



SOLOMON ISLANDS

STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE
63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

26TH SEPTEMBER 2008, NEW YORK

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Mr. President, Distinguished Heads of States and Governments, Your Excellency Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon, Ladies and Gentlemen.

At the outset, allow me to offer Solomon Islands warm and sincere congratulations on your election as President of the sixty-third United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that with your vast experience and able leadership you will guide this Session to a fruitful outcome. You can be rest assured of Solomon Islands unwavering support and cooperation during your tenure in office.

Through you, I acknowledge the good work of your predecessor Dr Srgian Kerim, who has shown great leadership on issues of global concern, in particular on Climate Change, Financing for Development, United Nations reforms, and the Millennium Development Goals. My delegation is pleased to see you take such issues head on, presiding over the High level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals as we arrive at the midpoint of our time bound commitments. Unfortunately many countries including my own are off track in terms of achieving the Goals.

My delegation also wish to join others in conveying its gratitude and appreciation to our Secretary General, His Excellency Ban Ki Moon who worked tirelessly and diligently to protect and preserve the principles and purpose of the UN Charter, during his very first year in office. We wish him well as he carry on the good work he has began in particular his regular briefings with the membership, making his office accountable and transparent in carrying out its activities.

Mr. President,

This year our multilateral institution is being revisited by history and challenged by the changing international system. Unilateralism and changing postures by big powers is creating a new global order. New fronts are created in Asia, the Pacific, and Eastern Europe coupled with the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and in parts of Africa. Above all, the arms race is no longer a threat, but a reality.

The structural imbalance of the international financial architecture has exposed the inability of the major developed markets to respond to the volatility of the international financial system resulting in state interventions. The world economy is looking more precarious and unequal. For small open economies the results are catastrophic. Hence, we must be cautious in using the free market approach and recognize its limitation.

Mr. President,

The increasing cost of food and energy is causing macroeconomic instability throughout the world today. This speaks of the complexity and weakness of the international system. It reflects the uneven distribution of wealth that continues to fail the developing countries, generating global instability across the world. This can only be corrected by having an open rule based, non discriminatory and equitable trading system. Furthermore, market speculation and agricultural subsidies continue to pose major risks to the global economy. The failure of the recent Doha

Rounds is of concern to my delegation, as it further marginalizes the small economies from globalization. The issue of food crisis now deserves our immediate and most serious consideration at this session.

My delegation deeply regrets that the recently discussed UN Food Crisis Comprehensive Programmed of Action is not matched with the required resources. Countries will therefore need to look at their own resources for solutions. To this end, Solomon Islands is working on short, medium and long term solutions. The population is encouraged to eat locally produced food, and undertake community based rice growing programmes. Solomon Islands hopes to further strengthen its relations with rice growing countries. My Government commends the Republic of China on Taiwan for supporting Solomon Islands rice growing programmes.

Dependency on imported fossil fuel and food is reversing MDG gains, painstakingly achieved over the last decades. Solomon Islands is no exception. Thus, cleaner energy to power the world economy is the way forward. In this connection, we look to both the North and South for solutions. I wish to thank the Republic of China on Taiwan, Turkey, Italy and Austria for coming forward with community based renewable energy programmes. Such cooperation preserves the indispensable character of our noble institution and translates into action Solomon Islands Rural Electrification Policy of bringing affordable electricity to 80% of its population in the rural areas. We are also exploring bulk purchasing arrangements with Venezuela using the models of Petro Carribe arrangement. We hope this will provide Solomon Islands with some breathing space, having spent a third of our national budget on fuel alone.

Mr. President,

Climate change and natural disaster continue to create anxiety and cast a dark cloud over the future and survival of humanity in particular the fifty million people of small islands developing states. The magnitude of Climate Change has outgrown the existing capacity of the United Nations system. Our multilateral institution is heavy on providing technical support and analytical data and less on the ground activities. Regional and sub regional Intergovernmental organizations are also going in the same direction, leaving countries to fend for themselves. Solomon Islands hopes the Small Islands Developing States Unit within the UN will be strengthened to effectively coordinate the implementation of the special needs of Small Islands Developing States.

Today within Solomon Islands, there is already a steady migratory pattern of movements of indigenous populations from their ancestral low islands to larger islands as sea levels rises. This has placed much stress on the diverse fragile land tenure systems causing frictions between ethnic groups. Climate Change for Solomon Islands is a sustainable development; security and poverty issue - all are inter linked. It is about preserving our forests, reforestation programme, and providing people with environment friendly opportunities for the resources owners in our rural areas.

