

*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*



**Statement by**

**His Excellency, Tommy E. Remengesau Jr.**

**President of the Republic of Palau**

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Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Without trying to be melodramatic, I believe that my country, the Pacific Region, and the World have reached a crossroad.

In this International Year of the SIDS – leading up to the Climate Change Negotiations at COP 20 and 21, the Third Conference on Financing for Development, the impending adoption of the post-2015 development agenda -- and viewed within the context of our rising oceans, the Ebola crisis in Africa, and the apparent societal inferno in progress in the Arab world – we find our societies, our cultures and our economies under serious attack, as never before experienced on so many fronts.

We can continue “business as usual”-- along our current course, and wait for the horizons to clear away our global haze, or we can choose a different road, one that will enable our critical habitats a chance to recover and thereby ensure their continued ability to sustain us.

Am I a foolish dreamer or a simple pragmatist? I guess only time will tell. But, Mr. President, I will tell you one thing – My country, as small as it is, will not go down without a fight using every tool available. Nor will the Pacific region, whose people comprehend first-hand the real and present impacts of climate change and recognize that their oceans are becoming polluted and their fish stocks depleted, go down without a fight.

That is why Pacific Leaders at this year’s Pacific Islands Forum supported the Palau Declaration with the theme of “The Ocean: Life and Future.” Within this theme and declaration, Pacific leaders highlighted that if we are to survive, we must continue to play a central role in the stewardship of one of the greatest endowments in the world – The Pacific Ocean. That is because, in our short lifetimes, we have experienced a dangerous combination of human impacts that threaten the foundation of our Pacific livelihoods.

That is why, Mr. President, we have called on the global community to support the efforts of Forum countries to sustainably use their Ocean resources and to conserve their valuable underwater heritage.

That is why Palau, Kiribati, the Cook Islands, New Caledonia, the United States, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands are currently in the process of declaring and establishing protected marine areas of different sizes and requirements to reverse the current trends of over-use and to ensure a healthy ocean for our children.

That is why we are committed to ensuring the launch of negotiations by September 2015 for an International Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

And that is why we are calling upon the United Nations to ensure a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal on Oceans.

But while we are strongly in favor of this critical SDG, we are concerned that the post-2015 development dialogue may be too broad, with seventeen potential goals. We must remember that an agenda of everything is effectively an agenda of nothing. Above all, our goals and targets must be realistic, practical, simple, transparent and measurable. Within this context, we must continue to focus on those vulnerable countries and those people most in need. To accomplish this we must recognize that one size does not fit all and that we must continue to concentrate on a common but differentiated response.

Mr. President,

Our international community has years of experience of what does and does not work with our Millennium Development Goals. It's now time to complete the job on the remaining half and continue to improve both the level and responsiveness of our financing mechanisms. We must also ensure that the bulk of financing reaches those who need it most and that their share is not a mere drop in the bucket.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the Pacific, we believe action must begin in one's own backyard. In my country, in the next several months, we will formalize the creation of a national marine sanctuary which will include:

- A complete prohibition on purse seine fishing that covers 100% of the EEZ;
- A no-take Marine Sanctuary that covers over 80% of the Palau EEZ;
- A highly regulated Fishing Zone that covers approximately 20% of the EEZ that will provide for only Palau's domestic fishing needs; and
- A prohibition on commercial fish exports.

Through our global actions, through our partnerships between developing and developed nations and between the private and public sectors, we can achieve transformational shifts in the way we think about the use of our earth's natural assets. By recognizing the Ocean as a joint and primary asset of every citizen on our planet, we can move toward a global management of our Global Ocean Exclusive Economic Zone.

Mr. President,

We must never shift from the need for a global climate change initiative that speaks to a threat to all people of all nations. Climate Change is our Planet's silent war. It must not remain on the back pages of our minds and our global commitments. We must move it to the front page alongside global conflict so that it receives the attention and financing that it deserves. And we must understand that for public health, climate change is a defining issue for our century.

Climate Change affects the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink and the infectious diseases that find their way into our homes.

