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Keynote address delivered by

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VANUATU AND THE POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Distinguished guests

It is in deed a great pleasure to be with you this morning and to share some ideas on the key development issues facing our nation, our region and our world.

It is also a great honour to have recently received my letter of credence from President Iolu Abil to serve as Vanuatu's Ambassador to the United Nations, at what is a unique period for global multilateral relations.

We are coming to the critical juncture in world-wide consideration, consultation, and debate on what should come after the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) expire in 2015.

As most of us are aware, in September 2000, the world's leaders signed on to the Millennium Declaration. The essence of this comprehensive political statement was to reaffirm collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity and set the foundations for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world.

In a deliberate attempt to simplify the messaging, the eight chapters of the declaration were distilled into eight headline goals – the MDGs. And these global goals have been the cornerstone of international development ever since.

They have contributed to significant efforts at the national and regional levels, particularly in the areas of gender equality, education and health. But as we all know we have a

long way to go on our national, regional and global development journey towards inclusive and sustainable development.

We know that like many countries, Vanuatu will not achieve most of the MDGs by 2015.

We also know that the development of our nation and the well-being of our people depends upon the achievement of outcomes that were not adequately reflected in the MDGs, most notably in the areas of:

- Ensuring inclusive economic growth and creating job opportunities especially for our youth
- Building strong and capable institutions based on the rule of law
- Tackling existing and emerging health challenges, especially non-communicable diseases
- Moving the focus from quantity to improving the quality of education and lifelong learning opportunities
- Ensuring peaceful and stable communities

and

- Addressing the importance of our oceans, marine resources and the devastating consequences of climate change.

We now have the opportunity to shape our collective future, and in doing so we must take ownership of our development challenges and opportunities and where there are factors impeding our development that are beyond our control we must articulate our expectations of the global community.

The post-2015 development agenda will not be MDGs mark II.

There is a clear call for a transformative development agenda. One that puts the primary focus back on national ownership. Our national development frameworks must reflect our national priorities and circumstances. They should be aligned with, but not be subordinate to, global goals.

The UN has set in train a series of processes that will culminate in a global summit in September next year to launch the new set of development goals. It is also anticipated that next year there will finally be a successful culmination of many years' of global negotiations on climate change.

I have been following the post-2015 discussions since being invited to the Dili International Conference on this topic early last year. As part of that event, which brought together over 400 people from over 40 countries, the Pacific representatives took a day out to share experiences and thinking on the future we want for our region and our island states.

Since then, a massive international lobbying effort has been unleashed – everyone wants their cause to be a new goal. This is primarily to draw attention and of course maximise funding opportunities – or at least mitigate funding losses.

The Pacific's voice has been represented through the Dili Consensus, the outcome of that highly successful gathering in Timor-Leste. It has also been represented in the United Nations Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals - a process that continues in New York, and is scheduled to report to the UN General Assembly in September.

The Pacific is represented by a Troika comprising PNG, Nauru and Palau. Additionally the Pacific group of Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) contributes to the Open Working Group discussions through its current chair, Papua New Guinea. Other consultation mechanisms have included outreach by various UN agencies in the region, the Forum Secretariat and the contribution of NGOs.

We are entering a new era of global cooperation, and as a full member of the United Nations family we need to be actively engaged. Our national voice in these discussions could be more prominent, and that will be a key part of my work as I take up my new post as Vanuatu's representative in the UN.

I have given my assurances to the President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister that I will ensure Vanuatu's priorities are strongly represented on the global stage.

Firstly that will involve taking part in the Open Working Group on the post-2015 development agenda, and the international negotiations on climate change through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Engaging in these intergovernmental processes is essential.

But governments cannot do it alone.

National ownership of the development agenda and the realisation of our development aspirations requires political leadership and sustained political commitment, but it also requires the inclusion of civil society and businesses.

And that is why discussions like this one this morning are so important - bringing together key decision makers and influencers from government, NGOs and the private sector.