On this note, Solomon Islands is embarking on an ambitious programme of scaling down logging, which is the country's major export income earner. My Government has earmarked

funds for community based reforestation and reforestation programmes. It is hoped over time agriculture, tourism and fisheries industries will fill in the forestry vacuum within the country's economy and sustainable harvest of forest will become the norm.

Mr. President,

The increased frequency and magnitude of natural disasters remind us, that no country will be spared. Solomon Islands is still recovering from last year's tsunami. We feel the pain and suffering of the Governments and peoples of Myanmar and the People's Republic of China, hit by Cyclone Nargis and the earthquake respectively. More recently the three hurricanes that battered our fellow islanders in the Caribbean speak of our common vulnerability to natural disasters. My delegation hopes that a more committed outcome will emerge from the Bali Action Plan. Solomon Islands further notes with concern the proliferation of climate change financial mechanisms outside the multilateral process. This will once again disadvantage the most vulnerable countries- SIDS and LDCs. Climate Change for us requires new and additional resources. Accessibility to the Adaptation Fund, Mitigation, and Technology Transfer is at the heart of the solutions to climate change challenges. In this light, Solomon Islands fully associate itself with the Alliance of Small Islands Declaration on the issue, as well the recently adopted Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Niue Declaration on Climate Change. We further call on the United Nations membership to support the resolution on "Climate Change and Security".

Mr. President,

On the issue of terrorism, Solomon Islands is concerned about the lack of progress on the comprehensive terrorism convention. The absence of a legal definition of terrorism is creating gaps in our global fight against terror. We continue to condemn terrorism in whatever form and manifestation. We urge the international community to weed the evils that breed terrorism. Our fight against terrorism must be responsible and humane.

Mr. President,

I take this opportunity to sincerely congratulate the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands commonly referred to as RAMSI. The Government and people of Solomon Islands value its partnership with the Regional Mission and I thank all participating Pacific Islands Forum Countries for their ongoing contribution and commitment. RAMSI continues to enjoy popular support as it provides a unique opportunity and an enabling environment to rebuild Solomon Islands. Since assuming office nine months ago, my Government, the Coalition for National Unity and Rural Advancement has defined its relationship with RAMSI and the Pacific Islands Forum through consultation and dialogue. This is done through regional and national processes.

Solomon Islands and RAMSI will soon commence negotiations on a proposed SIG-RAMSI Partnership Framework. The Framework will form the basis of future cooperation. The guiding principles of the framework should be people centered, nationally owned and driven and aligned to Government priorities and policies. This should guarantee its sustainability and long term success.

Meanwhile, our Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee has been mandated by our National Parliament to review RAMSI. That Committee is expected to report its findings to Parliament next year.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands is establishing a "Truth and Reconciliation Commission", modeled on South Africa's experience, to address people's traumatic experience during the three years of ethnic conflict. It is our hope that the process will rebuild confidence, trust and unity amongst the diverse cultural communities in Solomon Islands.

Mr. President,

More than 80% of the country's resources and land are traditionally owned. Last month Solomon Islands National Parliament passed "A Secure Transaction- Bill" that make traditional assets bankable to allow more investment occurring in the informal sector. Solomon Islands is also considering putting in place a "Political Parties Integrity Bill" to instill national stability and nurture its growing democracy.

On the issue of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, as a Small Islands Developing State with a Least Developed Country status, much of our achievements rests on partnership with all stakeholders at all levels. Solomon Islands is one of the highest foreign aid recipient countries. This unfortunately has over stretched and crowded our national policy space in strengthening and maintaining good relations with all donors. Meanwhile, the Government welcomes new approaches by non-traditional donors of providing direct assistance using existing national institutional frameworks. This strengthens governance and democracy as provided for under the Paris Declaration, allowing the state to increase its legitimacy to reach out to its population more meaningfully.

My delegation remains concerned that much of the debate on the MDGs is centered on social commitments from health to gender and from HIV/Aids to education. Economic issues are not given any attention, placing countries with huge youth and unemployed population in an awkward and fragile situation. We consider such a gap as a time bomb that will explode and trigger more instability in the near future if it remains unaddressed. Educating our youth is the way forward. We are therefore grateful to those countries that continue to train our young people. This year a new partner, Cuba is offering medical training opportunities for more than sixty students. Solomon Islands will make every effort to utilize these training opportunities.

Within my sub region of the Pacific, the Melanesian Spearhead Group after some twenty years of informal existence has established a Secretariat located in Vanuatu. This should further strengthen relations amongst the countries and its wider neighbours, as we continue to address our collective development aspirations.