Our world leaders, both developed and developing, must overcome the failures of our own lost generation. As stated by the Secretary General, "The race is on, and now is the time for leaders to step up and steer the world toward a safer future." A temperature increase of 3.6° is simply not acceptable and if that is the best that our global leaders can muster, we might as well throw in the towel and stop having children, because there will be no future for them.

By the end of 2015, our global leaders must announce a new direction with new and realistic commitments and practical actions supported by a much enhanced financial commitment, both to mitigation and to adaptation. These commitments must include the ratification of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol. And within our discussions, migration should not be an option. As Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner from the Marshall Islands so beautifully stated on Tuesday, "No one is moving, no one is losing their homeland, no one is becoming a climate change refugee."

Our small island nations, who are first to feel the impacts of climate change, who are first to feel the impacts of diminished marine resources, and who are first to wet our feet on sea level rise, are ready and willing to lead. We do not call for action from developed nations that we are not willing to take ourselves.

Last year my country committed in the Majuro Declaration to a 20% contribution of renewable energy to the energy mix and a 30% reduction in energy consumption by 2020. We are well on the way to achieving these goals.

Mr. President,

Since its independence, Palau has been blessed with strong partnerships. For over 50 years, the United States has provided its support and friendship. Without their support to Palau's transition, revenue independence, and infrastructure development, we would not be where we are today. Palau stands strongly behind the United States in its on-going efforts to guide the international response to the horrific situation in Syria and Iraq, and its actions to respond to the threat of ISIS. Let us not forget that global peace and stability are critical if we are to achieve our development agenda and respond to the issues of Climate Change and Ocean regeneration.

We wish to give special thanks for President Obama's support of Oceans, and the expressed intent to set aside 10% of our global oceans as marine protected areas. Finally, we thank the United States for past and future technical and financial assistance in our efforts to implement our National Marine Sanctuary. We continue to look forward to finally completing our Compact of Free Association Agreement which reflects this close and special relationship.

Palau would also like to acknowledge the very significant economic support that we have received over the years from our good friend Japan. We are hopeful that the Security Council expansion and reform process will result in Japan's Permanent Membership on the Security Council. We also are hopeful that Japan will continue to support and enhance public and private assistance to our EEZ surveillance efforts and our continued efforts to develop our National Marine Sanctuary.

In addition, Palau would like to thank the Republic of China (Taiwan) for its friendship and economic support in assisting Palau to achieve our Millennium Goals and would urge the UN System to involve Taiwan in the process of developing and implementing the Post 2015 Development Agenda. I would also call upon the UN to support Taiwan's broader participation in the UN specialized agencies and regional economic integration mechanisms, as their participation in the World Health Assembly, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, demonstrate their ability to contribute to Global and regional initiatives.

We also would like to express our thanks to the Australian Government for its on-going partnership, for its annual aid assistance focused on education and for its commitment to provide \$2 billion to the Pacific Region to replace its aging marine surveillance fleet.

Finally, we would like to recognize the very broad list of partners across the globe who make our efforts at a sustainable future possible, including New Zealand, the European Union, private organizations, NGO's and Civil Society.

Mr. President,

Partnerships such as these are commitments. We would not be where we are without them. In the Post 2015 Development environment, we must all recognize that our actions, as individuals, as states, as nations and as regions impact all of our partners on this planet Earth. If we are to save our oceans, if we are to stem the tide of greenhouse gasses, we must establish a long-lasting system of global partnerships and respect. And at the end of the days, we must recognize that some of us are developed and some of us are not. The 'Means of Implementation', in terms of Oceans, Climate Change, Biodiversity and all of the other issues that require global solutions, is therefore a recurring and central issue. Without effective partnerships, change will simply not occur.

And without legally binding commitments towards our oceans and towards Climate Change, we will not make the transformative changes that we need to make in the next generation.

As a small island developing state, as a member of the Pacific Community, I am ready, willing and able to commit to do my share. I am even willing to lead. But let us not fool ourselves. The only way to make a difference in this modern global era is to go beyond our self-interest mentality. By standing together we can craft a sustainable future for our children and for generations to come.

Thank You.