



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-FOURTH SESSION

NEW YORK, 25 SEPTEMBER 2009

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

Mr. President, I wish to offer my warm congratulations on your assumption to the Presidency of this 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly. We are confident that you will live up to the high standards of your esteemed predecessor.

Allow me, Mr. President, to begin my remarks today by thanking members of this General Assembly for their positive action this past June in adopting the resolution 63/281 on climate change and its possible security implications.

Developed and developing countries alike worked together with the smallest and most vulnerable to do something that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. It becomes all the more compelling that we work together as we did in passing this Resolution, to act decisively now in confronting this threat.

The importance of this groundbreaking resolution cannot be overstated. Its message is clear - climate change is a threat to international peace and security. The resolution is an historic milestone for this august Body. Climate change, including its far reaching effects and security implications, is the defining issue for the world today that should command attention and support from everyone.

When we met here last year, the world economy was going through a time of unprecedented crisis. Fearing that the global economy was heading for a collapse, the world stood together and, with strong determination and swiftness, adopted difficult but concrete measures aimed at averting this global disaster. In keeping with the same spirit of cooperation, it is indispensable for the international community to be steadfast and be bold enough to take equally difficult decisions to addressing the climate change crisis without delay.

Mr. President,

Given the critical importance of climate change to my country, allow me to address that issue here again. I thank the Secretary-General for bringing more attention to climate change and for convening the Climate Change Summit on 22 September 2009.

For us Micronesians and our fellow Pacific islanders, including islanders in other parts of the world, climate change is a matter of survival, as a people, culture and as nations. For centuries, the people of Micronesia have lived on their small islands, many less than a meter above sea level. They have enjoyed a life dependent on the bounties of the sea and the harvest from the land. They have developed a culture of respect for nature and lived in harmony with their natural surroundings. They built outrigger canoes and rigged them with sails from pandanus leaves.

Long before Magellan, they sailed the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean aided only by an intimate understanding of the stars and ocean movements. Sadly, today's disregard for our planet is slowly making the ocean, that has always nurtured us, the very instrument of our destruction.

Micronesia is already experiencing the brunt of the negative impacts of climate change. Sea-level rise, changing weather patterns and an increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters such as typhoons, are all undermining our development efforts. El Niño years have brought increased droughts or increased rainfall, causing substantial damage to staple crops. In the first place, our taro patches and arable lands are limited. Compounding the problem is the salt water intrusion, damaging basic crops including taro and coconut trees - our tree of life.

What if the meltings from the polar ice sheets and glaciers reach their irreversible tipping point? The outcome is crystal-clear: Micronesia and all low-lying islands will disappear. But the effects will go much further, endangering coastal cities and communities all over the world, including Manhattan.

Our vulnerability compels us to take a pro-active, concerted approach in seeking fast-track solutions. In this regard, I am pleased to share with you two specific mitigation measures taken by my Government.

The first action taken by Micronesia is a proposal that is now lodged with the UNFCCC. The aim of this second proposal is to make a modest beginning of evaluating rapid mitigation strategies by establishing, under the UNFCCC, a four-year program of work by experts who would be commissioned to report on ways to achieve rapid mitigation through actions dealing with the short-lived non-CO2 agents including black carbon.

This year Micronesia and Mauritius proposed a two-part amendment to the Montreal Protocol that would mobilize that body to phase down production and consumption of HFCs. Secondly, our proposal would expand efforts to destroy so called “banks” of discarded refrigerants that are harmful to climate. Our proposal, which has gained additional co-sponsors, started a global dialogue on the demonstrated versatility of the Montreal Protocol as a treaty for early climate protection.

I want to commend the North American countries for their strong action on HFCs. Recently, the United States, Canada, and Mexico added their support to the proposal to use the Montreal Protocol to phase down HFCs. That is the kind of cooperation we need - cooperation between the developed and developing countries. We therefore urge the North American countries and others to support the second part of the proposed amendment by Micronesia and Mauritius, as well.

Mr. President, the bottomline is that Micronesia already suffers from climate change. We therefore seek to draw the attention of the world to any and all possibilities for rapid mitigation actions that could buy us all more time while the longer-term war against CO2 proceeds.

Mr. President,

Briefly, now, allow me to focus on several other priority areas for my country.

To effectively manage and conserve our biodiversity and limited natural resources, Micronesia continues to work with other governments in our sub-region to meet the commitments of the Micronesia Challenge. We acknowledge the support of our friends and development partners who have helped us implement this initiative.

As part of our national development agenda, especially in the priority areas of health, education, and private sector development, we are seeking to acquire comprehensive broadband connectivity capacity through submarine fiber-optic cable. This will enable us to meet the objectives of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is also essential to liberalize the environment for telecommunication services, to promote competition, and to put in place an appropriate national Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plan.

To do this, we look to the UN system, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), and our development partners for support and guidance. And we thank our development partners for their support and active participation in these endeavors.

Micronesia is indeed undertaking a wide variety of tasks as it strives to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We recognize that some of the goals can be especially difficult for us to sustain even though we may be on track to achieve them. Progress towards the MDGs is inherently threatened by the nature of our vulnerability.

As an island state with a large Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ) abundant with marine and fisheries resources, we are naturally concerned with unsustainable fishing practices. We are also concerned about the unabated incidence of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing that only rob the coastal island nations of their most precious resources.

At a time when the world food market is deeply affected by the food crisis and economic turmoil, Micronesians are increasingly dependent on the bounties of the sea to provide for their nourishment and for their economic development. And that is precisely why we remain concerned with collateral catches and discards in commercial fisheries as they deprive our people of these critical resources they depend upon for their subsistence living, and are of cultural importance.

The international community must help us find ways to minimize and eliminate this wasteful harvesting of resources. Economic resources are critical to successfully implementing our nation-building efforts. But we realize that we cannot solve problems or advance our national development priorities on the basis of public or government resources alone. Triangular cooperation between the government, private sector, and civil society is imperative to moving our development objectives towards their realization.

Mr. President,

Micronesia has a genuine interest in the reform of the United Nations Security Council – a Council that must include an expansion in both of its membership categories, to be more inclusive, broadly representative, and reflect the present realities of the world in the new century. So we urge you, Mr. President, to carry forward what has already begun in the intergovernmental negotiations during 63rd

session of this Assembly. I reiterate our support for Japan, India, and Germany for permanent membership on the Council.

Mr. President,

December is around the corner and the world needs to “seal the deal” in Copenhagen. The task will not be easy but we must not fail. Millions of lives are at risk and homelands are in peril.

Micronesia is a member of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and our position is well known. We have repeatedly called for a strong agreement that must leave no island behind. Our collective failure to meet this challenge now will lead us towards a colossal and irreversible damage to our Earth.

When the health of our planet needs remedy, and lives of millions depend on our action, we must respond and take appropriate action. I am aware that different States have different ideas of what a strong deal means. But mistrust between countries cannot become a reason for failure; nor can economics become an excuse for inaction.

Throughout the history of humankind, there have been examples of disagreeing nations coming together for their own survival during a crisis, whether it be during a time of war, economic hardship, or disease outbreak. Today, that crisis is climate change.

There is simply no more time to waste, and I will therefore stop here. Talk is cheap, action speaks louder. Let’s go to Copenhagen to “seal the deal”. I will see you all in Copenhagen.

Thank you.