

Country intervention of Republic of Vanuatu

39th FAO Meeting, Rome, Italy

6-13 June 2015

by H.E. Ambassador Roy Mickey Joy

Ambassador of Vanuatu to the EU/ACP

Dear Chairman,

Distinguished Ministers,

Colleague Ambassadors,

Representatives of the FAO,

Colleagues and friends,

Let me begin, Chair, by extending our congratulations to you, for the manner in which you are chairing this session, assisting the Minister of Samoa as substitute Chair of the 39th Session of the FAO Conference.

Let me also convey to FAO my Government's apologies for the unavailability of my Minister for Agriculture, who was not able to join us you due to pressing matters in the capital.

We however bring to you the Minister's and my Government's best wishes for the success of this FAO Session.

Chair, before I begin I wanted also to place on record my Government's appreciation and profound gratitude to Ms Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General, for her efforts and initiative to invite, for the first time, Pacific Small Island Development States (SIDS) to participate in this 39th Conference. I must underscore the

fact that this is the first time we have a stronger SIDS representation, which I feel, on behalf on my delegation, has added great substantial value to the work of FAO, including the support given back to the FAO Director-General, Professor Graziano da Silva from Brazil.

Allow me now, Chair, on behalf of all Pacific SIDS and FAO member countries, to also congratulate the Honourable Minister Le Mamea Ropati Mualia from Samoa for his election as Chairman of the 39th Session of the Conference. This is a welcome gesture of the ongoing support that FAO is according notably to SIDS countries within the FAO family of members states, but particularly to the Pacific Islands of the Western Pacific region.

Equally and on this note, I wish to join the other member countries, who have already spoken, to convey to the Director-General Dr José Graziano da Silva, Vanuatu's sincere congratulations for his re-election to the high office of FAO.

As you are all very much aware, Vanuatu recently suffered from the devastating cyclone Pam. Cyclone Pam is the most powerful cyclone to ever hit the Southern Pacific. On 13 March, it strengthened to a Category 5 storm over the y-shaped chain of islands, which make up Vanuatu. And in the next few hours, it took the islands by storm, leaving in the early hours of 14 March, Saturday morning, at least 60 percent of the population displaced. This is the first time a cyclone of that magnitude has hit one of the small islands in the Pacific.

The calamity destroyed critical infrastructure, displaced thousands and severely affected food security and productive sectors, including agriculture, livestock, fisheries, forestry and of course biosecurity.

These are the issues, the elements that constitute the heart of the FAO programme. Though we are presently undergoing a lot of work, it will undoubtedly take us years and years to bring back life to normalcy.

On this note, I wish to grab this opportunity to sincerely thank FAO, UNDP and all other donor partners and of course members of the FAO for all your support to Vanuatu during these daunting, dark hours we faced in the last few months.

Vanuatu has already proceeded to establish a Risk Resilience Unit (RRU) under the supervision of the Director-General of the Ministry of Agriculture, who is here with us this afternoon, and the supervision of the Ministry to help the country refocus much more proactively towards building resilience and resilience strategies towards managing the adverse effects of climate change.

This brings me to put before you today the need for some sort of an Emergency Trust Fund to help provide swifter responses to similar or more adverse future challenges of this nature. Rapid changes to world climatic weather patterns will increasingly cause extreme weather events of the magnitude of Tropical Cyclone Pam or even worse than that.

As we speak, already we are in the midst of another threatening weather pattern – an El Niño – which is predicted to induce a drought over the next six months into 2016 in the Central Western Pacific region.

In this regard, and speaking largely from the perspective of the Small Island Development States, I wish to underscore this urgent call to ensure a more responsive, robust and pragmatic mechanism is put in place to help tackle what will very obviously become an increasingly challenging future for our developing countries, notably those of the Pacific Islands.

Let me seize this opportunity to also reiterate the call of our Pacific Island leaders, as voiced within past FAO conferences and meetings the need for the 16 Pacific Island countries to be granted at least one additional seat in the FAO Council. At the moment there are 16 of us, and we are only given one seat and one voice. I beg this FAO session and august assembly to take that into consideration.

While we value the support and representation of our leading traditional partners in the region, my Government believes there can be no better moment to make this happen than now. Now is the time to participate fully in decision-making processes that affect the daily lives of small and vulnerable economies such as Vanuatu and the rest of the Pacific's SIDS countries.

Let me conclude, Chair, by again sincerely thanking FAO and others for your support in reaching out to Vanuatu during the recent calamity that my country has suffered. I wish to thank the Director-General and your staff, and your leadership Chair, for all the support that you have granted to Vanuatu, and wish you Godspeed and blessing success in the course of this 39th Conference.

I wish you well. Thank you, Chair.