

Speech by the Republic of Vanuatu  
at the High-Level Segment  
of the 19<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the  
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  
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*Delivered by:*

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MR PRESIDENT,

On behalf of the Prime Minister and the people of the Republic of Vanuatu, please allow me to express our deepest gratitude to you and to the state of Poland for the kind hospitality extended to our delegation at this 19<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of The Parties.

The friendly faces and warm support provided to the Vanuatu delegation by your army of volunteers and support staff has been most welcome.

Vanuatu associates itself with statements made by Fiji, on behalf of G77 & China, Nauru on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and Nepal, on behalf of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) who have emerged as the leaders here at COP19 and are continuing to push forward as a 'Coalition of the Willing'.

The Republic of Vanuatu, due to its smallness and island vulnerabilities, is particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Situated in the South West Pacific Ocean, we have again been ranked as the most vulnerable country in the world to both geological and climate risks. It is clear that despite all of our adaptation efforts, the climate-related loss and damage we are already experiencing far outstrips our capacity for recovery.

Mr President,

Here at this nineteenth conference of the parties, Vanuatu refuses to accept inaction that condemns this and future generations to a planet that is beyond repair. The delegates in this room will be judged on what we do for global society, and on where we go from here.

While we believe progress has been made at this COP, key areas that are of vital importance to the Republic of Vanuatu have been unsatisfactory and disappointing, such as long term finance and loss and damage.

On the key issues of long term finance, mitigation, loss & damage we have witnessed tremendous and consistent push-back from Parties of the developed world. Take for example the issue of loss & damage:

Climate change HAS ALREADY brought loss and damage to Vanuatu that could not be avoided through mitigation efforts, nor could be avoided through adaptation. While much of our adaptation has been successful, some of Vanuatu's losses are permanent, unavoidable, irreversible and unrecoverable and such that no adaptation measure can adequately address them.

Sadly, a group of wealthy and climate change-responsible Parties here at COP19 seem unwilling to extend their humanitarian compassion on this issue or listened to Vanuatu's plea for immediate action but rather have pushed strongly to hide loss and damage under the auspices Adaptation Committee. They claim that Copenhagen discussions on the adaptation committee included "everything" related to climate change. But Nations of the world, it is abundantly clear that the mandate and functions of the Adaptation Committee are insufficient. Not distinguishing the existential issue of loss and damage would also mean that financial support for loss and damage would be ring-fenced by the 2020 USD100 billion promise; not nearly enough. Yes, these Parties provide humanitarian assistance when disasters strike, and yes, we who are victims in the climate crisis thank you, but ad-hoc and post-devastation rallying for funds is not a sustainable or sufficient answer.

Mr President,

Our government, civil society agencies and community-based organizations desperately require sufficient finance to implement life-saving adaptation and disaster risk mitigation and reduction programs.

How can I return home and face my suffering people when developed countries have failed to clearly make climate finance commitments from now through 2015.

It is highly disturbing to see many of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases (both developing and developed Parties) still not recognizing their fiscal responsibilities to the Green Climate Fund and other UNFCCC financial mechanisms. Without a global climate finance roadmap – including the pre 2020 period, non-public sources, targeted annual disbursements, and at minimum 50% allocation to adaptation, we are lost.

To access this finance Vanuatu calls on the UNFCCC's financial mechanisms to make fiduciary allowances in accordance with CBDR principles so that the Republic of Vanuatu may create and host its own national implementing entity.

Mr President,

Sadly, the women of Vanuatu are experiencing the worst of the climate change impacts. For this reason, the Republic of Vanuatu has pushed strongly both at COP18 and COP19 to further enhance gender equality and equity within the UNFCCC. We have proposed realistic and implementable solutions to ensure that women are active participants at UNFCCC meetings and taking decisions that appropriately reflect the need of our women back home. This year Vanuatu's own delegation exemplifies our gender equity aspirations, and we acknowledge the other Parties here who have made major advancements alongside us.

The Republic of Vanuatu is pleased with progress made under Article 6 of the convention at this COP. The Republic of Vanuatu recognises that through education, training and public awareness, appropriate adaptation and mitigation work among our island peoples may be enhanced and flourish.

Capacity building is desperately needed to build and strengthen the institutions in Vanuatu which transparency and accountability will guide our climate change development aspirations.

Our Vanuatu National Advisory Board on Climate Change & Disaster Risk Reduction under the newly formed Ministry of Climate Change is an example of the high level political will demonstrated by our leaders in our existential struggle against the negative effects of climate change.

Mr. President,

Each year Vanuatu engages in the UNFCCC process with the hope that this time, if only this time, we will see Parties from around the world rouse collective ambition to decisively address the earth's greatest threat. But each year, we see delegations come and go who are disempowered by their political leaders, who are in-turn disempowered by those who elect them. Vanuatu echoes the call of the people of the world to put aside political band-standing, and rapidly and dramatically upscale our collective ambitions to reduce the concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Vanuatu calls strongly for 'political climate change' as we watch ambition lowering, while more and more we are discussing the economy, and not the stark reality of climate change science.

It is increasingly difficult for victim countries like Vanuatu to participate in this process. We are unable to report real progress to our constituents suffering back home. While for some Parties this seems to be an academic discussion, for us, climate change is real. Vanuatu is finding it harder to remain confident in this process when we repeatedly hear excuses and untenable non-starter proposals from highly climate-change responsible Parties.

We are a member of the global community, and we believe that change can happen if new legally binding protocol strengthens existing multilateral rules-based and legally binding regimes. This is based on science and designed to ensure our planetary survival, and is "applicable to all", requiring universal participation and contributions from every party. Vanuatu stands ready to continue to make substantial sacrifices in this regard, and will abide by the ambitious renewable energy targets set by our Prime Minister. Vanuatu looks forward to the outcomes of the UN Secretary General's Leader's Summit in 2014 where global leaders must be prepared to bring the fate of the planet to the fore.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, Vanuatu continues to extend its trust to the international community and the mandate of the UNFCCC. The climate crisis requires a new international political reality: one marked by a willingness to accept solutions commensurate with the challenges. As I have mentioned, history will judge the present generation by our successes or failures in meeting and surmounting this existential challenge.

So I urge all nations of the world to become leaders to the fullest extent possible and keep fighting. We have got a lot more work to do.

Thank you.