PAPUA NEW GUINEA COUNTRY STATEMENT

Delivered by

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At the

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Chairperson,

Madam Executive Secretary,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates

Introduction

At the outset, let me join the previous Speakers and express my delegation’s gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Thailand and the ESCAP Secretariat for the courtesies accorded to us since our arrival in Bangkok, Thailand.

Let me also take this opportunity to convey our congratulations on your election as the Chairperson of the 70th session. We are confident that under your able leadership supported by the Executive Secretary and her team, we will make decisions on all the issues on our agenda for the betterment of our people in the Asia and the Pacific region.

Theme for the 70th Session, "Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity"

Chairperson, over the years we have made progress in strengthening and enhancing efforts towards regional economic integration in our region.

The 70th Session theme, "Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity" provides a region-wide platform for us to discuss and explore opportunities to meet the challenges of globalization, regional integration and cooperation including climate change and sustainable development as well as the implementation of our Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and UN post-2015 development agenda.

The interactions that we have had in the past few days relating to the theme of this year’s Session is a step forward as we search for ways and means to further enhance closer cooperation for a better and sustainable future for us today and for our generations to come.

In this context, Chairperson, we commend the Under-Secretary-General and her team for the excellent work they have done on the study to find mutually pragmatic ways for us to further enhance regional cooperation through economic integration in the region.
We note from the study report that there are many complementarities arising from the regions diversity and so as many underexploited opportunities for mutually beneficial integration.

The findings point to the direction that regional integration can also assist in making regional development more balanced.

We are pleased to know from the study that cooperation through economic integration can also help the region address shared vulnerabilities and risks hence contribute to exercising its influence in global economic governance.

PNG therefore supports the recommended four-prong approach with the long-term vision of building an Asia-Pacific Economic Community. As the way forward, it would require a comprehensive institutional architecture to achieve this goal. In this way, we can begin consolidation and harness the potential of regional economic integration for the betterment of our countries and the people.

Excellencies, in the last few days we have heard the views of many of our distinguished leaders and experts on the key challenges that need to be addressed in achieving inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in the region. Our leaders have also recognised that it is imperative and necessary that we must have regional economic integration.

We believe that it is time that we make a commitment to work together to begin our journey towards Economic Integration for an inclusive and sustainable development for the region.

**Key Policy Issues: Papua New Guinea's Perspective**

**Chairperson**, having said that let me highlight some of the issues pertinent to regional economic integration from the perspective of Papua New Guinea.

Our population today is more than 7 million and is projected to reach 10 million in 2030 and no doubt will create many socio-economic challenges for us to address.

Since 2005, we have enjoyed strong growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) due to windfall revenue gains from the minerals and petroleum
sectors, significant investments in the Liquefied National Gas (LNG) projects that have had positive spill-over effects on the economy and this is projected to continue. The political stability provided by the successive governments has also contributed to the growth.

Today the challenge is for the Government is to translate these revenues into pragmatic results to improve the lives of the people.

Excellencies, on the Millennium Development Goals since adopting the UN Millennium Declaration, we have developed the long-term development strategy in Vision 2050, which sets the overarching goal of achieving improved human development.

The introduction of PNG’s Strategic Plan (PNGDSP) 2010-2030 supported by the action-oriented – Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP) 2011-2015 sets out sectoral targets and indicators to be achieved. We have also re-tailored and aligned the MDGs to our national priorities with 88 indicators connecting them to the national development plans.

In addition, our Official Development Assistance Programs with the donor partners are also being gradually realigned to the national development priorities in order to progress the efforts to achieve the MDG targets and indicators.

Chairperson, as we heard from many leaders in the past few days, the collection of reliable statistical data and closing the data gaps remains our major challenges. We require reliable data to do planning for environmentally sustainable economic developments, for social services such as health, education and infrastructure.

With proper infrastructure in place and availability of reliable data, trade and investment can be facilitated and further enhance to propel economic growth as well as to track the implementation of MDGs in the country.

Excellencies, on transportation like other countries we are confronted with many challenges to develop appropriate and adequate transportation infrastructures that is vital to connecting the people in the country and also with other countries in the Asia and the Pacific region.
The geographical constraints and social issues resulting from complex land tenure system, the national transportation connectivity still remains a major challenge.

And to address this, we have developed appropriate sectoral plans and have realigned to our Medium Term Development Plan for implementation.

It is in this context that we are committed to the implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, and its Regional Action Programme is a step in the right direction to foster regional transport cooperation and economic integration in support and inclusive to sustainable development.

Chairperson, at the sub-regional level, especially in the Pacific region, our focus is on inter-island infrastructure connectivity to facilitate and enhance the promotion of trade and investment opportunities among the Pacific Island countries.

As we have heard from the Pacific leaders, the “Inter-Island Shipping” provision provided in the Regional Action Programme is strategically critical to the Pacific Island developing countries, including Papua New Guinea. We are optimistic that this will enable people to access to low transport costs and also easy movement of people, goods and services.

Chairperson, there are enormous challenges in the area of trade and investment in relation to financial constraint, food shortages, fuel crisis and value chain disruptions as a result of natural disasters and the effects of climate change.

Mindful of the costs and benefits of trade liberalisation and in order to maximize the economic benefits from our natural resources, the Government has introduced appropriate and outwards oriented trade policies are pursued through the export-led growth strategy and the Development Strategic Plan which emphasizes export promotion.

