanes that hit the Southern United States, Bahamas, Grenada, Haiti, and Jamaica in the Caribbean over the past few days and cyclone Hieta which devastated Niue, flooding in Fiji and continuous heavy rains in Solomon Islands all bring home the stark reality of our worlds vulnerability to natural disasters. Solomon Islands understands the great challenges and pain which smaller island developing states face in dealing with the magnitude and impact of such disasters and the challenges of recovering. To this end, we share our condolences and sympathy for the loss of lives and properties caused by the recent cyclones in Grenada and Haiti and would urge the international community to assist in relief efforts to those that are affected.

Generally, Solomon Islands strongly feels that more could be done by the international community toward safeguarding our environment. Hence, we acknowledge the partnership of the Global Fund in assisting the environmental programmes globally, and would encourage that the focus of further assistance should extend to other sectors of sustainable development such as energy, water and sanitation.

My delegation has closely followed the review of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) and the development of a G77 Strategy paper. Whilst negotiations are still on-going, Solomon Islands as a member of AOSIS acknowledges that the strategy paper strengthens the BPOA and places it as an action oriented programme we can all identify with. We are hopeful the Mauritius meeting will revitalize our efforts towards protecting our environment and enhancing sustainable development, including new and emerging issues which have been identified by SIDS.

Mr. President

Trade remains a significant source of economic growth and development for many developing states. Regionally, Pacific Island countries have gradually began the process of regional integration. South-South trade cooperation amongst the Forum Island Countries

has culminated in the entry into force of the Pacific Islands Trade Agreement (PICTA) last year, and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Trade Agreement is being reviewed with the view to further broadening its scope and markets ten years since its inception. Intra-regionally, the Pacific members of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States are negotiating an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union under the aegis of the Cotonou Convention. These developments manifest the continuing preparation by small island developing economies in the Pacific Islands Forum region for their gradual adaptation into the broader process of globalization of the world economy.

Solomon Islands notes that the recent UNCTAD XI convened mid this year in Sao Paulo, has built confidence and consensus on the ongoing multilateral trade negotiations. Solomon Islands supports the process and urges a more participatory and inclusive process which ensures that no one is left behind, especially the small and vulnerable island developing economies and least developed countries. We are mindful that the inherent structural problems of geographical size, isolation from markets, and constraints caused by lack of supply-side capacities and economies of scale must be recognized, especially for SIDS like Solomon Islands. As a member of the WTO, we however, are pleased that the Doha Rounds of multilateral trade negotiations embraces a development dimension, in particular the recognition of the principle of "special and differential treatment" (S&DT) into its work programme on small (island) developing economies.

Mr. President,

One of the principles of the United Nations charter is to open membership to all states that accept its Charter's obligations. The Republic of China on Taiwan has registered its interest to be part of the United Nations family. Solomon Islands once again calls for the Republic of China to become a full member of the United Nations. Solomon Islands enjoys a warm and cordial relation with the Republic of China and is mindful of the threats facing the world today. Threats such as SARS are transnational and transboundary in nature and require the cooperation and engagement of all countries of the world. To deny one country the right to participate weakens any global mechanisms and questions the security of all.

Mr. President,

The Republic of China on Taiwan is a democratic and vibrant economy that is ranked globally and a country that has the third largest foreign exchange reserves. Its development experience offers important lessons in the need to embrace freedom; upholding respect for the basic principles of human rights, respect for freedom of press and uninhibited functioning of democratic institutions. The capability and capacity of the Republic of China for contributing towards the strengthening of the United Nations should be seriously considered, especially at a time when this august body could do with all the help it could receive.

Solomon Islands calls upon this body to find a process that will allow the Republic of China on Taiwan to be a full and equal member of the United Nations. Within the Pacific Islands Forum process we have a mechanism that engages both Chinas in our dialogue process and we have continued to benefit from such a rich interaction.

Mr. President,

To conclude, I would like to call upon this august body to get real and confront the increasingly varied and complex challenges we face today. The purpose and role of the United Nations is ultimately to create a peaceful, just and prosperous world that offers hope to all. This requires that the organization is made flexible, innovative and responsive to the ever-changing global demands and hence, the onus is upon us to make bold and tough decisions that would breathe new life into our organization.

I thank you, Mr. President.