



***Statement delivered by His Excellency the
Honourable Baron Waqa, M.P.,
President of the Republic of Nauru***

***United Nations General Assembly – Seventieth
Session***

General Debate

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates

Mr. President,

It is an honor to be here for the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. I can only marvel at the scale of this accomplishment. Not only has this institution grown from its original fifty-one members to its current one hundred and ninety three, but it has also expanded its work to take on a remarkable number of issues facing the world. Our debate here provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on what has made this organization so successful.

I believe the reason for this success can be summed up in a single word: *Legitimacy*. Only with legitimacy could we expect Leaders from around the world to gather here every September. Only with legitimacy can we expect the agreements we reach here to be implemented in the real world.

However, legitimacy is a fragile thing. It takes decades to build, but can be lost in the blink of an eye. Therefore, preserving and strengthening the legitimacy of this institution must be at the center of work if the United Nations is to remain a powerful force of progressive change in the world.

Therefore, to strengthen the legitimacy of the United Nations, I propose that the road ahead be guided by three principles: universality, adaptability, and accountability.

We took an important step in this direction last week with the adoption of the 2030 Development Agenda, which demonstrates our ability to learn from past experience and create an approach better tailored to the needs and circumstances of all nations. The Agenda places the welfare of human beings at its core and lays out a comprehensive set of goals and targets to help empower every individual to realize their full potential.

This moves us away from looking at single indicators like GDP or income per capita to measure human progress, and focuses our work on the building of a more robust foundation for sustainability and prosperity. Education, public health, gender equality, clean water, oceans, energy and more importantly, a strong family unit – these are some of the blocks on which our future must be built.

For my country, the ocean is the source of almost all development possibilities. Unlike larger countries, we do not have a diversified portfolio of industries. Phosphate mining and fishing constitute the large bulk of economic possibilities

for Nauru along with less than a handful of other sources of income. It is all the more concerning therefore when vessels come to our waters and engage in Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. Regional estimates put lost earnings from IUU at anywhere from the millions to over a billion. For economies like ours these numbers are staggering, and if we are to be true to Agenda 2030 and the commitments made to SIDS, we must do much more to eliminate IUU fishing and ensure that the income from fishing goes to the rightful resource owners.

This and other issues from Agenda 2030 will require us to rethink the way we cooperate at the international level. Our international and regional bodies must be fit for purpose. The universality of this endeavor will require them to respect national differences and move away from one-size-fits-all strategies. Thematic silos must be replaced with crosscutting networks. Implementing agencies at every level must become both more nimble and more robust.

All partnerships – be they multilateral, bilateral, or public-private – must be based on mutual respect – a respect that recognizes genuine development partners such as the Republic of China (Taiwan), a democracy that can contribute meaningfully towards development and prosperity in the world. Needless to say, Taiwanese technology and know-how can make a lot of difference towards helping the needy, and as such, I call for the inclusion of Taiwan in the development agencies of the UN.

Mr. President,

Aid must be predictable and sustainable. It should not be wielded as a weapon to advance partisan political ends. Predatory relationships that pit one group against another have no place in the 2030 Development Agenda. History has demonstrated that openness and engagement have proven far more effective strategies for positive change than isolation and exclusion. Only in this environment can we hold one another accountable for its full implementation.

This is the vision that Nauru has embraced for the 2030 Development Agenda and we are taking steps to move forward back home. And like the United Nations itself, we will need to build strong domestic institutions to achieve our goals. And similarly, their legitimacy will rest on their inclusiveness, their adaptability, and their accountability.

Therefore, in the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda, we must go beyond capacity building. We must engage in the difficult task of *institution building*. International and regional agencies and development partners should back these efforts with real resources that include long-term *in-country* engagement when appropriate, so that they leave behind durable *domestic* institutions run by a skilled *national* workforce. Nauru is asking for a lot from its development partners. We want to be better partners ourselves. And at the end

of the day, implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda will mostly happen at the national and local level.

On this note, let me thank our partners; Australia, Taiwan, Russia, Cuba and others for their support towards our sustainable development priorities.

Our efforts to improve the legitimacy of international institutions must extend beyond those most directly involved in the 2030 Development Agenda. The Security Council in particular must better reflect the geopolitical realities of the world today, and therefore the list of permanent and non-permanent members should be expanded. And we support the inclusion of Germany, India, Japan, Brazil and others in the permanent category.

In addition, the Security Council must continue to adapt and respond to the most pressing issues of today. For this reason, Nauru calls on the Security Council to make climate change a permanent agenda item. This should be supplemented by the appointment by the United Nations Secretary-General of a Special Representative on Climate and Security. In addition, relevant organs of the United Nations should conduct an assessment of their capacity to respond to the security implications of climate change.

The governance of the Bretton Woods institutions should also be made more representative, with developing countries given a greater presence. The global economy has become more reliant on the flow of international capital, and with the frequency of financial crises increasing, the legitimacy of these institutions will continue to be tested.

However, climate change will be the largest test of our international and domestic institutions. We have already seen how some climate impacts can overwhelm the capacity of even the most powerful among us. Clearly, a strong, legally binding agreement in Paris is absolutely critical, with ambitious mitigation contributions from all countries. The agreement should be guided by a temperature goal of 1.5 degree Celsius and consistent with our vision for a safe and secure world. It must also ensure climate finance is available for adaptation, particularly for the most vulnerable countries. And for dealing with the impacts that exceed our adaptation efforts, it should anchor an international mechanism on Loss and Damage.

The United Nations was created to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind. At present, climate change, if left unaddressed, promises impacts no less catastrophic for many of our nations.

Today marks the lead-up to a very important milestone in my people's history – the seventieth anniversary of our return home. During the occupation of my country in the Second World War, Nauruans were forcibly evacuated to what is now Chuuk State in the Federated States of Micronesia. Due to widespread food

shortages and the harsh conditions imposed by our captors, our population fell below one thousand five hundred. We were in danger of extinction. Nauruans know very well what happens to small, vulnerable countries when the big ones fail to address their problems in a responsible manner.

Mr. President,

I strongly believe that many of the major economic powers want to reach an agreement in Paris. Many have already come forward with meaningful mitigation contributions that will certainly require a great deal of effort to achieve. And while we know it's not enough, I do not doubt their sincerity. However, I'm starting to doubt whether they are willing and able to make the fundamental changes in their political and economic systems required to achieve our ambitious goals.

The intense lobbying to accept an unsatisfactory outcome has already begun, and in the international process, this has often meant that we will be presented with a take-it-or-leave-it deal at the COP. Would such an agreement have any legitimacy? Can we solve the climate problem without it?

Mr. President,

The number seventy has biblical significance in the Christian faith, composed of the numbers "seven" and "ten."

The number "seven" often represents the concept of "completeness," while the number "ten" often refers to law and responsibility. It is fitting that during the seventieth session of the General Assembly we will complete our work on a new set of global agreements to tackle the challenges of our generation.

The number "seventy" can also represent a period of judgment. We stand at a critical moment in history, as civilization outstrips the natural boundaries of our planet. Our response over the next few years will determine the fate of future generations for the next thousand. Will we continue to march to inexorable decline? Or will we join together to meet the challenges before us?

Thankfully, we still have a choice, and the widespread recognition of the need for change I heard over the past week gives me hope that we will make the right one.

May God bless the Republic of Nauru and may God bless the United Nations.

Thank you.