

**ADDRESS BY VANUATU TO THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

Madam President

Director General

Distinguished Representatives,

Vanuatu attends this World Health Assembly at the time when the world is in a state of turmoil with the the onslaught of COVID-19 pandemic through our communities. Countries have taken tighter measures to address this amidst the already many infectious diseases around us.

The Prime Minister of Vanuatu, the Honorable Bob Loughman Weibur, shares on behalf of the people of Vanuatu his sympathies and prayers to families whose loved ones have been lost to this invisible virus.

Fortunately, as we speak, Vanuatu has not had any reported confirmed cases of this pandemic but that is not to say we can be complacent. We recognise that should there be a reported case the pandemic will be fatal to our people and our health system.

Vanuatu recognises its resource constraints and having seen the experiences and lessons learned by the developed countries. Vanuatu has taken precautionary measures particularly in enforcing tighter boarder controls, established temporary and emergency pandemic infrastructure, imposed health and safety protocols supported by establishing greater public health awareness on hand hygiene and physical distancing.

The contributions and invaluable assistance provided to have the precautionary measures in place could not have been done in a timely way without the supportive assistance of our generous development partners who came to our aid.

On this note I wish to commend and convey our heart felt gratitude to our generous development partners especially the WHO, the Government of the Peoples Republic of China, the Government and people of Australia and New Zealand including our

Multilateral agencies. We look forward to your continuous support in technical areas that we do not have the expertise and funds for.

We understand that there will be discussion during this Assembly for expansion of membership for this organization. We wish to reaffirm Vanuatu's position to recognise the one china principle

We recognise the experience, success and the lessons learnt from the developed countries and know fully well that in order to be successful in our approach to preventing the spread of the disease standard protocols and procedures have to be observed and implemented.

Inspite of the continuing threats of COVID-19, Vanuatu must continue to address other existing health and social challenges, namely maternal and child health care, vector borne diseases, Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases.

On the note of social Challenges Vanuatu is the most vulnerable country in the Western Pacific. Recently we have experienced yet again another disaster – a Category 5 Tropical Cyclone which devastated the northern part of the archipelago leaving hundreds of people homeless, as well as being without proper water and sanitation facilities thus making them prone to other re-emerging diseases.

Vanuatu will increase efforts to improve health services not only to achieve a complete physical, mental and social wellbeing but also to be disease free which is a basic human right !! This right comes with duties and responsibilities to being borne at both personal and also by Governments and all partners. Vanuatu like any other member countries can not do it alone and we call on the international community and WHO family to continue their support to the small vulnerable countries in particular the Pacific Island Countries.

In the last few months and in this Assembly, there is a call to consider options to improve the actions and decisions on how the WHO has addressed the current pandemic and how we improve preparedness and response. Vanuatu stands firm and supports that such an assessment be both comprehensive and independent for the benefit of all member countries.

Last but not the least I take this opportunity to convey my country's appreciation and acknowledgement for your continued support to our health services, to our

development partners, non-state actors, civil society and individuals, thank you very much.