To focus our interactive discussion this morning, I have been asked to provide a brief update on where the priority areas for the post-2015 development agenda are tracking and to then open a discussion to help advance our national priorities on the international stage.

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First and foremost, there is recognition that globally we have to do more to set the world on the path towards sustainable development, across its three dimensions: social, economic and environmental.

The UN Secretary General's High Level Panel has set the scene with their report of last May, which is based on the premise that for the first time in history we have an opportunity to end extreme poverty. The Panel have called for a development agenda that ensures no one is earning less than \$1.25 per day by 2030. Currently there are 1.2 billion people in this category. But many have questioned if that is ambitious enough? There is a much larger proportion of the global population living on \$2 a day, and many governments and NGOs are calling for setting the bar higher in tackling poverty.

One of the biggest challenges for the High Level Panel was what to leave out. Their report includes 12 illustrative goals and 54 targets - up from the 8 MDGs, which had 18 associated targets.

The Secretary General's subsequent report, tabled at the General Assembly last September, expands on that - and while it does not refer to them as goals, points to 14 transformative actions that must apply to all countries.

As the debate has shifted to the Open Working Group, we are starting to see some convergence of issues across the parallel processes, including:

- Ending poverty, inequality and hunger
- Empowering women and achieving gender equality
- Improving quality of education and health care systems
- Ensuring food security and nutrition, with a focus on sustainable agriculture and rural prosperity
- Promoting inclusive economic growth that creates decent jobs, especially for our young people
- Securing sustainable energy with an emphasis on expanding access and use of renewables
- Universal access to water and sanitation
- Addressing our environmental challenges, especially climate change and the sustainable management of natural resources, including oceans and marine resources
- Meeting the challenges of urbanisation
- Improving governance, transparency, accountability and effectiveness of institutions

And

- Building inclusive and peaceful societies.

Let me focus on the last two for a moment, as these remain the most contentious, were the primary focus of the Dili international conference, and underpin our global and national efforts to eradicate poverty and chart us on a path towards sustainable development.

We have learned through our collective experience of the MDGs that we cannot achieve our global or national targets if our state apparatus is not equipped to deliver essential services and respond to the needs of its citizens. We have found that in the past when our aid donors or international NGOs step in and attempt to do it for us it weakens our ability to establish sustainable systems of governance so that one day – we can do it ourselves.

In order to build upon and accelerate the progress of the MDGs, we need in place the national building blocks – and they are strong and capable institutions and inclusive, peaceful societies. This was reflected in the Millennium Declaration, but not in the 8 Millennium Development Goals. As we now know, what gets measured gets done. So there is now a growing call for peace and institutions to be reflected in the new

development goals. Together with our Pacific colleagues, Vanuatu has supported the inclusion of this dimension in the new development agenda. We do so in recognition of the fact that peaceful societies are not just those focused on averting or reducing violence, crime or conflict, but that have the resilience, inclusive means and access to all of the benefits of sustainable development and mechanisms in place to avert any backslide against development gains.

In this context we are talking about inclusive politics and political dialogues, and having the necessary state institutions to deliver basic services such as health and education, foster economic empowerment and promote sustainable development. A goal that highlights the importance of peaceful and inclusive societies and capable institutions reinforce and are reinforced by targets across the other dimensions of sustainable development we are striving for, especially:

- The provision of quality health care, education, energy, infrastructure, water and sanitation
- Promoting equality, the empowerment of women, and the eradication of violence against women and children
- Promoting sustained and inclusive economic growth and decent work, especially for marginalised youth
- The conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, oceans and seas, and protection of vulnerable ecosystems; and
- Responding to respond to the devastating effects of climate change.

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Another key area that we have joined with our Pacific neighbours is calling for a goal to recognise the global reliance on the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, oceans and seas.

The interlinkages of our oceans and seas to health, nutrition, livelihoods, transportation, and increasingly food security, climate change, disaster risk reduction, energy and untapped scientific discovery are well known, and have been well documented.

