

Vanuatu Country Speech

Your Excellencies, Director General, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen of this 38th Session.

Vanuatu profoundly thanks the FAO and all of the member nations for the initiative, extremely hard work and positive action in developing and actioning the “Zero Hunger” initiative.

Our island nation, whilst many thousands of miles from here, wholeheartedly agrees with the initiative and direction taken by the Director General of the FAO... whilst we may not have the capacity to contribute globally, we can, in our own way, show that it is really possible!

With a population of 260,000 people, Vanuatu is experiencing many different problems today. We have indeed good resources in our oceans and a wonderful unspoiled environment.... However, we are charting new and unknown territories as we experience the onslaught of climate change.

Whilst we believe we have dynamic solutions, we can be no further from the truth! Our traditional farming systems have come under attack from the ravages of climate

change and now seem to be weakening at the seams. Its path is relentless.... Temperature changes have destroyed whole eco-systems in our oceans and destroyed kilometers of coastlines....

Our people have no knowledge of this kind of invasion into their daily lives and have no where to turn.... Our systems to educate and assist the people of Vanuatu to adapt are poor and inferior to say the least!

Vanuatu is trying to adapt, and adapt quickly. We have limited time in which to educate and steer our population in a direction that will ultimately pave a way for a better and more sustainable future.

In our efforts, we have identified a vision which will ultimately see a new and improved Agricultural Extension Service which experienced its demise in the late 1980s due to efforts associated with reform.

A new cooperative association structure is now being put before the government for endorsement, and this will quickly and efficiently dovetail with the extension service to provide the education, direction and support needed at the rural level.

Sustainability within the 5 different subsectors of my Ministry is paramount, and to tackle this we are working seriously to develop our aquaculture and agro-forestry industries.

The South Western Pacific Fisheries, whilst still retaining good levels of resources is under a major threat of over fishing and indeed Illegal and Unregulated fishing. Vanuatu too has its own problems, and these have been addressed by the EU..... I am happy to say that we have spent a great deal of time and effort trying to meet the requirements of the EU.

Vanuatu maybe feels the pressures that this meeting is addressing more than most.... Being surrounded by vast oceans of water, and having most of our islands towering from the ocean floor leaves very little room on land for development.

Our trade with other nations is small in comparison, but our efforts match most.

We put our nationals first and foremost, and with a still strong Culture and associated Custom base, we have a chance of surviving into the next millenium.....

Resilience has been touted as the key to dealing with the onsslaught of climate change! We have a number of assistance packages on the table, but at the end of the day, we are a small "LDC" Least Developed Country with a small voice....

We agree and support all members of FAO that poverty, hunger and malnutrition have begun to eat into the very fabric of society, and we believe that the efforts of this

institution under the leadership of Mr Jose Graziano De Silva will achieve its ultimate goal.....

There is no real quantative way of foretelling the future, but I believe the efforts of the FAO might be a start!

Thank you very much.