

UNITED NATIONS



NATION UNIES

THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR OF THE
UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM'S OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Speech by Resident Coordinator a.i. Dr. Isiye Ndombi for the UN Day Celebration at Level 4 Kadavu House on the 23rd Oct 2009.

Your Excellencies Heads of Diplomatic Missions,
Senior Government Officials of the Republic of Fiji Islands
Representatives of International Organizations
Representatives of the Civil Society
Private Sector Partners here present,
Distinguish Guests,
Children and Young People,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Ni sa bula and greetings from the United Nations team in the Pacific. It is a great honour for me – on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator and all my UN colleagues in the Pacific – to welcome you here on this special and memorable day. Sixty-four years ago on 24 October 1945, the United Nations Charter entered into force. To recognize this important day, it has been celebrated publicly since 1948. In 1971, the United Nations General Assembly recommended that Member States observe it as a public holiday. Indeed, some Member States have designated this date as a public holiday. We decided to celebrate the occasion today, on a weekday, for the convenience of our partners and our families.

The United Nations has a foundation of human rights on which stand the pillars of its commitment to development, peace and security and social justice. People look to the United Nations to stand up for human rights, to defeat poverty and hunger, to expand education and to protect them from illness. As an organization of member countries, the United Nations are us in our capacities as citizens of sovereign member states.

As the UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon has said, "on the occasions of the United Nations Day and everyday in between, the United Nations is at work delivering humanitarian aid, vaccinating children, helping refugees, feeding the hungry and protecting those who face persecution."



Today as we commemorate this Day, the world is faced by a myriad of challenges. The challenges of the Global Economic Crisis; Climate Change; terrorism; conflicts; and many and growing numbers of disasters.

For us the Pacific the forthcoming Climate Change dialogue in Copenhagen means a lot because Pacific people are already experiencing the impacts of global warming through sea-level rises, increased hydro-meteorological disasters, loss of biodiversity and the spread of climate-sensitive diseases. We honestly hope that leaders in Copenhagen look to the Pacific to see the emerging reality of the consequences. If they see the dire reality, they will hopefully make the brave right choices. I am reminded of the strong statement by the Prime Minister of Niue at the Cairns Pacific Leaders' Forum. He likened the current status of climate change to an ill patient who is refusing to take the doctor's full prescription. He or she wants to take half the dose to deal with a potentially fatal illness. That is just so true, given some of the pre-Summit dialogues we've followed. But as the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said, "there is no Plan B".

Let me highlight some of the successes of the United Nations team in the Pacific in the recent past. The UN formulated the current Pacific Regional Development Assistance Framework to align with the Pacific Plan, Millennium Development Goals and the national development plans. It has four main pillars, namely: 1) Equitable Economic Growth, 2) Good Governance and Human Rights, 3) Equitable Social and Protection Services, and 4) Sustainable Environmental Management. The Framework seeks to start with the National Development Frameworks and Results as well as Pacific regional approaches. It has prioritized Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and embraced partnerships with Pacific institutions as the backbone strategy. The framework also underpins the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, emphasizing alignment to national systems and harmonization of development partner activities.

The second highlight is the Joint Presence Initiative through which the UN has expanded its substantive presence at country level from five to 10 countries in the past year. This was our response to the 2005 request by Pacific Ambassadors to the UN Secretary General where they conveyed that the UN needed to be on the ground in most if not all Pacific island



countries. The joint presence initiative is a system through which UN agencies represent each other at country level so that while individual agencies will not be on the ground in each country, their interests are covered. For instance, the joint presence host agency in Tuvalu is UNDP, the host agency in Federated States of Micronesia is UNFPA and the host agency in Kiribati is UNICEF. Let me highlight that the main objective is not just to be present in-country but to use the joint presence to drive acceleration towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals.

The third highlight is the One UN Fund for Kiribati, where UN agencies have come together working to support the Kiribati Development Plan through a harmonized funding mechanism. Discussions are under way between the Government of Kiribati, the UN and the Australian Government which is exploring possibilities of supporting this fund. But a small start has already been made using some allocation from the Multi-Donor Trust Funds envelope. We believe that after successfully implementing this approach in Kiribati, we'll need to expand it to other Pacific island countries.

The UN has also made good progress in working with partners to agree on a Cluster Approach in the response to humanitarian crises. This approach was implemented successfully in the humanitarian response following the recent tsunami disaster in Samoa.

Recently, the UN made a joint mission to Nauru in the context of Sustainable Development Framework to analysis and planning. This was a positive outcome which the UN and its partners should systematize in the Pacific.

The UN has also worked with Pacific organizations to document updates on the status of human rights ratifications by country. Some of the Pacific island countries have not ratified key treaties. Even when ratified, not all treaties have been followed by alignment of legislation. And where legislation has been aligned, it has not always been enforced. I take this opportunity to urge all Pacific countries to review and ratify all major treaties, seek to align their legislations with them and follow through with relevant enforcements.

During 2010, the UN is working with Pacific Island Countries and Institutions to plan a GEC Conference, a Pacific Food Security Summit and other important meetings. We believe that



these meetings, their follow-up with strategic actions at national and sub-national levels will translate into better results for Pacific people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One key event we have just witnessed on this Day has been the first UN flag-raising at Kadavu House and the formal official opening of UN offices. Please join me to applaud this success for the agencies that have taken space in this beautiful house.

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to take this opportunity say a big Vinaka vakalevu to the Fiji Government for the warm hospitality and support. I also wish to acknowledge the good support from and collaboration by the development partners and civil societies with the UN in its work to support Pacific people.

But harder work is yet on the way. We need to work together to ensure most if not all Pacific island countries achieve their MDGs. The recent Cairns Compact is a good place to start. We need new energy, new speed and new momentum. We owe it especially to the children, women and those who are marginalized and excluded. We need to focus on vulnerability and risk as starting points. Ensure data integrity and facilitate good plans which must be followed through.

I believe we can make a major step up. But it will require all of us pulling together.

Many thanks for your attention. Vinaka vakalevu.