Mr. President,

We have only eight months left to register our continental shelf as required by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In this regard, we are working diligently on the matter having just accessed the DOALOS Trust Fund four months ago. Solomon Islands welcome the recent decision by the 18th Conference of the State Parties of UNCLOS in recognizing the technical and resources constraints of many developing countries to meet the required timeframe of May 2009. We are determined to keep working on this very important issue that will redefine our territorial waters.

Mr. President,

On sustainable development issues, hailing from the world's largest ocean, countries of the Pacific have relied on the Ocean for their livelihood and economic sustenance. This has prompted certain countries of the Pacific including Solomon Islands to initiate sustainable management arrangements to protect our juvenile tuna stocks by closing pockets of high seas adjacent to our respective Exclusive Economic Zone.

Mr. President,

The review of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus scheduled for late this year should promote global growth and better international development support especially for the Least Developed Countries who remain on the periphery of the international system. Solomon Islands hopes the review will also reinvigorate the operations and governance of the Bretton Woods Institutions, to make them more responsive to the changing character of the international financial system and become an effective part of the multilateral system.

As one of the Least Developed Countries, Solomon Islands looks forward to the fourth UN Conference on LDCs scheduled for 2010. It provides an opportunity to address the special challenges of least developed countries. My delegation joins other LDCs in looking to you for leadership to work on the modalities of the conference during this session.

Mr. President,

On the issue of democratization of the United Nations, Solomon Islands believe our organization must play a prominent role in influencing and shaping the dynamics of international system. This can only be achieved by increasing the legitimacy of our premier organization through wider participation of its membership. This means strengthening of the General Assembly is crucial. Ensuring the UN Secretariat is representative of its membership is a must. We also call for a genuine attempt by the Secretariat to undertake a universal recruitment drive in particular to those that remain underrepresented in the organization. This could be achieved through annual UN country competitive recruitment exams. Solomon Islands welcomes the recent recruitment exams held in Honiara and would like to see this done annually.

On the issue of system wide coherence, Solomon Islands notes the establishment of the joint

office arrangement between UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF five month ago. Having one of the largest UNDP country programme in the sub region of the Pacific, we note with concern that more than 70%-80% of the programmes are spent on consultancy, making country-United Nations relations a distant one. In this regard my delegation welcomes the appointment of an in country UNDP Deputy Resident Representative. However, we renew our call for a fully fledged UNDP Country Resident Representative.

Mr. President,

Security Council reform continues to elude the organization. It is like a process that never started and takes the longest to finish. We have over the years identified elements for negotiations, yet remain reluctant to move into intergovernmental negotiations. I am confident under your leadership you will plough deep in facilitating an intergovernmental process on Security Council reform by February 2009. In this connection Solomon Islands reiterates its support for Japan, Brazil and India as Permanent Members in an enlarged Security Council.

Mr. President,

On the issue of Taiwan, Solomon Islands congratulate the Government and People of Taiwan for a successful free and fair election of President Ma Ying-jeou in March this year. My delegation would like to acknowledge the good will by Taiwan in developing an atmosphere of trust, flexibility, pragmatism and a positive spirit to reduce tension across the Taiwan Strait with greater economic engagement, through trade, tourism and cultural exchange. We also note the intentions to replace arm confrontation with negotiations and isolation with engagement. Resumption of direct flights between the two countries, increased dialogue, and people to people interaction are all positive developments that should be encouraged. Above all, much has happened since the March election.

Solomon Islands calls on the international community to recognize the Republic of China on Taiwan's good faith and build on the positive momentum. The international community must provide the Republic of China on Taiwan with the necessary and appropriate international space if we are to be responsible and contribute to the maintenance of international peace, stability and security along the Taiwan Strait.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands welcome the 47 days Annapolis talks from December 2007 last year into January this year. My delegation share the Quartet's support for ongoing Palestine and Israel negotiations to realize the shared goal of establishing a Palestine State by December 2008 as a just, permanent and long lasting solution to the Middle East conflict. Solomon Islands further salutes Turkey for mediating talks between Israel and Syria in April and for the courage of the two countries to discuss issues that are difficult and sensitive.

Mr. President,

In conclusion as we reflect on the range of the global agenda before us, we must honour and act on our collective commitments. We must also define a path that offers our people human security that gurantees freedom from want; freedom from fear; and freedom to live in human dignity.

Mucha Gracious, Tangio Tumas, I thank you Mr. President.