



*President*

REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

**H.E. Mr. Christopher J. Loeak  
President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands  
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Mr. President, Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

When the United Nations was founded nearly 70 years ago, it was created to ensure that, through effective cooperation, the world would avoid grave security threats – and with the aspiration that peace and diplomacy could overcome self-interest.

But the decades since signing the UN Charter have been marked by nearly as many failures as successes – and many of those failures could have been prevented by early action and stronger political will.

I stand particularly concerned at recent events in Ukraine and the rapid spread of violent terrorism in Syria and Iraq – even though half-way around the world, the Pacific Islands are a fragile region that sits at the edge of global superpowers. The leaders of nations have in our hands the means to respond with alert action, or to turn our backs on a growing danger.

Mr. President,

Climate change poses no less of a security threat to our own Pacific shores, and, indeed, to the world. As a low-lying nation, we have no higher ground – no where to go – and we will not cede an inch to rising waters. Earlier this week, over 120 world leaders met in this hall to signal our political will and our commitment. No one should take this lightly. Leaders simply cannot afford “consensus games” and squabbling.

Yet words and intentions alone do not meet the full challenge before us – there will be a serious emissions gap between what the world will do, and what needs to be done to save my nation.

Earlier this week, young poet and mother Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner from the Marshall Islands took this very same stage to urge world leaders to action.

Today, for the most vulnerable nations – those at the frontline – I ask of the leaders of the largest nations, the major emitters, Kathy's very same words - to “take us all along on your ride. We won't slow you down. We'll help you win the most important race of all, the race to save humanity.”

Like no other global challenge, climate change requires direct political ownership and eye-to-eye engagement by leaders. This issue, more than any other, Mr. Secretary-General, will define your legacy with these United Nations. I urge you to not only continue your commendable personal leadership – but also to redouble your good offices towards creative political solutions.

Everyone – large and small, rich and poor – must and will take strong action on emissions.

In this regard, the Republic of the Marshall Islands strongly supports the Federated States of Micronesia, the United States, and many other nations in urging a rapid global phase-down of HFC gasses under the Montreal Protocol. I will personally attend the Paris climate conference next December, to carry my own voice, and that of my people.

Unlike many others - this huge global fight to address climate change is also personal. It literally starts in my backyard. It is my own seawall, built with my own hands, to push back rising waters and to save my own future, the future of my children and my grandchildren. But it is not enough. We face a challenge nearly beyond belief. Like so many other moments in the history of the United Nations, will leaders respond to the climate threat with courage? Or will some nations, including some close friends of the Pacific Islands, slide back on their efforts and simply bury their heads in the sand to an obvious climate reality?

I hope – and expect – that at the coming G20 meeting later this year, the world's largest economies will address climate change - and the economic consequences of inaction. The Pacific Islands demand no less.

Mr. President,

Last month, nations around the world gathered in Apia for the third global conference on small island developing states. The nation and people of the Independent State of Samoa showed the world the true Pacific hospitality as the host nation.

As we have for decades, Pacific Leaders have spoken firmly – in last year's Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership, in this year's Palau Declaration on the Ocean: Life and Future – and again in the SAMOA Pathway – our development needs are beyond urgent – and must not to be put off for yet another year.

While the Samoa outcome charts a course forward for international partnership with small islands – there is too often a mismatch between our national structure and complicated sources of assistance. It is my hope and expectation that many of the large announcements and partnerships from the Samoa summit will not lose momentum due to poor connections in the delivery channels. Our needs are often modest, but the “trickle-down” of international assistance, and global development, somehow fails to reach our local communities, and to meet our unique challenges.

In the follow-up to the Samoa meeting, starting this year, I urge the UN Secretary-General, and the international system and UN agencies, to start thinking closely about how to work more effectively within our unique challenges as island nations.

Mr. President,

As UN member states design a post-2015 development agenda, it is important that we focus on a strong outcome which is also flexible to accommodate the unique character of each nation. We cannot measure progress without specific benchmarks, but as a small nation we fear that so many ambitions can be the same as having none at all. The answer is not to be isolated within a separate and unconnected island strategy – but rather to build the flexibility needed for so many nations to act as one.

Mr. President,

I stand firm with fellow Pacific leaders and nations around the world who have urged a UN Sustainable Development Goal on oceans. And I am puzzled as to why some nations close their eyes to two-thirds of the world's surface, pretending the world's vast blue water somehow did not exist.

The Pacific ocean and its rich fisheries are our lifeline.

We are the custodians of our own vast resources on the behalf of future generations.

We could introduce a step-change in the world's sustainable fisheries – and play our own role to address global food security. Distant water fishing nations must engage us as true development partners and work with us to change the focus beyond their immediate national industry, and towards a global responsibility. Recent progress on sustainable fisheries has become the defining story of the Pacific – it is our empowerment and our future. The oceans are an equally valuable resource for alternate sustainable energy, including ocean thermal energy conversion.

Mr. President,

Everyone should participate on the international stage. The Republic of the Marshall Islands supports Taiwan's meaningful participation in UN specialized agencies and mechanisms, including the WHO, ICAO and UNFCCC, as well as in key regional economic integration mechanisms. Further, I call for Taiwan's involvement in the Post-2015 development agenda, and urge recognition of important assistance provided to my country in health, education and energy. The Marshall Islands welcomes Taiwan's efforts to reduce cross-strait tensions, and urges that UN member states recognize and encourage such progress.

Mr. President,

As a former UN Trust Territory, the Republic of the Marshall Islands has a unique legacy shared by only a very few in this hall – it was the UN which helped set us on a path to independence – but it was also the UN which explicitly authorized the 67 nuclear tests conducted in our nation between 1946 and 1958. Our own history bears the burden – and contemporary impacts – of these tests.

Our suffering could have been prevented by the United Nations – if only you had listened.

Like many other nations, the Republic of the Marshall Islands believes that the awareness of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons must underpin all approaches and efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

These facts speak for themselves, and were recognized two years ago by the UN Special Rapporteur. We look forward to addressing these issues further during our participation in the UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review next year.

It is essential for the survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances. The universal way to accomplish this is through the total elimination of such weapons.

It should be our collective goal as the United Nations to not only stop the spread of nuclear weapons, but also to pursue the peace and security of a world without them.

Mr. President,

This year, I look forward to a United Nations that better recognizes the true global challenges of today, that moves beyond old political cobwebs, and well into our dynamic century.

Thank you and kimmol tata