

Statement by

Republic of the Marshall Islands  
and Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum

Honourable Co-Chairs,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to address this High Level Meeting on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum group of countries which are members of the United Nations namely Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Across the Pacific region, our Forum member countries remain firmly committed to fulfilling the promise we made in 2000 - committing our respective countries to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty, and setting out a series of time-bound targets, with a deadline of 2015.

2. Many of our countries are Small Island Developing States with unique vulnerabilities – small size, remoteness, limited resources, aid dependency and vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters. While these factors may have hindered our progress towards the achievement of the MDGs, they have not diminished our obligations and political will to carry out commitments already given and to implement strategies already worked out.

3. Achieving MDG 1 – **eradicating extreme poverty and hunger** - is our biggest challenge. The challenge lies not in eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, but in eliminating hardship or poverty of opportunity. Many of our Pacific people lack access to good health care, quality education and clean water.

4. **Gender equality and the empowerment of women** is also an uphill battle, with only three of the fourteen Forum island countries on track to achieve this goal. Widespread violence against women across the region hinders our progress. But we are doing something about it. Under the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, we have committed with renewed energy to tackle this issue head-on.

5. But all is not red in our report cards. We have good news.

6. Most of our countries are on track to **reducing child mortality and achieving universal primary education**.

7. We are also making progress towards **improving maternal health**, and combating **HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis**.

8. Non-communicable diseases, however, are wreaking havoc on our Pacific communities and ending lives sooner than expected. We call on the global community to take more urgent action to curb the spread of these dreadful diseases.

9. Our Pacific island countries continue to take steps to ensure **environmental sustainability**. We in the Pacific have long recognised the importance of the environment to the well being of the people.

10. We must respect the land and the oceans. We only have one planet.
11. But climate change is here. Our Pacific people contribute the least to climate change but suffer and bear the full brunt of its impact. At the Forum Leaders meeting earlier this month, Forum Leaders endorsed the Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership. We committed ourselves to be Climate Leaders. To lead is to act.
12. We reiterate our call to action to supporting Small Island Developing States on climate change adaptation and mitigation, including making it easier for us to access climate change finance.
13. Next year, Samoa will host the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. We welcome and commend the aptness of the theme selected for the Conference: "Sustainable development of Small Island Developing States through genuine and durable partnerships".
14. For a region that receives the highest aid per capita inflows, the Pacific recognises the **importance of partnerships** and in particular, **strengthening development coordination**. Both are important elements to achieving the MDGs and will no doubt feature strongly in the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals.
15. But our region is not just about receiving aid or development assistance. We offer our experience of the Forum Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination, which has been in place since 2009. Through Peer Reviews, we are learning from each other to get the best out of the limited resources that we have.
16. It is a home-grown solution to achieving the MDGs.
17. After all, the best solutions are those that come from within and those that Leaders take ownership of. A key lesson that we have learnt in our experience with the MDGs is that the catalyst for progress is strong political leadership and resolve.
18. As we look to defining the new development agenda, and as the Sustainable Development Goals emerge to succeed the MDGs, let me recall the promise we made in 2000 of freeing the entire human race from want.

Ladies and gentlemen,

19. The world we want is a world free of want.