

Statement
by
His Excellency, The Honorable
Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr.
President of the Republic of Palau
to
The General Assembly of the United Nations

September 14, 2005

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

May I first congratulate the United Nations on its Diamond Anniversary. And may I express my country's full support of this international body in its efforts to build nations, to curb hunger, to ensure water, to aspire to economic and cultural equality, and to bring nations together to solve global issues. Truly, your work plan is a difficult one. Yet it is one from which you must not deviate.

I would also like to convey to all of you my pride regarding the 10th anniversary of my country's independence. As such, this year also marks the 10th anniversary of our membership in the United Nations. The Republic of Palau, although small, and although new in terms of political independence, has survived, and might I add, prospered in its first 10 years of self-rule. Yet much of our future depends on the global efforts made by the United Nations to bring peace, stability and economic sustainability to all of its member nations.

The Secretary-General, in his Report "In Larger Freedom," stated that, "One of the great challenges of the new millennium is to ensure that all States are strong enough to meet the challenges they face . . . no country, weak or strong, can realize prosperity in a vacuum."

For Palau, and for many other Small Island Developing States, the challenges are mounting. We are new countries, remote and isolated. We are small countries, with small economies that lack in fiscal diversity. We are island nations whose sustainable development requires healthy reefs, plentiful oceans, freedom from incursions by international terrorists, and meaningful educational and career opportunities for our children, who are leaving our islands in pursuit of both. While other regions of the world receive more attention, Professor Jeffrey Sachs in his Millennium Project Report to the Secretary-General, noted that Oceania is second only to Sub-Saharan Africa in being "off track for nearly every [Millennium] Goal, and falling back in some areas." While Palau is proud of its performance in moving towards the achievement of these goals, that is clearly not the case in all of our island nations and we must move aggressively forward in bringing equality of opportunity to all of the nations in achieving these goals through the actions of the United Nations.

As global warming worsens, bleaching our corals and threatening our land; as over-fishing by foreign fishing fleets continues to deplete our vast fish stocks; as certain fishing practices threaten to destroy our marine biodiversity; and as the combination of these forces place our diverse island cultures in jeopardy; the challenges mount.

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. And I might add, it is time to bring the moral and religious leadership into the process of defining a new direction, not only for

our small islands, but for all of the countries of the world. International peace and security could well be strengthened by such a partnership.

In our effort to develop a workable outcome from our High Level Event, and to speed our international development efforts, we must first recognize that this process is one of partnership. As partners, it is important to acknowledge that significant achievements have been made since the Millennium Summit and Monterrey Conference. To continue this joint forward movement, we must all recognize realistic needs and responsibilities. While developed countries must continue to work to expand their annual contributions and to improve disbursements, developing countries must establish environments that maximize the effectiveness of these contributions. Good governance must not only be treated as a mechanism towards expanding development assistance, but as a mechanism to improve the lives of our people. And it is not unreasonable to anticipate that strong recipient performance will lead to greater donor contributions.

Due to recent international events, it is also time for the United Nations to immediately expand its emergency response to the rising prices of fuel. For small island developing states, economic gains made over the past ten years are being wiped away by these spiraling fuel prices. For island economies to survive, we must move rapidly and decisively towards alternate energy resources, which can only be accomplished through international assistance and funding.

With great sincerity, we take this opportunity to acknowledge the United Nations efforts and the efforts of those countries and international institutions that have recognized our situation and worked with us to overcome our unique challenges. The United States has labored for over 50 years to help us instill principles of democracy in our leadership and in our children and has nurtured our young institutions. We offer our sincere thanks. With our American Friends, we also mourn the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina's aftermath. We have no doubt, however,

that due to the resilience of the American character, American, and those impacted will rebound from this great tragedy.

We acknowledge the continual support of Japan to our region and to our country, and we are hopeful that the Security Council expansion and reform process will result in Japan's Permanent Membership on the Security Council, where it can employ its knowledge of our region in the deliberations of that body. Fair and equal representation of the nations of this world in its international body, the United Nations, can only strengthen your efforts to achieve a powerful and respected voice on international and regional issues.

As Palau supports Japan's wider role, due to its importance to the region, Palau also supports Taiwan's membership in this august body as a significant regional friend to Palau, and as an important member of the world community. As long as one nation and one people are excluded from their rightful representation in our global community, we have failed to achieve our goal of universal rights and privileges.

We also take this opportunity to commend the Government of Israel and Prime Minister Sharon on the historical disengagement from Gaza and parts of the West Bank. We have followed this complex and painful process and look forward to further progress on achieving peace.

In spite of Palau's increasing support for the United Nations' work around the world, and despite our determination to become an active member of the multi-lateral community, I note that the United Nations and its organizations and offices do not have one permanent representative in our nation to assist us in developing our capacity. Surely the intimate knowledge gained of our unique culture, economy and people is well worth the expense of providing such representation. To this end, along with several other Pacific countries, we have asked the Secretary-General to assist us by establishing a United Nations representation in Palau to assist our

people in accessing the international institutions, which will be helpful in our drive for economic and social independence. We consider this to be a vital foundation for our sustainable development.

Mr. President, the people of Palau recognize that every nation in the world, regardless of its size, has an important role to play on the international stage to assure the global community of a bright and secure future for its children. Today, on the 60th anniversary of this great institution, on the 10th anniversary of Palau's membership in this body, and on the 10th anniversary of Palau's independence, I affirm that the people of Palau, despite all obstacles, will play their part.

Thank you.