



National Statement - Republic of Palau

71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly

**H.E. Dr Caleb Otto, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Palau
to the United Nations**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of H.E. Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr., the President of the Republic of Palau, I have the honor to make the following remarks at this 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

At the outset, Palau would like to congratulate your Excellency, Mr. Peter Thomson, for your election to lead our work in the 71st session. We are confident that you will rise to the many challenges and make the Pacific Islands proud. We pledge you our support. May we also take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his sterling leadership the past year. His Presidency will be known for championing participation and transparency.

Mr. President, we join the other Pacific nations in extending our heartiest congratulations to Fiji for the first ever Olympic gold they brought to the Pacific from Rio. And like the other Pacific nations, we also claim the gold because it was won by members of the Pacific family. Here, allow us also to congratulate and thank the people of Brazil for the successful hosting of the 31st Olympiad. Palau believes in the power of sport as an important enabler of sustainable development and contributed to its inclusion in the 2030 Agenda as expressed in para 37 of this framework for sustainable development. The power of sport for uplifting the human spirit was demonstrated when the Refugees Team was allowed to compete in Rio. Congratulations to the Refugees Team, to Brazil and to Sport for walking the talk about inclusiveness.

Mr. President,

Last year we opened our statement by saying that we live in perilously challenging, yet still hopeful times. Today as we meet, the perils of Climate Change and global conflicts still exist. Other challenges such as migrants and refugees, terrorism and violent extremism have become more prominent with their associated mental and psychosocial damages and despair. Addressing antimicrobial and nuclear testing issues have also become matter of urgency.

Amidst these challenges we still have bases for holding on to hope. The High Level Forum on Migrants and Refugees just held gave us an opportunity to explore ways to address the issue and we eagerly await the report. We commend Ambassador Camacho of Mexico for the excellent job on the New York Political Declaration on Antimicrobials. We trust the declaration will jumpstart needed actions throughout the UN system as well as on the ground in all member states.

Mr. President, Palau joins the family of nations to condemn the nuclear testing, conducted by DPRK. We are concerned with the peace and long term stability of this region. Palau's proximity to the launching site places us in special threat. Additionally, we call on member states who have not ratified the Non Proliferation Treaty to do so in order to move one step closer to nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President, Climate Change impacts including those on oceans are, of course, for Palau and other Small Island Developing States, still pose existential threats – the more frequent and intense storms, sea-level rise and ocean acidification, for instance. Palau participated actively in the UNFCCC processes and also was one of the countries that strongly advocated for Goal #13, as the stand-alone goal on Climate change and is proud to have been 2nd among the 60 nations that have ratified the Paris Agreement – amounting to 47.76% of the required 55% required for entering into force. We are encouraged by the 127 other nations who have signed the Agreement and are confident that by end of the year, the Agreement will begin to work for all of us. In addition, we are hopeful that a Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for Climate Change and Security will be appointed who will provide an effective working linkage between the Secretary General, the General Assembly and the Security Council on matters dealing with peace and security issues due to Climate Change.

It is imperative that all efforts be in place to ensure that the global temperature rise remains under 1.5 degree centigrade. Additionally, access to financial and technology must be made available to SIDS and all who need it most.

Mr. President,

14 years is short period within which to achieve the 17 goals of 2030 Agenda. That is why we agree with the sense of urgency expressed in the word “push” in theme for the 71st session of the United Nations “The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform the world”. There is an urgent need to transform a world of severe Climate Change impacts, of global conflicts resulting in unprecedented migration of refugees and poverty exacerbated by huge gaps in resource use and ownership. There is a need to push, either to ‘jump start’ or to go further. Yes, “push” is necessary since we have already lost one year of implementation

In Palau, we are in the process of integrating the 17 goals into our national and sectoral plans so we can implement the 2030 Agenda in a holistic manner. But while that process is taking place we have taken an initiative that, for us, indicates a concrete path towards achievement of the SDGs. In 2015 we started to implement our National Marine Sanctuary. For us, this was the best way to achieve the sustainable development goals.

