



**STATEMENT BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY MR. JAMES MARAPE, MP, PRIME MINISTER  
OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

**AT THE**

**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY SEVENTY-FOURTH SESSION  
HIGH-LEVEL GENERAL DEBATE**

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Your Excellency, Professor Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the General Assembly, Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations, Excellencies, and distinguished delegates, today, I am honoured and privileged, on behalf of my Prime Minister Honourable James Marape and the Government and the people of Papua New Guinea, to address this august Assembly.

I warmly congratulate you Mr. President, and the Government and the people of Nigeria, on your presidency.

We share the spirit of your presidency's theme of "galvanising multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion" and the priorities you have set.

Mr. President, you have our trust and confidence in leading our collective work, and as one of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, for this session, my country stands in solidarity with you and the UN membership.

I would also like to express our gratitude to the outgoing Madam President Her Excellency Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garces for her vibrant leadership, commendable commitment and tireless efforts, including in strengthening the hand of multilateralism, inclusivity and humanity, this past year.

I wish her all the best in her future endeavours and Papua New Guinea hopes that it will not be another decade or more for a female President of the General Assembly.

**Mr. President,**

I wish to also pay tribute to Mr. Secretary-General, for his exemplary leadership, selfless service and stellar work in many important areas such as on climate change, this past year, and which continues apace, for the greater good and wellbeing of “we the peoples of this United Nations.”

At the regional level, Papua New Guinea is heartened and inspired by his most timely and welcomed landmark visit to the Pacific region in May this year to bear witness to our sustainable development challenges, vulnerabilities and opportunities and the clarion call to step up the fight and do better, more and urgently against the adverse impacts of climate change.

At the country level, the United Nations remains a trusted and highly valued partner. The development, peacebuilding, human rights and humanitarian support under the reformed UN system that is now functional in the country continues to not only expand and deepen but more importantly complements strategically my Government’s development priorities. We are moving in the right direction however, there is much to be done.

Mr. Secretary-General, I would like to assure you and the UN system that you have my Government’s undivided support.

**Mr President,**

A localized and integrated 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains an important priority for Papua New Guinea under my Government.

Currently, measured progress continues to be made in specific areas such as education, primary health care, gender equality and empowerment and peace and security but much more work remains.

For instance, in health and education services the Government's policies on Free Education and Health Care continue to gain momentum countrywide. More Papua New Guineans, particularly girls and children are benefiting from these strategic interventions.

My Government remains committed to ensure the provision of quality education and primary health care as a solid foundation for a better future for all our citizens.

Work on achieving these goals are important in our preparations to present, for the first time, to the High-Level Political Forum in July 2020, our Voluntary National Review on the status of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Whilst we continue to be inspired by our National Vision 2050, the National Strategy for Responsible Sustainable Development and guided by the Medium-Term Development Plan under a paradigm shift, including a generational change of political leadership.

This is being done to strengthen national level implementation in the context of core development priorities under the new vision of Take back Papua New Guinea to make it prosperous, peaceful and secure through inclusive sustainable economic growth.

The objective is firstly, to strategically position the country's sustainable development to empower our citizens at all levels to take national ownership and leadership of our development pathway and destiny whilst protecting our abundant natural resources.

Secondly, to Take back Papua New Guinea, we are ambitious to achieve economic independence and self-reliance in the next decade.

It recognizes that a healthy and educated population supported by quality infrastructure, broad-based agriculture and a just, fair, equitable and inclusive development serve as the engine of sustainable development.

These will secure and empower the future of our children whilst ensuring that we do not erode and compromise our environmental capital.

**Mr. President,**

To achieve our national 2030 Agenda, the priority areas of focus are on firstly, the revitalization of the agriculture sector as a key driver for inclusive economic growth.

This is intended to harness the productivity of our rural communities, including particularly women and girls, that constitute 80 percent of the country by empowering and enabling them to participate in income generation and job opportunities to improve their standard of living and eliminate poverty.

Sectoral plans are being established, covering Marine and Fisheries, Forestry, Mining, Oil and Gas and primary industry products, which include Gender Equity and Social Inclusion.

Secondly, we are committed to downstream processing of our natural resources to add value and build our human resources and manufacturing capacities and capabilities to industrialise our economy.

In taking such measures we are striving to become a middle-income country by 2030.

We therefore welcome genuine and durable development partnerships from bona fide foreign investors to develop downstream processing facilities.

Thirdly, we are embarking on reviewing and reforming our legislative infrastructure on renewable and non-renewable resources.

This is aimed at finding the right balance that fairly and equitably accounts for all stakeholders interests. Presently, this is not the case and disempowering our people, who are the natural resource owners.

Fourthly, we have prioritized building resilient economic infrastructure projects such as roads, airports, wharves, electricity and telecommunications.

This infrastructure will support economic corridors throughout the country that will enable our citizens access markets for their primary produce and basic services.