Our priorities in export promotion includes creating well-functioning domestic economic base with sound infrastructure utilities; opening up access to export markets; promoting export-led growth in the industrial
sectors; and promoting targeted investment through economic corridors and free trade zones.

Through regional cooperation arrangements and in connection with APEC, ASEAN and others, Papua New Guinea is committed to support trade facilitation and business development efforts that will stimulate and enhance investment in the region.

Chairperson and Excellencies, Papua New Guinea is blessed with abundant flora and fauna which is unique. It is estimated that some 8% of the world’s biodiversity is found in PNG, yet environmental consequences of ill-conceived development practices without concrete planning strategies and visions are having catastrophic effects on the social lives of the people.

The current economic development activities especially in the mining, petroleum and forestry sectors are not only affecting the environment but also changing the social structures of societies, creating social disintegration and disharmony among our people.

Environmental degradation through resource developments, climate change impacts and potential sea level rise are issues of grave concern to us. These are results of poor planning, and natural causes affecting the lives of our people today.

Papua New Guinea heavily relies on the nation’s rich biological resources for sustainable livelihood and its social structures and economic development are important components in maintaining a sustainable environment.

We have responded to global resolutions by having in place, for example a Climate Compatible Development Plan to mitigate the effects of climate change, and a National Protected Area Systems Policy to protect the unique biodiversity, which is aligned to the overall national development plans and strategies.

Chairperson, we are indeed proud to be a part of the epicentre of the marine biodiversity in the world that houses 600 coral species, 3000 species of fish, and with by far the greatest extent of mangrove forests on this planet earth.
It is fulfilling to support an initiative such as the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI), which not only drives to protect this gift of nature, but to help the 120 million lives that face great challenges on this trans-boundary and communal biological resources.

In protecting these vast marine resources, our focus in the near future is to develop the blue economy in a sustainable manner. The Blue economy in a Green World is a global issue that the Pacific Small Island Developing Countries will need collective and collaborative thinking, strategies, support and action from the other countries and partners to regain environmental and economic development balances and pursue a sustainable development path.

Excellencies, ICT has the potential of accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

But the digital divide and connectivity gaps still exist in many developing countries, including Papua New Guinea and the Small Pacific Island countries.

Indeed, the availability of ICT infrastructures and access to services across the nation is improving, but low by world standards. Even the level of access in rural areas is much lower than PNG’s national average due to combination of factors including low household income and the high costs of providing service over difficult terrain to a widely dispersed population.

The policy reforms that our Government has introduced since 2010 on ICT to meet the challenges has drastically increased the expansion of infrastructure roll-out, and voice services reaching many parts of Papua New Guinea.

We recognise that competition alone cannot achieve the objectives to increase access to telecommunications and ICT services in rural areas. In this regard and with the support of our donor partners, the Government has introduced a policy to promote a Universal Access
Scheme through public-private partnership programmes aimed at extending the infrastructure network and services to remote areas of the country.

We are also embarking on a project to integrate all government departments and agencies from national to provincial and districts into a single network to enable interaction between the government, people and the business community. The objective is to improve efficiency, transparency and accuracy in government administration and interaction with the people and the business community.

Whilst the Government welcomes and encourage private investment in ICT, it also appreciates assistance in areas of capacity building and technical advisory from the international and regional ICT institutions such as International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and South Pacific Community (SPC). These institutions continue to guide Papua New Guinea and Pacific Island Countries on international best practices.

Chairperson, like other countries, PNG is not prone to natural disasters such as drought, flooding, sea-level rise, cyclones, volcanic eruptions, and landslides. We have in place a Disaster Management System that has established partnerships with development partners and the private sector to improve early warning systems.

In fact, the Government through the Office of Climate Change and Development in partnership with Digicel PNG limited is utilizing its mobile phone network in sending out early warnings through text messaging.

Chairperson, Papua New Guinea’s population is currently more than 7 million with 40% under the age of 15. The increase in population impacts on employment opportunities, education and health services hence challenges the ability of the government to support productive investments and infrastructure.

In response, the Government has introduced key national policies which include tuition free National Education Policy introduced in 2012 and National Education Plan and the Universal Basic Education Strategy.

Through these positive actions by the Government in addressing the social issues including HIV/AIDS through Vision 2050 and the supporting
strategies, we are confident that PNG will achieve the respective nationally tailored MDG targets and indicators.

We are therefore supportive of the Commission adoption of the Report of the Asia Pacific High Level Inter-Governmental Meeting on the assessment of the progress against the commitment in the political declaration on the HIV/AIDS and the Millennium Development Goals.

Chairperson, many of us gathered here have recognized the need to further strengthen the work of the United Nations, in particular ESCAP to take account of the changed circumstances under which it operates as well as the new and emerging challenges that it must address.

We commend the UN Under-Secretary-General and representative for the ongoing administrative and institutional reform undertaken to improve the efficiency of ESCAP to better serve the member States.

We urge all stakeholders in the Commission to demonstrate courage and leadership so that the composition and works of the Commission can be reformed in ways that are equitable and reflective of the current geo-political and economic realities.

Finally, Chairperson and Excellencies, as we get closer to identifying the regions development agenda beyond 2015, I am confident that member countries are united in the hope for a balanced and more sustainable world, affixed on the inter-linked three pillars of sustainable development.

Thank you.