



*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

**Statement by**

**His Excellency, Tommy Remengesau Jr.**

**President of the Republic of Palau**

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of the United Nations General Assembly**

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## **2013 UNGA Remarks Tommy E. Remengesau Jr.**

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

The Palauan flag depicts a yellow full moon against a blue ocean. This combination of moon and ocean is a metaphor for nature's balance and harmony through the consistency of the rising and falling tides. Just before I left for this year's UNGA, during a full moon high tide, my back yard, which nestles against the ocean, flooded. Typhoon Usagi, just a few days later passed through the Pacific and landed in Asia, killing many people. This was followed almost immediately by Tropical Storm Pabuk.

Mr. President, when I was a child, my back yard did not flood -- and we did not have tropical storm after tropical storm pass through our Pacific islands. It is thereof clear to me and other Pacific leaders that the full moon and the ocean are no longer metaphors for balance and harmony. Today they represent imbalance -- from our past excesses and a lack of harmony -- due to our current inability, as you have so often said, Mr. Secretary, to create "the world we want."

Mr. President and Mr. Secretary,

The Leaders and the People of the world certainly face many challenges moving forward to creating this world we want and in developing a Sustainable future. In addressing this next round of Sustainable Development Goals and in responding to the ever growing challenges of Global Warming, it is imperative that we all do a better job of working together to solve the serious issues that we face. World Leaders at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio established a positive and rational vision of partnership and sustainable development for this World. Unfortunately, this vision seems to have become sidetracked. Frustration in many countries today therefore relates to our failures to move this vision forward, the slowness in progress in meeting our joint goals and the fear that these goals are being diluted.

Today it appears that The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has stalled, that the Kyoto Protocol is on life support and that the Rio + 20 Conference has not done enough to strengthen our three pillars of sustainable development. Our job as Leaders is to re-invigorate our efforts by establishing real mitigation commitments and in identifying immediate, sufficient and long-term implementation financing.

Together we have reaffirmed the principle of '*Common but Differentiated Responsibilities*' at Rio and moved forward with the '*Green Economy*' approach to sustainable development issues. We must not allow our Green Economy to become 'business as usual'. Rather, we must take concrete actions to make real our stated reaffirmation of the principles of the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development. Only then will our Sustainable Development Goals discussed at this 68<sup>th</sup> General Assembly have a real chance to respond to our current world-wide environmental and developmental emergency.

Mr. President

It is clear that what is needed today is Leadership -- Leadership from the Developed world and Leadership from the Developing World -- Leadership that focuses beyond borders and looks past today's problems -- In the end, Leadership that creates a broad consensus vision to preserve our planet for tomorrow's children. This leadership must be based upon concrete and clear principles that will help guide all of our actions.

- First, all nations, large and small, must accept direct and primary responsibility for global issues that threaten our planetary future, and must immediately take appropriate action.
- Second, we must protect the natural resources of all people and all nations, and recognize that no nation has the right to pollute the resources of another.
- Third, we must recognize the need for richer nations of the world to actively address actions that threaten the poorer nations of the world.
- Fourth, we must protect human resources through governing strategies that focus on broad-based education, health, jobs and equal opportunity, and which acknowledge cultures, traditions and homelands.
- Finally, we must agree, in all matters, to promote and protect the human rights and peaceful existence of all the people of the world. Discussion, not weapons, is the best way to resolve differences and insure human rights.

And, let me interject, as we witness so many areas of conflict on our planet, I think it is time for all of us, as Leaders, to use this great institution and our own efforts to condemn violence on people for whatever reason, including the use of chemical weapons, and to seek an end to armed conflict wherever we can. The events in Kenya are but one of a series of violent acts against people that we must work together to eliminate.

Mr. President,

Our Global Warming doomsday is already set in stone if we fail to act. It is therefore our job, as Leaders, to take all necessary actions to eliminate the current threat. My country, along with other Pacific Island countries, is unwilling to even discuss a 3° to 5° temperature increase scenario by the end of the Century, for this will ensure our demise. We are also unwilling to discuss the issue of migration. Instead, we will continue to work with our developed partners to implement strong mitigation commitments and follow-through actions to hold the line on this increase to the more realistic 1.5° level.

My small Pacific country supports the concepts inherent in the recent Pacific Island Forum 'Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership'. This declaration acknowledges the gross insufficiency of current efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It also recognizes the need to immediately ramp up Climate Change responses and provides a platform for declared Country Leaders to establish new and realistic reduction commitments. As Leaders, we must all respond to global warming in

- both the short term and in the long term,
- from the top down and the bottom up,
- both pre-2020 and post-2020.

However, we must not forget that the primary responsibility to reduce greenhouse gasses still rests with our developed partners.

