

REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS



STATEMENT BY H.E. PRESIDENT LITOKWA TOMEING
THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 63RD UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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*Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Your Excellencies,*

I am honored and privileged to be able to speak in this great Assembly on behalf of the people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

My sincere congratulations on your election, Mr. President. We have every confidence in your wisdom and able leadership to guide us through our deliberations. My sincere appreciation to you, Secretary-General, for your leadership and commitment to the work of the United Nations.

As this august body enters its 63rd anniversary, I am moved to express my profound appreciation to those visionaries who foresaw the importance of the United Nations, and took it upon themselves to establish the necessary structures for the governance of our collective affairs.

It is not that the creation of this body has led to the cessation of war, it has not. Rather, it is that we now have an international forum in which nations can talk and deliberate over issues of mutual concern. One could well imagine what the alternative to talking might be in certain circumstances.

Mr. President,

Like its sister island states in the Pacific region, the Marshall Islands is struggling with the implementation of its *Millennium Development Goals*. Our effort has been made difficult by unpredictable global forces, capable of draining every ounce of our resources.

As a small economy, inter-island distances are vast, making transportation excessively expensive. Formulating development strategies which address these differing conditions has not been easy.

An excellent example in this case, Mr. President, may be found in the current energy crisis arising from the escalation in the cost of fossil fuel.

Its adverse impact has been immediate and severe. Transportation of essential goods and movement of people to and from far-flung islands were sharply curtailed.

The dispensation of essential services and food products has been acutely impaired, crippling our ability to sustain normal public services, posing a particular threat to food security and medical services.

The rising cost of fossil fuel occurring in rapid successions has left the Marshall Islands with no choice but to declare a state of economic emergency.

I am sure, and the International Monetary Fund has observed, that at the height of the crisis, when the cost of a barrel of oil was over 140 dollars, numerous countries were also on the tipping point.

Mr. President,

As Small Island Developing States and member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum, we are now exploring the concept of bulk purchasing of petroleum, a concept endorsed by Pacific Forum Leaders in Niue last month.

Given our painful experience, we request that the international community give special consideration to the creation of a comprehensive financial facility that can help Small Island States cope in times of crisis.

In addition, such a facility should also help Small Island States transition from fossil fuel based energy to affordable and renewable energy sources.

Mr. President,

Our Small Island States in the Pacific region are among the lowest greenhouse gas emitters in the world. Yet, we bear the full brunt of climate change, and its frightful consequences.

The Marshall Islands supports international initiatives aimed at stemming the tide of climate change. In this context, we endorse the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change*, the *European Union Pacific Declaration* and *Japan's Cool Earth-50 Program* which provides funding for adaptation and mitigation, and the *Niue Declaration*.

Mr. President,

In further pursuit of greater guarantees of our territorial integrity, the Pacific Island countries intend to introduce in this 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, a Resolution calling for climate change to be addressed by the Security Council as nothing less than a security concern of the utmost serious nature.

Mr. President,

The litmus test of the international community's commitment to these agreements should be reflected by its ability to provide sustainable financing for immediate and concrete adaptation programs on the ground in Small Island States. It is one thing to produce agreements or resolutions, it is another to give them real meaning in concrete terms. Our commitments must show themselves in deeds, not in words alone.

Mr. President,

On the scale we experienced over the past few months, the effect of rising fuel costs could bring everything to a standstill. Nevertheless, some in-country adjustments could be made, painful and agonizing however these might be.

But in so far as climate change is concerned, we have no option. We can neither alter the size nor the height of our islands. They are our natural givens and we are stuck with them. Our very own survival is at stake. Consider that if sea-level rises by two meters, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Marshall Islands - will be completely submerged under sea.

Thus clearly, Mr. President, the only alteration or adjustment that is possible is in the mind-set and moral, economic and political behavior of the heaviest emitters of greenhouse gas.

In summary, nothing is more glaring now than the fact that not only are these issues interrelated but their cross-cutting global character clearly demands an effective and immediate global response.

If wars have been waged to protect the rights of people to live in freedom, and to safeguard their security, why will they not be waged to protect our right to survive from the onslaught of climate change? Is the former more morally imperative than the latter? I urge that the UN elevate this threat, this nightmare, as justification for a total war against climate change.

Mr. President,

Recent positive developments evidenced by the easing of tension and improvement of relations between the Peoples' Republic of China and Taiwan has begun a new era of goodwill, and hope for improved economic possibilities and political stability.

In the context of these emerging dynamics now maturing between China and Taiwan, we see evidence of a mutual desire to dialogue and engage in a process that can forge better relations and understanding.

It is a development worthy of our respect, and it presents an excellent opportunity for the international community to encourage and strengthen this process.

In light of this, the Marshall Islands firmly believes that the time is now ripe for the 23 million people of Taiwan to be accorded full participation in the specialized agencies of the United Nations. This is a starting benchmark that is consistent with the principle of true universality.

Mr. President,

As we continue to build a United Nations which better represents our global diversity, the Marshall Islands believes that membership in the Security Council should not be guarded as something that is overly sacred and untouchable.

To do so would be to fail to keep in tandem with the principle of change. It should instead be enlarged to reflect this reality. Japan's fitting aspirations to seek a permanent seat on the Security Council deserves favorable consideration.

As a world economic and industrial power, Japan's leadership and contribution to the United Nations is admirable and self evident. We are confident that as a permanent member of the Security Council Japan will bring much that is good to the Council and the UN as a whole.

Mr. President,

Earlier this month, the United States commemorated the 7th anniversary of the tragic loss of lives resulting from barbaric acts carried out against the American people on September 11, 2001. The event threatened our collective security, prompting a response in support against acts of terrorism.

It is a matter of personal gratification for me, Mr. President, to say that over the past few decades, the special relationship between the Marshalls and the United States has continued to deepen with encouraging outcomes. I am proud to say that Marshallese young men and women in Afghanistan and Iraq have been participating actively in coalition forces as part of the United States armed services personnel, demonstrating our commitment to shared democratic ideals.

I take this opportunity, Mr. President, to express our deep gratitude to the United States for its continuing constructive role in our partnership under the Compact of Free Association, and also for its leadership in advancing the cause of freedom around the world.

Mr. President,

While the ideal of peace envisioned by the framers of the Charter of the United Nations 63 years ago is yet to be fully achieved, this should not be a cause for despair.

People of goodwill everywhere have expressed their yearning for world peace. Today, we see vast increases in movements and organizations devoted to humanitarian work, empowerment of women and mobilization of youth. We see young and older nations engaged in matters of mutual concern.

The United Nations has demonstrated our collective capacity for united action in a wide range of social and economic initiatives. It has affirmed our collective will to build a better future.

I believe, Mr. President, the time has come for the United Nations to convoke an international convention where the fundamental principles and tenets of permanent world peace may be deliberated.

Such a bold step, Mr. President, will draw our attention more sharply to our true nature, to existing constructive forces, and to the need for unifying social structures that can foster the establishment of a truly new world order, and global society animated by principles of social justice.

Today, Mr. President, nothing is more urgent, more imperative and more important upon this great institution than the establishment of world peace, one that is permanent and firmly rests upon the bedrock of justice. And as we jointly undertake to gradually build this edifice of lasting international peace, let us draw our strength and take comfort in these words from the Gospel of Matthew: "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Your Excellencies,
Thank you very much.