We recognize the importance of the digital economy and therefore working earnestly with our development partners in harnessing the added value to the economy and lives of our people through the Information and Communication Technology sector.

Noteworthy is the recent completion of the submarine fibre optic cable between Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea and Sydney, Australia.

This will significantly boost ICT services in the country and globally.

My Government greatly appreciates the strong and valued partnership with our close neighbor, Australia.

**Mr. President,**

As an integral part of enhancing the rule of law and order in my country, my Government is seriously committed to strengthening governance, particularly combating corruption at all levels.

We have made it a key priority to finalize the Organic Law on the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and aim to soon establish the Commission. This is pivotal to halting the insidious resources drain associated with corruption and to apply those resources to the areas where they are most needed.

Another key part of the measures my Government has taken is to strengthen the reforms of our public sector to ensure that it is fit-for-purpose for service delivery. This will be guided by economic drivers and social need, and where necessary outsource or establish partnership with the private sector and civil society organizations.

**Mr President,**

We recognize the value of development partnership for our national development as called for in multilaterally agreed frameworks.

We urge our development partners to align their development assistance with our national plans and policies in accordance with our Development Cooperation Policy.

Let me take this opportunity to convey our appreciation to all our bilateral and multilateral development partners, including Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, United States, EU, India, Israel, Republic of Korea and the United Nations.

I would like to also recognize the important and enduring role of faith-based organizations and civil society agencies amongst others, supporting our socio-economic development agenda.

**Mr President,**

I want to address the critically important issues concerning equality and empowerment of our women and girls.

Based on a recent thorough review and evaluation of my country's socio-economic development over the past decade, we have not measured up to our full potential in this regard. We can do better in meeting the needs of our women and girls with the right leadership, commitment, requisite resources and a holistic and inclusive approach to it.

We have put in place laws, policies, plans and strategies, such as the National Public Service Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Policy that champions workplace gender equity, inclusivity and leadership. The 2016-2025 National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender Based Violence complement our international human rights and gender equality commitments such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

What is needed now is to better translate into meaningful action these existing national frameworks and related international commitments supporting women and girls equality and empowerment. This is exactly what our 5-Year Medium Term Development Plan III is addressing through an approach of securing our future through inclusive sustainable economic growth. An integral part of it is the clear recognition of the importance of gender as a cross-cutting development issue.

**Mr. President,**

This year marks eighteen years of unbroken peace in my country's Autonomous Region of Bougainville. This followed the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement in August 2001 between the Government and the people of Bougainville after a civil conflict that claimed scores of lives and livelihoods which necessitated the involvement of the United Nations.

As an integral part of the Peace Agreement, a Referendum will be conducted on 23 November 2019, to decide the future status of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville subject to the final decision of the National Parliament of my country.

Papua New Guinea is steadfastly committed to upholding the Peace Agreement and we are doing everything possible to ensure the referendum is free, fair and transparent.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General and the United Nations system and our bilateral and other multilateral development partners including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Ireland, Norway, Germany and EU, for their enduring support that has enabled the peace that we continue to witness.

**Mr President,**

On climate change, let me begin by joining others in conveying my Government and people's sincere sympathies and condolences to the people and the Government of the Bahamas for the unprecedented loss of lives and devastation caused by Hurricane Dorian. As a fellow Small Island Developing State, we stand in solidarity with you.

We support and congratulate the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit and the inclusion of youth in championing the fight against climate change. We are proud that today we heard a such call to urgent action in the context of Small Island Developing States from a young Papua New Guinean woman. The courageous and uncompromising stance of the youth is a good omen for the world. We also thank those funding the support for the youth and others in this rallying call.

At the recently concluded 50<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting Tuvalu the Pacific Leaders agreed to build on the Blue Pacific's Call for Urgent Global Climate Change Action through the Kainaki II Declaration for urgent Climate Action Now. This is now our moral compass and authority going forward to the 25<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP25) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

**Mr. President,**

This is a defining issue of our time that requires all UN Member States and all stakeholders to now take urgent and concrete measures individually and collectively under the Paris Agreement through the revision of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by 2020. This will effectively address the adverse impacts of Climate Change, for the sake of the planet.

The important outcomes from the Climate Action Summit early this week paves the way for us to take the measures necessary to save ourselves.

We cannot continue to be morally irresponsible about this existential threat to the planet. It is utterly unfair and unjust for the least contributors of the greenhouse gas emissions to pay the highest price. This must stop!

**Mr. President,**

We take seriously the importance of being a party to the Paris Agreement by taking the necessary measures domestically and globally. For instance, Papua New Guinea was one of the first few countries in the world to submit its National Determined Contributions and we are currently in the process of revising it.

At the Climate Action Summit, my Government's three initiatives were accepted under the Nature – Based Solutions Track and the Resilience and Adaptation Track.

