

**United Nations General Assembly-SIXTY-SECOND SESSION**

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Statement by

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**Vanuatu** *PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS*

**Mr. President**  
**Mr. Secretary General**  
**Excellencies**  
**Distinguished Delegates**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I bring to this august Assembly warm greeting from the people of Vanuatu.

Let me begin by joining others in extending to you Mr. President our felicitations. You take up this high position at a time when the United Nations is confronted by some enormous challenges. The uncertainty shrouding the horizon will severely test our common resolve to address global problems. The escalating tension and animosity circulating in our midst are an affront to the principles and values of this Organization and ultimately challenge international order. What the world needs right now is the hand of friendship and rebuilding trust and faith among and between members. The resounding war of words must not be treated with any complacency.

As one of the smallest members of the UN family of nations, Vanuatu reaffirms its commitment to building global peace and security. We will also continue to participate in United Nations peace-keeping missions.

May I also take this opportunity to echo the commemorations on the abolishment of slavery some 200 years ago in the Diasporas. My country also suffered tremendously from those horrendous acts executed by the great champions of deception and iniquity who were responsible for enslaving thousands of men, women and children and shipping them under malicious torture and inhumane conditions to foreign shores. The days of black-birding are long gone but the bitter memories and injurious social consequences are entrenched in the history of my country and of our people.

I honour all the descendants for their courage and determination to live on. They deserve a special place in the countries to which their forefathers were forced to live. There also remains a huge debt for countries that suffered large human losses from those heinous crimes against humanity. We cannot exonerate the past but we can all hope for a just and better future.

All countries must work together in preventing other insidious and contemporary forms of slavery that have established themselves in our societies.

Today is an important day in history for the Government and the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to whom I congratulate for the 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their independence.

**Mr. President,**

I welcome and support the decision to make climate change the theme for this year's session of the General Assembly. In the same vein my Government highly commends the Secretary General for convening the high level meeting last week that should be an important catalyst for the Bali conference later this year.

Climate change including sea level rise is a critical concern for all of us. Its effects on agriculture production, water quality and infrastructure development is worrying. It is a reality that if it is not addressed urgently, will have irreversible effects on the agriculture and tourism sectors which constitute the core pillars of development of many of our island economies.

At this point we take this opportunity to recognise and commend the work done under the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to address the effects of climate change and promote mitigation and adaptation strategies. But the point must be made that rapid reduction of Green House Gases (GHG) emissions by all major emitters must be ensured within the next 10-15 years. Unlike terrorism, climate change has a universal target, working against all development initiatives and efforts. For many small island states and least developed countries (LDCs) meeting the challenges of climate change will only add additional stress to their financial, human and institutional capacities

**Mr. President,**

We have followed with great interest the recent debate about the criteria and rules that the UN uses to decide whether a country should be or not be taken out of the UN list of Least Developed Countries (LDCs). You will easily understand the reason why we paid much attention to this issue: we ourselves might be affected by this difficult question in the foreseeable future.

I would like to make the following remarks to contribute to this debate. Graduation from LDC status implies losing concessionary treatment. It is therefore a serious decision. Graduation is desirable and fair if, and only if, it is the culminating point of a process of structural progress over time. That is to say, progress based on irreversible improvements in the structure of the economy, or in the fundamental factors of development. It is only fair and logical, therefore, that the criteria that will be used as a basis to recognize a graduating country be structural criteria.

The UN currently uses three criteria to identify graduation cases, and admittedly, only two of these three are structural in nature. One relates to human capital -- essentially health and education, the other one to economic vulnerability. The proponents of a reform of the graduation rule rightly postulate that these two

criteria together should form the basis for identifying a graduating country. In other words, no country should be forced to lose LDC status unless it has risen above the graduation thresholds relevant to both of these criteria. Instead of that, the present graduation rule allows the UN to declare a country ready for graduation even if only one of these two paramount thresholds has been met. We consider this current practice, **Mr. President**, as a conceptual flaw with serious implications, and we believe this anomaly could be easily remedied.

My Government is of the view that our Assembly should invite the Economic and Social Council to revisit the graduation rule in the light of the ongoing debate, and that the experts who advise the Council should be mandated to explore a reform of the rule with a view to making human assets and economic vulnerability paramount, or *sine qua non*, criteria. Such a reform would do justice to countries that have not achieved the implied structural progress. The Government of Vanuatu will do its utmost to cooperate with relevant UN bodies and other like-minded nations and friends in forging a consensus on this matter. I am convinced that this consensus implicitly exists and only needs to be formalized.

Experts and members of the Committee on Development Policy should also be encouraged to undertake in-country consultations and to experience first hand the development conditions of countries that are on the verge of graduation. We are talking about the livelihoods of peoples that may be seriously affected by decisions that are made at the United Nations.

**Mr. President,**

We must continue to work together in shaping the architecture of the UN that is more resourceful and applicable to our times, and to the people whom we all represent.

I commend the UN for increasing its presence in the Pacific region with its country-based offices. We will encourage more de-centralization of functions to the regional offices that are better suited to responding to the needs of its members.

The conflagration of the situation in the Middle East is a grave concern to all peace loving members of the UN, and we earnestly pray and hope for an early end to the conflict and the suffering of all innocent children, women and men. Both Israel and Palestine have the right to live in peaceful co-existence side by side as independent and sovereign states. The international community must be realistic about the future. Let us allow justice, security and long lasting peace to prevail for both the Israeli people and the Palestinians.

My Government highly welcomes the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is our hope that the Declaration will provide a framework

to address the grievances of indigenous peoples who remain suppressed, alienated and disadvantaged in the land of their forefathers. We can only hope that this instrument will provide an enabling mechanism to allow indigenous peoples the freedom to fully participate without fear or reprisals in the affairs and development of their country. It should also restore dignity to those who have remained second class citizens in the land of their fathers. We cannot turn back the clock but we can create a better future for them.

The Charter of the United Nations espouses the principles that continue to guide the Organization's efforts in the process of self-determination. This manifestation calls for recognition and respect of the fundamental and inalienable rights of people and territories still under colonial rule to determine their future. We cannot champion democracy if a blind eye is being turned to those who have been crying for freedom for many years. It is the moral responsibility of this Organization to act with diligence and work towards promoting better conditions in larger freedom.

Finally, **Mr. President**, I would like to acknowledge the support of Vanuatu's major development partners, in particular Australia, New Zealand, France, Japan, the People's Republic of China, the United States of America and the European Union. I also extend my Government's gratitude to India, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Turkey and various United Nations agencies for their ongoing contributions to the development of Vanuatu.

In conclusion, the world we live in today can only become a better place if all countries- big and small, powerful and weak- recognize, understand, value and respect each other as equals. The pride of the human person is the essence in building equality between all persons. Respect also means accepting national sovereignty of each individual country, and to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of any state. If we are to work towards constructing a future that will provide security, peace, hope and prosperity for all our future generations these are important values that must be upheld at all times.

May God Bless the United Nations  
May God Bless Every Nation  
May God Bless All Our Peoples

I thank you.