

The flag of the Federated States of Micronesia is shown in a vertical strip on the left side of the cover. It features a dark blue field with five white stars in the upper left corner, arranged in a pattern similar to the United States flag.

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

ADDRESS

BY

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PRESIDENT

OF THE

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

BEFORE THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

AT ITS

SIXTY-THIRD SESSION

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Mr. President; Mr. Secretary-General; Heads of State and Government; distinguished delegates; Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honored by this opportunity to address this General Assembly at its sixty-third session. This great institution plays a vital role in the development process of its members and remains the global organization best situated to address and help find solutions to the world's pressing issues. So it is with pleasure that I use this occasion to make the following remarks on a few but challenging issues of vital significance confronting Micronesia today, as a nation and as a people.

I must first commend Your Excellency on your election to the Presidency of this Assembly. You have my delegation's admiration and full support. In the same manner, I commend the dedication and stewardship of outgoing President Kerim.

I wish to offer my greetings to our able Secretary-General and express the best wishes of my Government as he continues to lead our Organization through the difficult challenges ahead.

Mr. President,

This General Assembly meets at a time of unusual uncertainties surrounding the global economy. The world financial situation and the double threats from the fuel and food crises impose additional strain on us and negatively impact our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and our pursuit of sustainable development. The security of our island countries remain under threat by the effects of climate change.

Mr. President,

The fuel crisis is a major challenge to the members of this Organization. There are few countries in this world that are left unscathed by the world-wide fuel crises. Too often, I am afraid, those most affected by this crisis are those members of the United Nations that can least afford the mobilization of a sustained effective response. More often than not, these are the small island developing states that are also the most vulnerable members of this Organization.

The developed countries may have room to respond to the worsening energy crisis without jeopardizing other developments and investments. But for us in Micronesia, we are painfully aware of the particularly strong and adverse impacts on everything from government operations to the significant financial pressure on individual families.

In a very real sense, the lingering global energy crisis has transformed the energy debate and highlighted the inadequacies and failure of the world dependence on fossil fuel. Power outages in our state centers have become a regularity affecting our medical facilities, schools, businesses, and everyday government operations, including services to our remote outer islands which are reachable only by ships. These setbacks are the result of our inability to procure fuel at a reasonable cost. While we recognize that fossil fuel will, in the mid-term, remain a necessity, the current energy crisis strengthens Micronesia's resolve to call for the acceleration of the development and sharing of technologies for renewable and affordable alternative clean sources of energy. Micronesia recognizes that special assistance from the international community and financial institutions in the area of renewable energy supply is necessary to achieve this. Towards this end, we are grateful to those friends that have generously extended assistance.

Mr. President,

This General Assembly, by its own resolutions, recognizes everyone's right to food. On a global scale, this right is being threatened as the world is facing a severe food crisis.

Already, the cost of imported food stuff has increased considerably that my government and people are faced with yet another development challenge already exacerbated by the energy crisis. The cost of rice, one of the largest imported food stuff that has become a main staple in my people's diet, is no longer affordable. My Government, in responding to the food crisis, has encouraged the people to increase the local production of our own crops. But this cannot be achieved without the provision of support and cooperation by our development partners and the UN system.

The nexus between food security and climate change cannot be overlooked. In Micronesia, the farmlands and the inhabitants occupy the low-lying fringes and islands barely a few meters above sea level. Taro patches which provide the main staple of our people for centuries are now under threat by sea-level rise. Already, many islands have experienced inundations of their taro patches and other food crops by salt water, resulting in decreasing production and crop destruction.

Mr. President,

Of equal importance to our self-sufficiency and in meeting some of our nutritional needs are the bounties of our ocean. The ocean is of fundamental importance to Micronesia, and we rely on it. The ocean sustains us and its resources enrich us.

At a time when the world food market is deeply affected by the food crisis, Micronesians are increasingly dependent on and look to the bounties of the sea to provide for their food and economic development. It is therefore of paramount importance that we continue to conserve and manage sustainably the use of our marine and fisheries resources. But the collateral catches and discards in commercial fisheries remains a concern to us. For Micronesians, these are critical resources that are of cultural importance and our people depend upon them for their subsistence living. The international community must find ways to minimize and eliminate this wasteful use of resources.

Equally damaging to the fish stocks are the incidence of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. This practice continues to deprive our people of their food resource, while the illegal operators continue to enjoy and unfairly reap the rewards from this activity without any accountability. The major consumer and market states must reduce the incentives and profits by such commercial actors involved in this illegal activity if we are to eliminate this abhorrent and unsustainable practice.