But meaningful global action has been elusive to ensure the myriad of social, economic and environmental benefits that our oceans provide will always be there.

Scant mention was given to oceans and seas in the MDGs. The serious depletion and disruption of marine ecosystems continues, despite our global commitments under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the 1992, 2002, and 2012 world summits on sustainable development.

We can rectify this through a transformative new development agenda. One that recognises the unique shared global responsibility we all have in exercising stewardship of our oceans and seas, and their vital role in sustaining life on earth and promoting inclusive economic growth to achieve prosperous and resilient peoples and communities, especially in Vanuatu and other small island developing states.

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The world and region we are living in is rapidly changing - more so than ever before. Our governments and people have to be equipped to respond to these changes and to sustainably manage our resources and revenues to continue to improve service delivery, build and strengthen our institutions and enhance citizen-state confidence.

Globally, the pressures on states to deliver will only intensify as our populations become increasingly urbanised. Here in Vanuatu, with an urban growth rate of 4.9 per cent, we are amongst the most rapidly urbanising populations in the world. This presents many challenges but also opportunities. It also means that increasingly only the State will have the means to work on such large scales. NGOs and civil society have and will continue to play an important role in our development prospects, but there is a big difference, for example, between providing water tanks in individual rural communities, and providing a reliable and safe reticulated water supply and sanitation in our towns and cities.

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As we gear up to be part of the international negotiation on what gets included in the post 2015 development agenda, we must be mindful that we cannot manage an uncontrollable shopping list of development issues – our leaders have a daunting task to decide where we best focus our development efforts.

But this can only happen if we have a substantial shift in how we approach development. The new agenda will not be a means to merely focus aid, but as it will apply to

every country, will need to recognise the reality of new partnerships - whether they be bilateral, multilateral or the increasing role of the private sector.

As custodians of the world's largest ocean and home to some of its most vulnerable countries, the Pacific has a significant stake in redefining the global approach to development. So in addition to ensuring our development priorities are captured in the new goals, we also need to ensure that we have a say in how they will be delivered.

Ownership was a key theme of the Pacific discussions in Dili. We need to own our problems, and understand their root causes, in order to develop effective, culturally sensitive solutions to our development challenges. We ourselves must define our national development priorities based on self-assessments. Our donor partners need to continue to more closely align their activities with these nationally defined priorities.

It was pointedly put in Dili that 'we must deconstruct colonial thinking and start truly conducting ourselves as independent states'.

The transition is occurring, and in an increasingly turbulent world. The shifting tide of geopolitics sees the Asia-Pacific region now the focus of global economic and strategic competition. This presents many opportunities - but also potential dangers - to our island states. The scramble for mineral and marine resources, including deep sea minerals, will further exacerbate this struggle. All of this is befalling a region that is still finding its identity.

At every level there are serious challenges in the search to be constantly redefining our place in the world, and improving the quality of life for people at home. We are living in a time when more than ever, people are questioning the big decision-makers - whether it is the banks, the multinational corporations, the multilateral development agencies and of course governments.

As Pacific governments seek to develop the capacity to better collect and manage revenues to deliver essential services to their populations, these efforts can be hindered through tax avoidance and corruption - the proceeds of which have knowingly ended up being invested in high-income countries. There is a growing call for improving global governance over these issues, and making high-income countries responsible for their transnational impacts - cracking down on illicit

capital flows, returning stolen assets and stemming tax avoidance and evasion – again, this is especially an issue for the resource rich countries in our region, but something we all need to be mindful of.

Defining a global post-2015 development agenda in this context is not going to be an easy task.

If we are to represent our national voice on the global stage then we need to listen to the voices of our people and businesses at home. More than ever, the role of informed debate and access to quality information are essential ingredients to our development prospects.

So as I prepare to join the international conversation about the post-2015 development agenda in New York, I welcome the opportunity this morning to hear from you what you think are the critical development priorities for the future development of our nation.

I thank you and look forward to hearing the exchange of views in the time we have remaining this morning.

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