



REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Statement by

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to the United Nations

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60th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
GENERAL DEBATE

New York, 23 September 2005

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I extend to you the warm greetings of "IOKWE" of the people of the Marshall Islands as we gather for the 60th Session of this august assembly. I am honored to speak on behalf of President Kessai H. Note who had to leave New York ahead of schedule due to an urgent matter at home.

Sixty years have passed since a visionary course of action was charted recognizing that freedom, justice and peace in the world are based on the inherent dignity, equality and inalienable rights of all. This world of ours has felt the United Nations' direct impact and we have good reasons to be grateful. Critics notwithstanding, our Organization has served the global community and has touched every aspect of life.

Marshall Islands is grateful for the United Nations for without it. how otherwise could a small remote island nation express its concerns, be heard, and be on a common ground among the rich and powerful?

Five years since we made a unanimous commitment to peace, liberty and sustainable development, we have gathered here again to take concrete measures as we have approved last Friday an instrument that the Secretariat and the General Assembly can build upon in streamlining the United Nations and in meeting the many new challenges of the 21st century.

All aspects of life in the Marshall Islands have profoundly been affected by its extraordinary history combined with a Pacific War and the legacy of nuclear testing. Its remoteness, size, and vulnerability continue to limit opportunities for the economic growth of the Marshall Islands. In finding ways to work together for the betterment of the population, our National and Local Governments, "traditional Leaders, NCOs, Private and Public Sectors Representatives convened last month in a special retreat -an opportunity for everyone involved to build trust, to think and work together in crafting a shared vision that can and will ensure prosperity of the people. We continue to go beyond words to action.

We continue to engage actively in the regional activities in the Pacific, including through our Regional Organizations such as the Pacific Islands Forum. A great deal of work has been done in the development of the "Pacific Plan" --- a strategy for broader regional cooperation based on the key goals of economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security. The Plan will be presented to the Forum leaders when they meet next month. It will also be discussed at our Small Island States meeting that Marshall Islands chairs.

In the international arena, we continue to reaffirm our solidarity with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). We are grateful for the support of the General Assembly in its endorsement of the Declaration and Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted at the Mauritius International Meeting last January. The Strategy necessitates quick and practical actions to address the unique challenges facing the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States.

The Marshall Islands' small resource base, limited market access, fragile environment, vulnerability to climate change and variability, high costs of energy, infrastructure, transportation, and communication are among the many constraints we face within the existing international economic environment. Our vulnerability to environmental and economic events continues to impede our opportunities for development.

Our development efforts will be in vain if the results are reversed by continued degradation of the environment and depletion of natural resources. We are pleased that the Kyoto Protocol has now entered into force. However, some major emitters remain outside of it. A more inclusive international framework needs to be developed for stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions beyond 2012, with broader participation by all major emitters of both developed and developing countries.

Climate change is a serious and long-term challenge that has the potential to affect every part of the world. It is time to undertake concrete actions and measures at all levels. We welcome the progress of the establishment and development of an all hazard early warning system.

The United Nations' international efforts were carried out swiftly and so effectively in the wake of the devastating tsunami in the Indian Ocean and more recently the hurricane Katrina in the Southern parts of the United States. We hope that the international community will not just act so humanely in the aftermath of natural disasters but also in the far less dramatic, but no less crucial, global actions needed to mitigate climate change and arrest sea level rise before it's too late to act when the people of Marshall Islands and others will become environmental refugees.

On health issues, Marshall Islands continues to face the challenges associated in dealing with major diseases such as diabetes, influenza, bird flu, SARS, and the risk of the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and other STDs. Despite the difficulties we face in addressing these challenges, we are proud of and grateful for the involvement of the traditional leadership, which has contributed to the substantial progress at local and national levels. We are in the final stages of completing the HIV/AIDS National Strategic Plan. Our ambition to carry out this task is high. But we cannot do it alone. The support of the international community is extremely important to help build our capacity; to strengthen our human resource; to help us implement effective public education programs that will encourage behavior change among the high risk groups in our population; and to provide technical assistance to facilitate prompt access to the Global Fund and other financial sources to combat HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Diabetes and Malaria. We have integrated family planning and maternal and child health programs into reproductive health services and we fully support the initiatives on accessibility to reproductive health services under the Millennium Development Goals.

On sustainable development, Marshall Islands has established a taskforce to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are fully integrated into our national strategy. One challenge we continuously face is the need for human and technical resources — but despite this and other challenges, we are determined to work toward achieving the Goals.