The Nature - Based solution track focuses on harnessing our abundant tropical rainforest resources as lungs of the earth and carbon reservoir through Sustainable Forest Management Practices.

This can be realized by implementing our National REDD Plus Strategy and secondly, on renewable energy plan, we endeavor to

tap into the rich hydro and solar energy sources and thirdly, climate proofing infrastructure in the country where pilot projects are well underway.

We commit ourselves under the Paris Agreement, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the energy sector. PNG's Vision 2050, National Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030 and the National Energy Policy outline our national goals to transition from our current energy sources to 100 per cent renewable sources by 2050. Climate funding is a necessity to enable full implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Papua New Guinea wishes to express its appreciation to those governments and organizations that have pledged additional funding to the Green Climate Fund and encourages others who have the financial capacity to do so as well.

However, Papua New Guinea aligns itself with statements already made relating to accessibility of these funds. If our NDCs are going to be ambitious then we must not be constrained by difficulties in accessing climate funds.

**Mr. President,**

My country considers the ocean as an integral part of our past, present and future. The ocean resources are vital to the economic, social and cultural value to our people's lives and livelihoods.

It is in this spirit that we are now framing our institutional framework and National Oceans Policy which are intended to develop and establish an integrated ocean management system within and beyond our national jurisdiction.

As a State Party, this will also strengthen the implementation of the UN Convention on Law of the Sea through our Maritime Zones Act to support core development policies and plans.

I am pleased to also note that as an integral part of this priority we have submitted our National Maritime Boundaries Delimitation Charts in April 2019 to the UN Secretary-General.

Additionally, we have taken positive steps to securing an extended continental shelf in the Ontong Java Plateau area in March 2017 together in a first-ever joint trilateral submission with our Pacific neighbours the Federated States of Micronesia and the Solomon Islands.

A highly technical and sophisticated work spanning over a decade, whose recommendations was published by the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

The fisheries sector is a major contributor to our economy and to ensure its sustainability we are committed to combating Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing and are working towards FAO Port-State-Measures Agreement by the end of this year.

It will also ensure downstream processing to add value to our resources. In this spirit, we call on the WTO negotiations on fisheries subsidies to ensure its successful conclusion that halts the practices that encourage malpractices in this sector.

**Mr. President,**

We also share stewardship of our ocean with our Pacific Islands Forum neighbours under our regional architecture of the strong Blue Pacific Continent that is secure, peaceful, and prosperous. This will enable our people to live free, healthy and productive lives and on our own terms and in ways that recognize the richness of our cultures, national circumstances and oceanic resources and the importance of conservation and sustainable use.

We welcome and support the convening of the Second United Nations Oceans Conference to support the implementation of SDG 14 in June 2020 in Portugal.

Similarly, we are pleased to note the positive progress made in the Third Inter-Governmental Conference to develop an international binding instrument to govern the conservation and sustainable use of the marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction.

As we move towards the final negotiations in early 2020, we encourage all stakeholders to not be narrow minded with their petty national considerations but to view the global commons as one shared ocean deserving of our collective protection and sustainable use.

**Mr President,**

My Government values the critical importance of the role of UN peacekeeping operations based on our own internal and regional experiences. We contribute in a modest way, to the UN peacekeeping operations, and intend to expand such support in future as our capacity expands.

Let me take this opportunity to express my Government's sincere condolences and sympathies to the families and friends of those peacekeeping personnel who have this year made the ultimate sacrifice with their lives for peace. Our prayers and thoughts are also with those injured peacekeeping personnel.

We are also grateful for the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Trust Fund, from whom we have benefited, particularly in the context of the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. We look forward to continue working in close partnership.

**Mr President,**

In 2020, as we prepare to mark the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the founding of this United Nations, the Security Council must be reformed.

On the Multi Country Office Review, we are heartened that the Review recognises and reinforces that the UN must do more and better to support Small Island Developing States, especially those covered by the multi-country offices, in their pursuit for sustainable development.

In our Pacific region, while we face common challenges, each country also faces specific and unique challenges. There is no one size fits all. To meet current development challenges, the UN Development System needs to operate in the context of the unique development dynamics in each country.

In this regard we welcome the Secretary General's decision to establish, a dedicated Multi Country Office in the North Pacific region for our Pacific neighbours of the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru and Palau.

**Mr. President,**

We remain concerned with sporadic terrorist attacks around the globe. We stand in solidarity with those countries and peoples affected by such acts and strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

We also continue to be concerned over tensions in various parts of the world as this have the potential to have unintended consequences for others. We would therefore encourage peaceful dialogue and resolution to resolve such issues.

In closing, Papua New Guinea's longstanding view on disarmament is for the world to be rid of any weapon of mass destruction. So long as nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction exist, there is a very real danger that one day, these weapons of mass destruction will be used again, whether by design or accident.

I thank you Mr. President.