The National Marine Sanctuary designates 80% of our total Exclusive Economic Zone – an area over half a million square kilometers of our ocean, a no take zone. The Palau National Marine Sanctuary is an initiative which is based on a traditional practice of conservation called *Bul* that puts a moratorium on a diminishing resource in order to allow it to replenish itself. Thus the National Marine Sanctuary will allow our ocean to regain its health, replenish its fish stock and allow rejuvenation of biodiversity. This, will boost tourism the main engine of our main economy – by strengthening the ocean-based sector of diving, snorkeling, kayaking and swimming as well as the ‘catch and release’ sport fishing. More importantly, it will allow us to pass on a healthy ocean and its heritage to our children and generations to follow. In addition to facilitating achievement of goals 13 and 14 the increased income from tourism will allow us to provide the basic services such water, sanitation and ensure food security . It would allow us to address the other goals: eradication of extreme poverty, improvement of health including addressing the predominance of Noncommunicable diseases, strengthening of education and building stronger community resilience,

including improved information and communication technology which will facilitate stronger and effective disaster resilience. We would also be able to address the special needs of children, the elderly and person with disabilities including those with mental illness. One of the important outcomes we want from the 2030 Agenda is promotion of mental health and wellbeing of all citizens of Palau.

The success of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary will, to a very large extent, dependent on what happens in the areas beyond national jurisdiction since fishes stocks and health of biodiversity do not have specific boundaries. Palau is, therefore, is very grateful that in accordance with the UNGA resolution 69/292 a new implementing agreement is under consideration through the process of PrepCom and negotiations to provide a comprehensive global regime to better address the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We are hopeful that the two Prep Coms will continue to provide positive progress towards a strong Implementing Agreement. It would contribute greatly to the successful achievement of the objectives of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary.

Genuine and durable partnerships are also critical to the success of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary. Conducting monitoring and surveillance of such a vast area is very challenging when we are so resource constraints in finances, technology and human capacity, thus underpinning the importance of Goal #17 and significance of genuine and durable partnership so strongly advocated for in the SAMOA Pathway.

We have been fortunate to have had many friends partners who have assisted us in this initiative as well as in other areas of needs, such as, in our renewable energy efforts and sustainable development activities. In this connection, to we wish to acknowledge, with gratitude, the strong partnership we have enjoyed with the United States, Japan, Australia, the EU, Italy, India and Taiwan, for the assistance they have already given us for the Marine Sanctuary, Climate Change and other areas of development.

The Republic of China (Taiwan) provided assistance that helped us to achieve our MDGs and we look forward to continued support towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda. We urge the UN System to involve Taiwan in the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. We will need all the resources we can garner and it will require every global citizen's participation to provide

the 'push' if we are to succeed. The mantra 'no one left behind' must not only refer to benefits but also in implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The 2030 Agenda was universal in its development and its transformational goals. It must also be universal in its implementation. Finally, Taiwan possesses technical capacity in many areas which can be shared with the world and, therefore, should also participate in other international meetings, mechanisms and frameworks of the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, and various Economic Partnerships, among others.

And while we talk about participating in and benefiting from Agenda 2030, we think of enablers of achievement. Thus, in addition to lauding the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, we would advocate for lifting of the embargo so Cuba can have the resources it requires to meet its developmental goals.

Additionally, we join others to advocate for an amenable resolution to the problem in West Papua.

Mr. President,

Before I conclude, I would be remiss if, on behalf of Palau, I did not express our profound appreciation of the Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. He is the first SG to visit the Pacific and he never wavered in his desire to ensure that the existential threats to the most vulnerable Small Island States are addressed. Under his stewardship we achieved Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development among other achievements.

He often said, 'We are the First Generation that can end poverty, the last that can end Climate Change.' We agree and salute him for the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement, which if implemented effectively will help end poverty and end Climate Change, respectively. Our resolve of 'no one left behind' should be about those who need help as well as those who can offer assistance. Addressing Climate Change and achieving the 2030 Agenda requires political will and resolve, not political barriers. It requires commitment of resources and goodwill. I am reminded of what the Sec. Gen. said in his opening statement of this UNGA about barriers. *"Far too often, I have seen widely-supported proposals blocked..... by a few or sometimes*

even just one country. ... Time and again, I have seen essential action and good ideas blockedIs it fair in this complicated 21st century for any one country or few countries to yield such disproportionate power, and hold the world hostage on so many important issues? The global public is right to ask whether this is how an organization in which we have invested so much hope and aspirations should function. “ In this vein, Palau supports the reform of the Security Council including expansion of the permanent membership to include two seats for Africa and one seat for SIDS.

Mr. President, Excellencies,

Our generation will either rise to meet the challenges or be condemned to face regrets from future generations. We can make the choice. Palau has shown the choice it has already made.

Thank you for your attention.