



**PALAU**



**PALAU MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**STATEMENT**

by

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Vice President**

at

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United Nations General Assembly**

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**New York**

**Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**This is a momentous year for our country as we celebrate, on October 1, the tenth anniversary of our independence and of our membership in this august institution. Palau was the last country to emerge from the Trusteeship System, having been administered by the United States under the supervision of the UN for longer than any country in the world. It was the UN that provided Palau with a willing forum in which to express and ultimately achieve our right to sovereignty, and for this we are ever thankful. I am also happy to observe, on this tenth anniversary, that this year we have established, for the first time, a Permanent Mission in New York, so that we can enhance our ability to meet our international responsibilities.**

**It was the United States, through its administration and its willing cooperation in our peaceful emergence into independence, that assured us the liberty and the values that guide us today. For this extraordinary legacy, we today express our deep gratitude to the United States of America.**

**This is a good year for Palau to deepen its involvement, since it coincides with the world's preparation for the Mauritius Conference, and the increased emphasis of this body on the unique challenges facing Small Island Developing States. While**

**images of swaying palm trees and white-sand beaches prevail in the world's imagination, they are only one part of the story. In truth and in fact, the remoteness and isolation of Palau make it a very difficult place to develop a self-reliant economy, provide medical care and education to its people, and deter aggression and terrorism. Fuel and transportation prices are among the highest in the world; after four successive colonial administrations our infrastructure is quite incomplete; and our most promising hope for the development of a sustainable economy, our pristine environment, is threatened by factors beyond our control, such as the failure of all industrialized countries to come to an agreement to implement the Kyoto Protocol. We have created a democratic society, assured human rights to our people, but without international focus, we will not be able to provide hope and opportunity to our children, and we will continue to watch as they leave their homeland to seek an education and a career elsewhere. For no matter what statistics may be advanced, what references to Gross National Product may be debated, until we can provide our children with the incentive to stay and help build our country, we will have lost. The Mauritius Process is thus a critical one for Palau, and we trust that the developed countries of the world will embrace it.**

**Similarly, we trust that the agencies of the UN will sharpen their focus on the Small Island Developing States and correct what we view as a current imbalance in support for the fragile small states of the world. We applaud the recent efforts of the Global Environmental Facility to streamline assistance to Palau through the**

**creation of an innovative North Pacific Sub-Regional Program that will build our capacity to protect our environment and create a sustainable economy.**

**We are troubled, however, by a growing trend in the donor community to demand that small countries like ours prove our capacity before assistance can be delivered. This is a "catch-22" situation that threatens to halt our development. The only way we can build our capacity to execute projects that will save, for example, our unique biodiversity, is to experience the hard work of completing projects, and learning from our experience.**

**This observation does not mean that we are reluctant to accept the obligations and responsibilities inherent in the receipt of assistance. We are willing and eager to be monitored by the international community in our performance. We firmly believe that we should be held accountable for the quality and the transparency of our efforts.**

**Ironically, it is the tiny countries like ours, where so many of the world's environmental treasures exist, that are denied the assistance they need, due to a perceived lack of capacity to navigate the unwieldy bureaucracies of the international organizations that are charged with protecting those very treasures.**

**As already observed, the failure of the world to come to an agreement to implement the Kyoto Protocol will contribute to the destruction of our marine and terrestrial resources. Palau, like many other small island developing states, is a window on the world's future in this regard, and must be carefully observed. We**

**urge the GEF to implement real funding opportunities for adaptation and mitigation measures, in a proactive and streamlined fashion, before it is too late.**

**In a similar vein, we are increasingly aware of a particularly damaging fishing practice called Deep Sea Bottom Trawling. Increasingly employed on the high seas as coastal fisheries are depleted, this technique entails dragging heavy equipment along the seabed, completely destroying established coral, sponge, and related communities that have taken centuries to develop. We are a culture of fishing people and find this practice unacceptable. As we participated with our Pacific colleagues in eliminating drift-net fishing some years ago, we now call upon the world to join us in declaring a Moratorium on Deep Sea Bottom Trawling before this practice does any more irremediable damage.**

**Last month Palau's accession to the Asia Group created the largest regional grouping in the UN. Two critical issues involving our Asian region also have great global significance.**

**First, for the UN to be effective at ensuring international peace and security, all nations, large and small, should be represented at its deliberations. The Republic of China (Taiwan) should no longer be kept on the sidelines of the most important international organization. The principle of universality should be applied so that the 23 million people of Taiwan can bring their talents, their energy and their principled democratic positions to the organizations, bodies, specialized**

agencies and programs of the UN, thereby aiding the rest of the world in pursuing our mutual agenda.

Second, and also in pursuit of the most effective means to strengthen the UN's credibility, Palau urges the UN to reform the Security Council to reflect the reality of the international community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century so that countries that play a major role in the maintenance of international peace and security always participate in the decision-making process of the Security Council. Palau believes that the Security Council should be expanded to include developing and developed countries as new members, and that Japan's stellar record of contribution is a solid basis for Japan's assumption of permanent membership on the Security Council.

Japan has been a leader in international initiatives for many years, and it is for this reason that Palau takes this strongly felt position.

Much of my presentation today has focused on the enormous threats to vulnerable island states like Palau. We agree with His Excellency, the Secretary-General, who observed in his opening remarks to the UN Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development that "high-level political attention has been diverted from sustainable development by the recent emphasis given to terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and the war in Iraq." But Palau also understands that the scourge of global terrorism and its immoral violence against innocents must be defeated. We are proud of our sons and daughters serving in the U.S. Military. Last week, one of those sons, a Marine fighting side-by-side with

**Coalition forces in Iraq paid the ultimate price, marking the first death of a Palauan in the struggle with global terrorism. Like Corporal Ngirmidol, our forces are small in number but large in loyalty, commitment, and idealism. No one should make any mistake about this.**

**Palau is grateful to the United States for allowing us to achieve our independence and thus to join the international community's quest for world peace. Nonetheless, a balanced international agenda, which includes a determined focus on sustainable development, is required if Palau is to achieve some measure of economic self-reliance, and if the world as we know it is to survive.**

**Thank you.**