

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



**PAPUA NEW GUINEA STATEMENT**

**TO THE**

**61<sup>ST</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

BY

GRAND CHIEF RT. HON. SIR MICHAEL T. SOMARE, GOL, GCMG, CH, CF, KStJ

Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea

New York, New York  
20 September 2006

Madam President,

I wish to convey Papua New Guinea's congratulations on your election as President of the 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly. I would like to assure you of my country's full cooperation during your Presidency.

We compliment your predecessor, His Excellency Jan Eliasson, for his stewardship of our work during his tenure. We also congratulate him on his appointment as Sweden's Foreign Minister and wish him well.

Madam President.

On 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1975, twenty-four days after Papua New Guinea attained political Independence, I stood at this very podium and addressed this Assembly with a lot of hope and expectations.

Like many developing countries, coming out of the colonial yoke. Papua New Guinea committed itself to the principles and purposes of the United Nations. I said:

"I state our fundamental commitment to the maintenance of peace throughout our world and our undertaking to uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations organization."

We believed that the UN was the most appropriate body to achieve our aspirations of meaningful economic development, respect for our sovereignty and the attainment of a peaceful and secure world.

The harsh reality today is that these aspirations remain largely unfulfilled for many of us. Our record will indicate lost opportunities to realize the promise of a better world.

Our world today is marked by an inequitable global trading order and a hostile security environment. Wanton globalization and unfettered trade liberalization are affecting many of us in ways that are detrimental to the livelihoods of our people.

Unilateral actions by the big and powerful to resolve disputes are no longer incidental but the order of the day.

We note the increasing incidence of human atrocities, genocides, wars, poverty, terrorism, emergence of HIV/AIDS and increase in malaria and TB.

Our streets and communities are littered with small arms and light weapons. Drug and human smuggling and other illegal activities are on the rise. Environmental degradation and climate change continue unabated.

We must confront these issues urgently.

To complement efforts in other fora, Papua New Guinea with other countries of the Pacific Region have agreed to pool our limited resources under the Pacific Plan to address these issues.

Madam President,

Papua New Guinea continues to believe that the UN offers the best hope for its member States to address these ongoing concerns and other emerging challenges facing humanity today.

In this regard, my country supports the ongoing UN reform initiatives that seek to make its operations more effective and responsive. We must ensure that its collective security mandates and functions, and its various organs, are strengthened and not weakened.

We are pleased to note the establishment of the Human Rights Council and Peacebuilding Commission.

Papua New Guinea believes in a revitalized General Assembly whose role and authority to reflect its broad membership.

We must press on with the reforms of the Security Council with courage and boldness so that they reflect the political and economic realities of today. An expanded Security Council must be more democratic and transparent. Its membership must include developing countries, while maintaining geographic balance and representation.

Madam President,

Global trade today is characterized more by its unfair practices, by those already holding decided advantages, than by the opportunities it offers developing countries like Papua New Guinea.

Our efforts to develop a more equitable trading order are hampered by the reluctance of our developed partners to open their economies and engage in genuine development discussions. Adding insult to injury, many of our developed partners have yet to meet the targets they agreed to in respect of Official Development Assistance.

While we appreciate the efforts of some of our developed partners to ease the burden of debt under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative, we are disappointed that many of them have not shown the same leadership on the Doha Development Round, leading to its collapse.

We are calling for developing countries to join us in framing a new and true development round. We must exercise leadership, rather than passively allowing others to chart our future.

Despite these difficulties, Papua New Guinea is pursuing economic development programmes that are based on an export driven economic growth strategy. At the heart of this policy objective is the focus on rural development.

We have developed a five-year Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS) and aligned it with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Achieving the MDGs by 2015 is a tremendous challenge for Papua New Guinea but we have taken the first steps in providing budget funding for its implementation.

We call upon the support of the United Nations system and other genuine development partners to meet these vital commitments.

Madam President,

As a result of better policy coordination, stricter implementation of structural reform, as well as prudent financial and economic management, Papua New Guinea has attained macroeconomic and fiscal stability. Our economy is growing, interest rates have fallen, and the exchange rate has been stabilized. Our foreign exchange reserves are at an all time high.

We are using these gains to re-invest in productive sectors of our economy and on delivering services to our people.

Development partners must play a supportive role to sustain these gains. This can be done through fair trade opportunities, equitable markets, increased foreign investment, transfer of technology, capacity-building and providing quality overseas development assistance.

Madam President,

Let me now turn to an issue which my country feels strongly about – that of Climate Change and Sea Level Rise.

For us, this is not academic, it is reality!

Small islands and low-lying atolls in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Region are being submerged by rising sea levels. As I speak, my own people are being resettled to higher ground!

Papua New Guinea's strong position on the environment is drawn from the Preamble of our National Constitution. It states:

*We declare our fourth goal to be for Papua New Guinea's natural resources and environment to be conserved and used for the collective benefit of us all, and be replenished for the benefit of future generations.'*

This constitutional imperative underpins my country's whole approach to sustainable development objectives, including those contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Mauritius Strategy.

Madam President,

Environmental degradation is occurring at a frightening pace. Scientific studies suggest that climate change is causing increasing incidences of environmental catastrophes, such as hurricanes, tsunamis, landslides and flashfloods.

Our planet is in distress!

As co-inhabitants of this world, we all must equally share the responsibility to address the root causes of this problem.

We urge the industrialized countries to reduce their green house gas emissions. We call upon those that have not done so, to accede to and ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

Papua New Guinea is prepared to play its part to protect and conserve the world's tropical rainforest with the aim of stabilizing the earth's climate.

The findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggest that an estimated 20-25% of annual global emissions were generated through land use change, primarily from the degradation of forest resources. In this context, it is crucial for us to protect the tropical rainforests through sustainable and fair market-based incentives.

Madam President.

The dilemma is this, for some of us the forestry sector is a major revenue earner - provider of much needed employment, facilitator of important infrastructure projects and catalyst for the provision of basic services in the rural areas.

The present incentives offered by international markets for agriculture, forestry and emissions reductions are inadequate. These are perverse incentives from the standpoint of the environment.

Papua New Guinea, along with Costa Rica, has formed a new Coalition for Rainforest Nations that includes many other countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific. Together, we are pursuing an initiative to access the global carbon markets to support efforts to reduce rates of deforestation.

Simply put, this approach seeks to recognize the contribution of resource owners for conserving and protecting rainforests for the benefit of mankind.

We invite more nations to join our efforts to create new markets and reform outmoded market and regulatory mechanisms. This is necessary if we are to contribute more effectively towards environmental sustainability, economic development, climate stability and poverty reduction.

Madam President,

The Initiative on Deforestation is part of a broader agenda being pursued by my Government to implement the MDG on Environmental Sustainability.

We are convinced that by implementing MDG 7, we will harness our ability to achieve environmentally and socially sustainable economic growth.

Many times, developing countries are drawn into the false promise of international investment. Often, we find our natural resources exploited leaving us with neither the resource nor the money!

We will not allow this to continue!

We want wealth from our natural resources to remain within our nations to fuel our economic growth.

Madam President,

The threat of HIV/AIDS is real in many of our countries and has serious implications on social and economic development.

In Papua New Guinea, my Government has passed HIV/AIDS Legislation underpinned by a comprehensive HIV/AIDS policy framework. To ensure close scrutiny, I have vested my Department with the responsibility of overseeing implementation. In addition, I have appointed a specific Minister to assist me provide political leadership on this issue.

But our experience suggests that national action alone is not enough. It requires a concerted global response. This is a war that must be waged on all fronts and by all countries.

We thank the efforts of the UN and its related agencies to address this issue. We also applaud the bold leadership of former US President, Mr. Bill Clinton and Mr. Bill Gates in this regard.

Madam President,

Of equal importance are the battles against malaria, TB, and other preventable diseases. While we have, as a global community, focused on HIV/AIDS and bird flu, this has diluted our attention on malaria which remains the biggest killer disease in Papua New Guinea.

I call upon development partners to support Papua New Guinea and other countries in maintaining perspective on these challenges.

Madam President,

Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is a serious threat to international peace and security. It must be condemned irrespective of who perpetrates it. All countries and peoples of the world have a serious responsibility to stand united and fight this evil.

However, Papua New Guinea is deeply concerned by the erosion of the international community's moral authority to address this issue. It is unhelpful to our credibility if certain of our members choose to address this issue in flagrant violation of international norms and universally agreed conventions.

Like other cross border challenges, member States will require the support of the UN and development partners with capacity building and other necessary resources to effectively fight global terrorism.

Madam President.

The conflict in the Middle East, despite various UN Resolutions remains unresolved. Papua New Guinea appeals to all parties to the conflict, including those powers that have the capacity to influence a positive outcome, to make the hard concessions necessary for a peaceful resolution to this long standing issue.

The recent confrontation in Lebanon resulted in loss of innocent lives and massive destruction to infrastructure.

Papua New Guinea appeals for restraint by all parties and urges that full use be made of the dispute settlement procedures of the UN.

Comprehensive and lasting solutions must be found to the issues that led to the conflict. The neighboring countries and the international community as a whole can make positive contributions by shepherding a process that allows for genuine dialogue to take place.

We commend the UN Interim Force (UNIFIL) and European countries, such as France, Italy, Germany and others that are contributing troops to maintain the ceasefire.

Madam President,

Papua New Guinea is extremely concerned about the proliferation, among states, of nuclear, chemical, biological, and other weapons of mass destruction. We continue to maintain that there is no real justification for the retention and further development of these instruments of war.

We call upon all countries to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and other related treaties to reduce the threat to international peace and security by weapons of mass destruction. Sadly, we were reminded by the Secretary General yesterday of the apathy that surrounds actions on non-proliferation and disarmament.

Madam President,

The Work of the UN Committee on Decolonization remains unfinished. We still have 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories, some in the Pacific, that are yet to exercise their rights to self-determination.

The referendum in Tokelau demonstrated a true spirit of cooperation between Tokelau and New Zealand. We congratulate both Governments and assure the people of Tokelau of our respect for their decision to remain in free association with New Zealand.

Madam President,

Let me conclude by saying that the World has changed in ways that not only provides opportunities but also offers more complex challenges for members of the UN.

The emergence of a trend over the years to try and resolve these challenges outside of the principles and framework prescribed by the UN has resulted in a world worse than what the founders of our organization envisaged.

We must renew our commitment and faith in the UN and seek to reform it in ways that is reflective of the realities of today.

At this juncture, let me take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to the outgoing Secretary General Kofi Annan for his outstanding contributions to the UN and the world. We wish him well.

As this is likely to be my last General Assembly, let me take this opportunity to thank all those that have contributed, in one way or another, in support of Papua New Guinea since independence.

When I brought my nation to take its seat thirty-one years ago in this Assembly, I said then and wish to reaffirm today that within the limits of our resources, Papua New Guinea will play an active and positive role in the United Nations.

Thank you, Madam President.