



PALAU



PALAU MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 575, New York, NY 10017 Ph (212)-813-0310 Fax (212)-813-0317

STATEMENT

by

**H.E. Mr. Stuart Beck
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary/
Permanent Representative**

at

**The General Debate of the
Sixtieth Session
United Nations General Assembly**

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(Please check against delivery)

Mr. President:

Palau warmly congratulates you on your election to the presidency of this Assembly and assures you of our full support and cooperation. We pay tribute to your predecessor, President Jean Ping of the Gabonese Republic for his effective leadership.

At last week's historic Summit, our leaders created an agenda for the world. It is our task to undertake concrete measures to advance that agenda. While the Outcome Document may not have addressed every issue of importance in a manner that is satisfactory to everyone, it is inarguably an excellent starting point for the hard work that now lies before us.

We must think of it as a floor, rather than a ceiling for our efforts.

Palau has much to offer and much to gain from a stronger United Nations. We are a new country, this year celebrating our eleventh anniversary as an independent nation and as a member of the United Nations. As Palau takes its place among the community of nations, a major concern is development to enable us to stand on our own. In particular, Palau regards the capacity-building expertise of the United Nations and its agencies as central to these efforts.

As the Secretary General stated earlier this year in his report "In Larger Freedom"

"One of the great challenges of the new Millennium is to insure that all States are strong enough to meet the many challenges they face"

And

"No country, weak or strong, can realize prosperity in a vacuum".

I fear that just such a vacuum exists in many Small Island Developing States, and that Palau is one of them. Not a single UN representative can be found in Palau to assist the country in moving forward. The UN flag does not fly there. So when a youngster wants to know whether a capacity building internship or scholarship might be available, there is no one to ask. And when a local environmentalist wants to know whether a Global Environmental Facility Small Grant might be available to assist in the preservation of an endangered local species, there is no one to help in submitting an application. In like manner, when Palau does its part in ratifying an international agreement, thus accepting the obligation to render complex reports to an International Agency, there is no one to help.

Mr. President,

The United Nations has attempted to fill this vacuum through the creation of regional and sub regional centers, which are quite distant from Palau's shores. While arguably well intentioned, this tactic has failed utterly to provide Palau with the capacity building

required, and has, similarly, prevented the world from truly understanding Palau's needs and aspirations. In this sense, these regional and sub regional centers merely replicate the colonial regimes, which the Pacific Island have thrown off—distant capitals making decisions about far-flung provinces. To Palau, Strengthening the United Nations means strengthening its marginalized members.

Palau has willingly taken its place as a responsible member of the international community. Heeding the Secretary General's call to action, Palau this year proudly deployed a contingent of police Peacekeepers who now serve in East Timor. And in response to the Secretary General's desire to develop better gender balance in these missions, Palau's contingent is entirely female.

When the world develops important conventions, often with burdensome reporting requirements, Palau steps up and signs them, as was the case last week when Palau's President Remengesau signed the Nuclear Terrorism Convention.

And when natural disaster strikes, Palau responds willingly, making significant financial contributions to remit suffering caused by the Tsunami and by Hurricane Katrina. I note that in both of these cases, Palau's contributions were, on a per capita basis, among the highest in the world.

Palau asks for very little. Now it asks for help, and that help should be forthcoming. As President Remengesau stated last week in his address to the Millennium Development Summit

"It is therefore time that the international community, and the United Nations as its representative, begin to move beyond studies that recognize past failures to achieve sustainable development in our island nations and to move aggressively forward and to establish a specific program agenda that recognizes our unique 'smallness', that appreciates our distinctive diversity, and that respects our island cultures as equal to those in other nations of this world".

Palau's development challenges are different from those of many of our friends around the world who have taken this podium. Hunger is not an issue at present in Paradise. But the challenges that confront the small island nations of the Pacific may ultimately be as devastating as famine. Climate change and sea-level rise threaten to obliterate our islands. The very poignant and moving statement of His Excellency Anote Beretitenti of the Republic of Kiribati last week contained a chilling preview of what the unchecked scourge of carbon emissions could mean to all of us in the Pacific. The President acknowledged and I quote, that his government "need(s) now to seriously consider the option of having to relocate our peoples when necessary". In this understated Pacific way, the President forces us all to confront a world where whole countries simply disappear from the globe. Is there a more compelling call to action than this?

The period leading up to such a catastrophe is upon us. Palau must rely on the maintenance of its extraordinary reefs and waters, its unparalleled biodiversity, to attract tourists. Without these assets, it will be unable to develop a sustainable economy, to create jobs, which will allow its children to live and work in their homeland.

The other pillar of Palau's development is its fisheries. For countless generations, our people have relied on their waters for their sustenance. Now, foreign fishing fleets, which have denuded the waters proximate to their own harbors, have come to the Pacific and threaten to do the same. The very food chain is threatened by new fishing practices, which, though in their infancy, have begun to damage Pacific seamounts in ways, which the scientific community deems alarming. It is for this reason that Palau has called for a moratorium on Deep Sea Bottom Trawling until the scientific community can gauge the long-term impact of this practice. We renew that call today and applaud Costa Rica for its leadership on this issue.

Mr. President,

We take this opportunity to commend Palau's bilateral partners and friends who have overcome our new nation's remoteness to become involved and knowledgeable about our needs and aspirations. The United States has provided in-country diplomatic representation and years of support for our vital democracy.

Japan has also provided diplomatic representation and invaluable assistance. Like the US, Japan has been steadily involved in our development and I would submit that this special familiarity with Palau's people has enhanced Japan and the US as much as it has aided Palau.

Palau has been disappointed by the failure of the 59th GA to accomplish Security Council reform, particularly because Japan's deep knowledge of our region would inform the Security Council members who have less familiarity with our situation. We supported, and continue to support the G-4 resolution and hope that the 60th GA will finish the work begun last year.

Mr. President,

A third steady supporter of Palau's development has been the Republic of China (Taiwan). We continue to assert that the world would be benefited by Taiwan's membership in this august body. This year Palau co-sponsored a resolution calling for a proactive role for the United Nations in addressing the rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait. We regret that the debate on this important resolution was foreshortened in the General Committee and we were prevented from expressing our views on this topic.

Mr. President:

The people of the Pacific, and the Pacific island nations themselves, are underrepresented in the Secretariat, and in the governing bodies, commissions and tribunals of the world. Our cohesive and effective regional group, the Pacific Island Forum, is most fortunate in having Australia and New Zealand amongst us. But it is time for the new island nations to take a more active role, and to share their unique and graceful Pacific way with the rest of the world. It is quite possible that the islands are marginalized in part by the irrational composition of the regional groups. Strengthening the United Nations should include a

realignment of the groups to better reflect the proliferation of Pacific countries and the actual geography of the world. This would allow the island nations to compete more effectively for seats on major bodies. For this reason, Palau suggests the reform of the system and the creation of an East Asia and Pacific Group, and that this group include our friends in Australia and New Zealand.

Thank you.