We must therefore use the opportunity at Warsaw at COP19 and thereafter:

- To support the technical work to fast track appropriate policies and technologies to accomplish our goal.
- To revive the Kyoto Protocol or develop a more responsive alternative and to deliver and expand on their commitments to reduce greenhouse gasses.
- To phase-out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that distort world oil prices; and
- To arrive at a legally binding agreement to respond to and to fund '*loss and damage*' associated with the impacts of climate change in vulnerable countries.

Here at the UN in New York, we must deal with global warming security issues by:

- Appointing a Special Representative on Climate and Security to help expand our understanding of the security dimensions of climate change; and
- Establishing a joint task force, led by the Secretary General, to assess and expand UN capacity to respond to the security implications of Climate Change.

And we must make 2014 the year of ambition. As host of the 45<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Forum, Palau pledges to use this summit to build on the Majuro Declaration and to drive greater action. As Leaders, we must also come to the Secretary-General's Climate Change Summit next year ready to discuss the new mitigation actions we are prepared to take and the plans necessary to see that they are fully implemented.

Mr. President,

My country is trying with all its might to accept its Leadership on issues of Sustainable Development. To date

- Palau has committed to provide 20% of our energy through renewable energy sources by 2020 and to reduce energy consumption through energy efficiency and conservation efforts.
- We have also declared and begun to implement the Micronesia Challenge, which commits the Micronesian Region to effectively conserve at least 30% of the near-shore marine and 20% of the terrestrial resources by 2020; In this effort Palau, and other Micronesian jurisdictions have -
  - Strengthened or established more than 150 protected and managed areas over more than 680,000 hectares;
  - Leveraged over \$20M in operational funds; and
  - Inspired other efforts, such as the Caribbean Challenge, the Coral Triangle Initiative, and the Western Indian Ocean Coastal Challenge.
- In addition, we have recently sponsored the creation of a Pacific Islands Forum Invasive Species Advisory Group to improve regional efforts to reduce the expansion of invasive species throughout the Pacific;
- Palau also pioneered the Planet's first Shark Sanctuary; and
- Finally, we have recently committed ourselves to pursue Palau's most ambitious commitment to date, to establish the world's first comprehensive marine sanctuary that will close Palau's EEZ to commercial fishing.

We ask all of the nations of the world to move in similar directions, recognizing their unique circumstances, to protect our Planet's natural resources. An example of one simple action that would have major impacts to save our shark population would be the prohibition of shark fin soup. This is something that everyone in the world can clearly do without.

Mr. President,

We are at an historic global moment. A year from now the UN will launch the Sustainable Development Goals: a framework that will define the relationship between people and our planet for coming generations. In these goals, we must commit ourselves to a more sustainable use of the oceans. The oceans cover 2/3 of the world's surface and connect 90 percent of its population. A billion people are dependent on its fish. The ocean's health is unalterably linked to our culture, our societies and our economies. Yet in the MDG's the Ocean received no mention. As these MDG's wind down in 2015, we need a new paradigm.

Mr. President,

It is therefore time to enunciate our commitment to our oceans with a sustainable development goal that will deal exclusively with the oceans. Drawing from the lessons learned from the MDG's, we, as leaders must create a goal that is resonant, measurable, and easily communicated. Failure to do so will leave us naked to the shifting tides.

In our Sustainable Development Goals, we must also focus on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD), which cause 2/3 of the world's annual 57 million deaths. Within this context, we must also recognize that tobacco consumption, which was left out of the MDG's, has a direct impact on worsening NCD's and must be separately targeted.

Mr. President,

None of our leadership goals can occur without strong partnerships.

Fortunately, Palau has been blessed over the last half a century with strong regional and international partners. I would like to first acknowledge the support of the United States for over 50 years of support and leadership. We stand with the United States in its on-going efforts to guide the international response to the horrific actions in Syria. We also thank her for her very generous economic support over the years and being a reliable ally on which we can depend. We look forward to finally completing the Agreement which will renew and reinforce our relationship.

Palau would also like to acknowledge the very significant support that we have received over the years from our friend Japan. We are hopeful that the Security Council expansion and reform process will result in Japan's Permanent Membership on the Security Council.

In addition, Palau would like to thank the Republic of China (Taiwan) for its friendship and economic support in assisting Palau to achieve our Millennium Goals and in moving on to the post-2015 development agenda, through grants and technical assistance in areas of infrastructure, food security enhancement, and human capacity. We strongly support Taiwan's expanded participation in the UN system, acknowledge the increase in its meaningful participation in UN specialized agencies and mechanisms, and call upon the UN system to accept Taiwan's participation as a valuable contributor to our collective efforts.

Mr. President,

Beginning with your Leadership, and working down to every level of international action and cooperation, we can respond, in a timely and expedited fashion, to the real emergencies that we face. But the time for excuses is over. It is now time for our Leaders to Lead.

Thank You.