



**His Excellency President Iroj Mr. Jurelang Zedkaia**  
**Republic of the Marshall Islands**  
**Sixty-Fifth Session of the United Nations General Assembly**  
**25 September 2010**

Mr. Secretary-General, Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen,

I bring you the warm greetings of Yokwe from the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Every September since accepting UN membership in 1991 – leaders of the low-lying Republic of the Marshall Islands have been reminding the international community of the need to address full global action on climate change. We have no mountains or high ground – we have only our narrow archipelago resting a meter above the ocean.

Enough talk – and too much repetition – has occurred; it is now time for meaningful action, creative cooperation and visible results to address climate. If we fail in the short-term, the economic and moral costs for on our low-lying islands – and eventually the whole world - will be beyond calculation.

The global commitment at Copenhagen to safeguard the most vulnerable faces a true litmus test – will our local communities realize visible results towards a climate-resilient future? I urge that by Cancun, nations build political trust through “fast start” finance – by providing transparent information and actively turning commitments into results.

We cannot wait the uncertain path to achieve a full multilateral climate agreement, and we cannot allow laggards to set us back. Those most vulnerable and those willing to confront the challenges facing us must take leadership in this process by putting forward our own agreement spelling real and ambitious commitments and actions to address climate change – we urge others to follow.

To work in true partnership – we must first show our own commitment. The Marshall Islands government has endorsed a new climate change roadmap, spelling out specific actions to cut our own emissions by 40% by 2020, and concrete strategies to ensure the growth of our local communities are safeguarded from climate impacts.

The Marshall Islands has made important inroads towards achieving several Millennium Development goals – but much remains to be accomplished.

With our international partners, we must also better address climate change risks in the context of our core development.

Mr. President,

Practical and “shovel ready” adaptation actions taken now – water security, resource conservation and infrastructure protection - will sharply reduce the long-term risks to our security and sovereignty. But we cannot ignore such threats – it should be a matter of serious concern to the Secretary-General that we are actively contemplating risks to our territorial integrity and UN membership, that we are considering options to safeguard our population's political rights if our land – and our thin water table – becomes unusable in the face of rising seas.

Mr. President,

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is known to the UN as a small island developing state – but we are first and foremost a large ocean nation. Our thin atolls may appear tiny on a map, but our exclusive economic zone is over 2 million square kilometers. As Chair of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement<sup>1</sup>, I address the UN on behalf of a unified political bloc vested in ensuring the future of the Western and Central Pacific – the world's largest viable tuna fishery.

For the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, our development pathways are narrow and limited – and at the highest levels we have committed to putting a firm stop to the unrestricted global harvest of our resources. The status quo of overfishing is unacceptable – it has strangled our development and threatened the viability of our resources.

We have closed off surrounding pockets of international waters – and if our development and ecosystem needs so demand, we will close off more. We currently realize only a tiny fraction of a multi-billion dollar industry – realizing only one penny from each can of Pacific tuna – and we are seeking political support and economic partnership to grow our benefit.

Without political and economic cooperation in regional fisheries decision-making, and unless fishing targets are in line with science – for the Parties to the Nauru Agreement – our collective economic development will remain at a standstill as our coastal resources decline. We have already driven our partners to achieve positive action. However, far greater efforts are needed, from both UN agencies and regional fisheries management organizations, to identify time-bound strategies which assist us in realizing a greater share of benefits from our own resources.

Mr. President,

The United Nations must make faster progress towards reflecting modern 21<sup>st</sup> century dynamics. The Security Council should be restructured to accommodate those nations whose size, leadership and responsibility – in particular the G4 of Japan, Germany, India and Brazil – indicates a deserved role as permanent members. Further efforts should also ensure that Africa and small nations, including island states, have an improved voice.

Mr. President,

The Republic of the Marshall Islands welcomes the progress achieved on both sides of the Taiwan Straits.

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<sup>1</sup> Parties to the Nauru Agreement: Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu

The pragmatic and moderate actions of Taiwan should not be overlooked by the UN, and deserve further encouragement. I call upon the UN system and member states to be open-minded and identify appropriate means to accept Taiwan's participation within specialized agencies, including ICAO and the UNFCCC. In particular, recognizing the commitment to reduce emissions by the 23 million people of Taiwan – a fellow island nation - in addressing climate change is in all of our common interests.

Mr. President,

The Republic of the Marshall Islands welcomes the leadership of the United Arab Emirates as host of the International Renewable Energy Agency. We look forward to pursuing increased partnership with UAE, and towards establishing a dialogue with the Arab League on investment and development assistance in the Pacific region.

Mr. President,

Finally – I must address one of the most important issue this year within the United Nations. Member states and leaders must improve progress in achieving the goal to stop the spread of nuclear weapons and to pursue the peace and security of a world without them.

The Marshall Islands has a unique reason for seeking the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. During our time as a UN Trust Territory, 67 large-scale surface tests of nuclear weapons were conducted on our homeland, explicitly authorized under two UN resolutions in 1954 and 1956. No people should ever bear such a burden.

For decades, we have told the United Nations about our communities, who are still displaced, about the deliberate use of our people as scientific experiments and of ongoing health impacts inherited through generations. We continue to face the challenges of a UN-era nuclear waste storage site, surrounded by rising waters – towards which we lack resources or technical capacity. We acknowledge important and positive actions already taken by partners –including our former administrator, the United States, but we need – and deserve – improved attention and assistance by the US – as well as from the UN system and multilateral bodies.

I also acknowledge the support of the Pacific Islands Forum, including the leadership of outgoing chair Australia, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement, in ensuring that the NPT review meeting acknowledged the need to address sites contaminated by testing. I fully expect that member states of the General Assembly will be willing to further recognize that a special responsibility exists towards former UN Trust Territories adversely effected by nuclear testing.

As the United Nations maps a global future of non-proliferation, the past legacy of nuclear activities can no longer be ignored.

Mr. President,

The message is the same for nuclear weapons, global security and freedom from terrorism, or climate change – international law is not an empty promise.

Thank you, and kimmol tata.