During this, the first policy year of its first implementation cycle, we recognize the important precedent set by CSD-13, on how future cycles could be conducted and on what type of outcomes could be expected. The Marshall Islands is working hard to improve access to fresh water; develop environmentally responsible waste management systems; and to provide affordable and renewable energy sources. However, our project implementation would not be

possible without the continued support of the international community and development partners, for which we are always grateful.

Mr. President.

One issue that continues to haunt the people of the Marshall Islands is the effects of Nuclear Weapons Testing. When people in most parts of the world talk about nuclear devastation, they tend to think of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It seems not very many people are aware that the Marshall Islands experienced the equivalent of 1.6 Hiroshima-sized bombs every day during the twelve years that numerous nuclear weapons were detonated and tested in our country. Interestingly, this took place while the Marshall Islands was part of the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

We would like to emphasize the need for full resolution of this issue based on the changed circumstances that have come to light and the new information gathered from scientific and medical advancements about radiological safety, clean-up, and the malignant effects of radiation on health. I call on the international community to support the Marshall Islands in this endeavor.

Marshall Islands has experienced the far-reaching and invasive effects of the nuclear testing program on the most intimate and personal levels: from our home islands that we can no longer inhabit to the sickness and death of many of our friends and families. We can do our best to try to prepare our health system to deal with this burden, but we can never remedy the human and emotional toll that this has had and continues to have on us as individuals, as families, as communities, and as a nation.

On Disarmament and Nonproliferation, we believe that sustainable peace and development will not be achieved without major steps towards disarmament. Reiterating our firm commitment to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, we look forward to strengthening its implementation, including through future Review Conferences.

As a nation whose single most important productive sector and key export is in fisheries, the state of the world's oceans and fish stocks and how these vital resources are being exploited remain our utmost concern. We recognize the importance of the Convention on the Conservation and management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. We remain seriously concerned about instances of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing within our Exclusive Economic Zone. The continued assistance of the international community is needed in building capacity for monitoring and surveillance in this regard.

Mr. President,

The threat we face today is a challenge of a different nature from anything the world has ever faced before. We recognize the critical challenges on how poverty, environmental degradation, and the abuse of human rights undermine human security. We welcome the recent adoption of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. We continue to cooperate closely within the Pacific region to ensure that effective regional action is taken to combat threats to our peace and security. We have taken steps to combat money laundering and terrorist financing as well as to implement the twelve core anti-terrorism conventions and relevant Security Council resolutions. In our global effort to counter terrorism, agreeing on the

definition of terrorism is one of the numerous issues that needs serious consideration and resolution.

On the Middle East peace process, we commend the determination and strong resolve of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in his effort to reinvigorate the Middle East peace process by fulfilling Israel's pledge and its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

On the International Criminal Court, we welcome its progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Darfur situations. We are also pleased with the entry into force of the Agreement between the ICC and the United Nations. We continue to call on all states to strengthen the rule of law around the world by ratifying the Rome Statute of the ICC.

Bearing in mind the phrase "we the peoples" in the Preamble of the UN Charter, Marshall Islands believes that if the United Nations adheres to the principles of universality and self-determination then it must NOT exclude the 23 million people of the free, democratic and independent nation of Taiwan. As a free and prosperous country, Taiwan has much to contribute to the peace and security of the Western Pacific and we reiterate our full support for the ongoing quest of the people of Taiwan to be granted membership in this Family of Nations. Denying membership to a free and democratic nation and condoning the presence of repressive States is a flagrant violation of basic democratic principles.

In a world divided by chasms between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, differences of interest are certain to shape all our reform efforts and keep us a contradictory and divided Organization. We share the aspirations, Mr. President, of a united Organization guided by these values and principles: belief in multilateral cooperation, the imperative of prevention, respect for the rule of law and human rights, solidarity with the poor and suffering, and concern for the rights of women, for the children of the world and their future, and for the health of Planet Earth.

We reiterate our support for the UN Security Council reform and expansion and for a criteria-based approach under which potential members, such as Japan, must be well qualified, based on factors such as: economic size, population, commitment to democracy and human rights, financial contributions to the UN, contributions to UN peacekeeping, and record on counterterrorism and nonproliferation.

Marshall Islands will continue to participate in this session's important debates on how to reform and strengthen the United Nations as an institution, and to ensure that it addresses effectively the threats and challenges of the 21st century. We assure you Mr. President, of our full cooperation towards the goal of a strong, effective, and accountable Organization.

Anij en kojerramman kojwoj tole". Thank you and God bless the United Nations.