Mr. President,

The world's financial turbulence, as evidenced by the current delicate situation in the host country, is another matter of concern. While the situation emanates from the bigger economies, all of us are at risk as part of a globalized world. We encourage the developed countries not to use this as a convenient excuse to reverse their recent gains in reaching the agreed target of 0.7% of GDP for Official Development Assistance.

Mr. President,

My delegation is encouraged by the spirit and determination of the members of the United Nations to bring the issue of Security Council reform a step closer to reality. Our task remains difficult, but we are encouraged by the recent decision of the General Assembly and look forward to the convening of the intergovernmental negotiation process. Among other things we reiterate our support for expansion in both membership categories and our long standing view for Japan and India from the Asian Group to be permanent members of a reformed Security Council. We also renew our support for Germany from Western Europe.

Mr. President,

In the attainment of the international development goals, there is no single issue that presents such an enormous challenge to small island developing states, such as the Federated States of Micronesia, than that of climate change.

Micronesia is especially concerned about climate change and the grave threat of sea-level rise that can literally wash away our islands and culture. Three recent articles were published in the prestigious science journal, *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, addressing the tipping points for abrupt climate change, including sea-level rise.

A tipping point is a “point-of-no-return” beyond which an element of the climate system abruptly tips into a new state, with profound impacts on the planet. Examples include tipping points for the melting of glaciers and snow pack from the Tibetan Plateau, which is the headwaters of most of the major rivers in Asia, and the disintegration of the Greenland and West Antarctica Ice Sheets, which will cause meters of sea-level rise.

The news is startling. Simply put, Mr. President, this means that the planet is in peril, and the islands and low-lying States are in special peril. But we cannot afford to be paralyzed.

We must undertake an aggressive program of fast-track mitigation strategies, starting with those that are already justified by their strong co-benefits. This includes the strategy Micronesia has been promoting last year and again this year to strengthen the Montreal Protocol. Our strategy can play a stronger role in protecting the climate system as well as the stratospheric ozone layer.

The Montreal Protocol has proven to be an effective environment treaty. It is also proven to be an effective climate treaty. We need it to do all that it can for the climate system, and to do it as fast as it can. This includes addressing the banks of ozone depleting substances that are hiding in discarded products and equipment. Experts say that if we act on banks at the next Meeting of the Parties, we can prevent the emission of up to 6 billion tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent by 2014. This is more than what we are asking the Kyoto Protocol to achieve in its first commitment period. Micronesia submitted a joint proposal with Mauritius to tackle these banks this November, and Argentina submitted a proposal as well.

One final suggestion, Mr. President: Tipping points for abrupt climate change has been called “the shadow that haunts” the climate negotiations. It is a shadow because it has never been squarely addressed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

But it is now time to have the IPCC address tipping points for abrupt climate change, with all due haste. It is also time for the IPCC to begin an annual update on tipping points and abrupt climate

change, and other near-term aspects of dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. The IPCC's current 5-year cycle is no longer sufficient.

Mr. President,

The global debate on climate change is predominantly framed from a sustainable development perspective. We could not agree more. But Micronesia is convinced that while sustainable development is of paramount importance, we must also be assured of our security and our territorial integrity.

We must approach climate change from a holistic perspective rather than limiting it to the dimensions of sustainable development, to humanitarian or technical issues, or to economic or environmental issues. Climate change also impacts our human rights. It impacts international peace and our own security, territorial integrity, and our very existence, as inhabitants of the very small and vulnerable island nations.

It is absolutely vital that this United Nations, governments and public and private enterprises including academic and research institutions, are united in combating climate change. Each one has its own part to play. We must overcome our differences and assail this threat with the necessary urgent action it deserves.

Mr. President,

Experts have warned that Climate Change is also a threat to international peace and security. Yet, instead of addressing the issue squarely, this United Nations seem to be more concerned about turfs and encroachments, as if it were wrong to admit that territorial integrity, national stability, and security may be threatened by the impacts of climate change, and that human conflicts may also arise as a direct or indirect result of climate change. Just as the IPCC Reports, the Stern Review, and the 2007 Human Development Report inform the UNFCCC negotiations, a report on the analysis on the potential impacts of climate change on international peace and security should provide additional reasons for urgent and adequate climate change mitigation actions.

Mr. President,

Our future, our environment is at stake. Our culture, our human rights are at stake. But we must not lose hope. The entire world is represented here. The time to act is of the essence. It is NOW or NEVER.

I thank you Mr. President.