



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
New York**

**Statement by Ms. Molly Helkena  
Assistant Secretary for Internal Affairs, Republic of the Marshall Islands  
at the 47<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Population and Development  
United Nations New York  
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Distinguished Chair,

The Republic of the Marshall Islands would like to thank the Secretary-General for his three reports to this important session of the Commission on Population and Development. We consider the 47th session of the CPD as a critical opportunity for all nations, and especially those such as my own, which are uniquely vulnerable to population and migration pressures, as well as basic social development challenges.

The Marshall Islands has made considerable progress towards the recommendation of the ICPD beyond 2014 review, despite significant challenges posed by low rates of economic development, dense and growing urbanization, limited natural resources such as arable land and potable water, and, as a low-lying nation, heightened vulnerability to the effects of natural disasters and climate change.

The Marshall Islands has recently endorsed a 3 year national strategic development plan which cuts across all key sectors and issues. Regarding public health, we have adopted two-prolonged bottom-up approach in which health sector interventions are integrated to civil society interventions, recognizing intertwined dynamics between health sector and outer island communities. Regarding gender, we are in the process of endorsing the National Report on Family Health Safety Study including the National Gender Policy, which will build the capacity of health care providers to address gender-based violence.

Despite the progresses in key areas, my government continues to encounter difficult challenges. Retaining skilled practitioners and specialists is a challenge, but one we must overcome to ensure that women can continue to have safe pregnancies and births. In achieving gender parity in education, we have ensured that all children, regardless of sex, start out on an equal footing. However, we must ensure that this achievement is not undone by high drop-out and teen pregnancy rates. Women are working at high levels in the government positions, boards and committees at an ever-increasing rate. Despite this progress, there is still only one woman in our legislature, and this number has not increased since independence. To ensure gender equality in

decision-making and leadership, we must strive to ensure that women are well represented at all levels of government, businesses, and society.

To further address teen pregnancy, targeted and increased support and protection for girls and young women is needed, including enhanced access to education, comprehensive sexuality education, and increased access to sexual and reproductive health information and services. Such plans are already being advanced in youth-peer and community-based organizations. The Marshall Islands endorses the prioritization of couples and individuals' access to contraception and information to make free and informed decisions about the number and timing of children, thereby preventing unwanted and unplanned pregnancies or pursuit of other alternatives.

In the Marshall Islands, climate change is our reality, and it will continue to negatively affect our attempts at progress in other areas, including implementation of 2015 Development Agenda. All progress is made under the ever-looming threat that our land—which defines our culture and our identity—is becoming uninhabitable as a result of rising seas.

In conclusion, the Republic of the Marshall Island wishes to reiterate our support in endorsing on key elements of the Moana Declaration, the Asia Pacific Regional Ministerial Declaration and our commitments to reaffirm its support to contribute to ICPD beyond 2014 and Post-2015 Development Agenda at the national, regional and global levels. We are also committed in addressing the cross-cutting nature of population issues, vulnerability to climate change, globalization and environmental degradation.

While we would like to further explore support in assistance on ICPD development issues, it is also important that such international support is tailored to the unique structure of small island nations and also delivers effective results “on the ground” instead of distant workshops. Further, both national partners as well as the UN system consider fully the theme of this year's global summit on small islands, hosted by Samoa – pursuing “genuine and durable” partnerships with small islands.