



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

**H.E. Mr. Christopher J. Loeak
President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands
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check against delivery

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

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

The UN's 2030 development agenda – and its Sustainable Development Goals – offers small island states a powerful tool to craft and adjust our own domestic strategies. The international community has now spoken – and a changing world is mapping a visionary landscape out to more distant years which have too rarely entered in our own national discussions – beyond 2020, beyond 2023 and towards 2030 and out to the middle of the century.

In adopting the SDGs, the Marshall Islands cannot afford a “set it and forget it” mentality which has too often marked past international efforts. We now have a powerful window to merge recent national planning improvements and set up architecture to measure progress and pinpoint gaps. These gaps are not only our own, but also those of our partners. For too often, we have – all of us – operated with goodwill, but without accountability for our collective performance. Our post-2023 national trust fund deserves a stronger support system – and also holds the opportunity, if we use it, to work towards specific goals and benchmarks.

If we can capture our national and global priorities together, if we can commit our own effort and national resources – however small they may be right now - and if our close partners can also work with us to restructure assistance delivery to target the SDGs – then my nation too can climb the development ladder.

I also welcome the establishment of a comprehensive assistance program with IAEA which will not only build our own national capacity to monitor and evaluate serious issues of nuclear contamination, but also address health strategies and other key SDG benchmarks.

Because I can assure the United Nations that the Marshall Islands refuses the very notion that we would willingly relocate – wholesale – to another nation, and that if the water comes, it comes.

As we move to the UNFCCC Conference of Parties later this year in Paris, I am proud that climate change is now recognized by all world leaders as a reality which deserves, and is gaining, a firm and collective response. Everyone among us must act – and many, including my own nation, have already committed to emissions cuts well into the future of 2025, of 2030 and beyond. But the world's initial efforts are falling well short – and instead of indifference, or fumbled excuses – we must realize true leadership and provide a direct answer to closing the global emissions gap.

As the wider United Nations debates Security Council reform to adjust to the modern world, those nations which hold themselves out as deserving leaders have an excellent opportunity to show that very same leadership in not ducking the bill or pointing fingers, but embracing this very challenge of the global emissions gap – and to start speaking of opportunities for a new energy, rather than dancing around perceived threats to growth. A world without a true commitment, and meaningful pathway, towards decarbonization is, for us in the island nations, ultimately, no world at all.

Mr. President,

As dramatically different as our landscape is today, tensions of an earlier age also echo – a time when the Pacific islands region served as a horrific theater for a global power struggle. Decades later, we again face the complex push and pull of larger international politics. Our regional baseline is often severe fragility – we have a sharp exposure to external shocks – and some of our emerging or future security challenges extend beyond our capacity and push the envelope of international precedent.

The treatment of our security, as small island – and large ocean – nations - cannot be considered apart from that of much larger interaction across the Pacific. Some may see political alliances, borders, and in some cases significant marine mineral resources, as mere possessions readily available for the collecting of the highest bidder or the strongest military force, no more than as one picks ripe fruit from a tree. This cuts against the grain of the UN Charter.

I offer my firm support for New Zealand's initiative during its Security Council Presidency, in holding a Council meeting on small island developing states and threats to international peace and security. This meeting revealed issues that slip under the global radar, but which cannot be ignored, and I urge the Council's establishment of a regular agenda item on security issues in small island developing states.

Mr. President,

I am proud to announce the formal establishment, earlier this week, of diplomatic relations between the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Cuba.

Mr. President,

Everyone should participate on the international stage. The Republic of the Marshall Islands supports Taiwan's meaningful participation in UN specialized agencies, including the WHO, ICAO and UNFCCC. It is imperative that the global community fully recognize and evaluate Taiwan's important

Mr. President,

The Marshall Islands faces some of the more complex development, security and planning challenges in the world – and we lack the full tools before us to tackle them. A nation which struggles to attain basic social development goals will not be equipped to resolve any other challenge.

Progress on education is key – firm efforts are underway to right our course, and to provide better opportunities for our youngest and future generations. We have found new paths to build on our traditional knowledge and culture – to educate on our own Pacific story and strength. But our efforts and good intentions alone cannot provide assurance that every willing student has an opportunity to succeed – we need international support.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands has one of the world's highest incidence rates of diabetes – my government has declared a state of emergency - and non-communicable diseases remain a primary threat to our national well-being. Without transformative partnership, without extending the UN's renewed Global Health Plan more closely to our shores, we risk a tragic downward spiral.

Mr. President,

The term “developing nation” implies forward movement – and for far too long the Marshall Islands has been only treading water. We have promising windows – aspirations to improve our investment platforms – but our untapped, yet substantial, resource base is often colored by larger international influence.

Our fisheries are not only a vital sector for our own development, but a wider contribution to international food security, as the Pacific is steward of half of the world's commercial tuna. Our foreign fishing nation partners, who by no mistake are also the drivers of global influence, have for too long held the purse to our own future, and key stocks in the Pacific are being plundered at unsustainable rates that jeopardize our future.

Already our higher returns from foreign licenses have benefited our own national fiscal future, and this is only a fraction of the true potential. It cannot be, that on one hand we are expected to achieve the UN's SDGs – to produce dramatic development progress – and that on the other hand, we are blocked from further benefit from our own resources by the self-interest of distant fishing nations.

The Marshall Islands – and the Parties to the Nauru Agreement – remain firmly committed to the benefits of the Vessel Day Scheme and targeted high seas closures as a condition to fish our waters. The tables have turned – and if others wish to fish our waters, they must now do so on our own sovereign terms.

Mr. President,

As a low-lying island nation, with no higher ground, climate change poses a severe threat to our very security. Some have said there is no more hope, and no more time. I forcefully disagree. The future of my nation – the future of our very land – is perhaps more in the hands of my fellow world leaders than it is my own. There is still hope – hope that my nation is able to tackle the most difficult planning challenges to build resilience wherever we can – and hope that the world will not turn a blind eye.

commitment to reduce its emissions. Further, I call for Taiwan's involvement in the implementation of 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 as a regional peacemaker, including in cross-strait issues, and urges that UN member states recognize and encourage such progress.

Mr. President,

Like many others, the Republic of the Marshall Islands believes that the awareness of the catastrophic impacts – and humanitarian consequences – of nuclear weapons must underpin all efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

As a former UN Trust Territory, the Republic of the Marshall Islands has a unique legacy shared only by a few other nations. Even as the UN was supposed to move forward our development, 67 nuclear tests were conducted between 1946 and 1958, in our nation by our former administering power the United States, and also during our UN trusteeship status, including through authorization in two UN resolutions. This is the only time the United Nations has ever explicitly authorized the use of nuclear weapons, and the results were – and are still today – beyond tragedy.

If it is that our own history – and very contemporary impacts - bears this heavy burden, then it is a story that the whole world must know much better. Mr. Secretary-General, in your very welcome statements encouraging progress on nuclear disarmament and test bans, I would strongly urge you to no longer omit the powerful and specific example of the Marshall Islands, and the related role of the United Nations.

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, and I am deeply disappointed that political distractions resulted in the lack of an outcome for the NPT's review conference earlier this year. It should be our 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 truly United Nations which has the courage to not only address immediate emergencies at hand, but which also continues to move us all forward into our dynamic century.

Thank you and kommol tata