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Agenda item 8: General Debate**

**Statement by H.E. David W. Panuelo
President of the Federated States of Micronesia**

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

Warmest Greetings from the Paradise in Our Backyards, the Federated States of Micronesia!

It is my honor to address the UN General Assembly, and in so doing, I bring a warm Kaselehlie on behalf of my delegation, the leadership, and the people of the Federated States of Micronesia to all of you in attendance today at this 77th Session of the UN General Assembly, and to those tuning in virtually from across the globe.

I express my country's gratitude as we join other Members of this august body in extending our heartiest congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to the Presidency of the 77th General Assembly. We wish also to thank your distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, for his excellent leadership during the 76th UNGA. I would also like to pay our respects to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who continues to demonstrate dedication and integrity in his role.

Mr. President,

I will begin by reiterating that the Federated States of Micronesia's foreign policy is to be a friend to all and an enemy to none; that we extend to all peoples and nations that which we seek: peace, friendship, cooperation, and love in our common humanity.

As leaders of the world, it is our duty and obligation to take bold decisions that serve our citizens as well as our values. Every person in this room and beyond is impacted, in some form, by the brutal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine. The unprovoked attack against the People of Ukraine by another member of the United Nations is illegal, blatantly disregards international laws and norms, and undermines the UN Charter whose purposes and principles are to maintain international peace and security.

To the People and Government of Ukraine: the People and Government of Micronesia support you in your quest to defend your families and homes. Micronesia strongly encourages all other Peoples and Governments, most particularly those with greater influence and means, to firmly stand with the People and Government of Ukraine, and show that the People of the 21st Century cannot, and will not, tolerate aggressive and violent behavior. An infringement on the rights of one is an infringement on the rights of us all, and we do well to stand with our neighbors lest we one day find ourselves standing alone.

Mr. President,

While traditional security concerns have taken much of our World's attention in recent memory, for Micronesia, as a Pacific Island Country, it must continue to be emphasized that the most enduring security threat to the Pacific, and to the World, is in the form of anthropogenic Climate Change.

The Federated States of Micronesia presents its most urgent appeal to the global community, especially the developed countries, to commit to the intent of the Paris Agreement by providing adequate, accessible, and concessional finance for climate mitigation and adaptation, as well as for loss and damage. On loss and damage specifically, Micronesia calls for the adoption of an agenda item for COP 27 on a Loss and Damage Response Fund, the establishment of that Fund in COP 27, and the full operationalization of the Fund to be completed in COP 28. The Federated States of Micronesia cannot overemphasize the extreme urgency of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees through rapid, deep, and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. However, to the extent that mitigation, as well as adaptation, are not sufficient to avert or minimize loss and damage, finance must be provided with all due haste to help vulnerable communities, like those of my country, to recover from Climate Change-related loss and damage.

Current efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions remain wholly inadequate. The world is leaving 1.1 degrees Celsius of warming in our wake and rapidly speeding towards – and soon past – 1.5 degrees. Despite warnings of dangerous feedbacks and tipping points, many actors still continue to engage in the worst emitting activities. They ignore the solutions that could address climate while supporting development goals in favor of business-as-usual. Fortunately, the tide is changing on CO2 emissions, but still too slowly. Moreover, research shows that efforts to reduce CO2 alone will not cool the planet in the near-term. Only mitigation of methane – the second most potent greenhouse gas – and the other short-lived climate pollutants can prevent the world from exceeding the 2-degree upper limit over the next two decades. Doing so is key to ensuring countries can put their adaptation plans in

place while additional CO2 mitigation gets underway. Micronesia urges all countries to commit to the Kigali Amendment and the Global Methane Pledge to see a 30% reduction of methane emissions from 2020 levels by 2030.

Mr. President,

This is my fourth address at this august body, and in my previous three addresses I have urged the United States of America and the People's Republic of China to consider Climate Change a non-political and non-competitive issue for cooperation, as solving the Climate Change crisis ultimately requires both of these superpowers to work together.

For the briefest period of time, it seemed as if the Americans, with whom Micronesia shares an Enduring Partnership, and the Chinese, with whom Micronesia shares a Great Friendship, were starting to work together on this issue, despite increases in tension in other areas. Now, they are no longer speaking to each other on this important issue.

Micronesia cannot understand why our partners and friends cannot get along on this issue of total international importance, but one way to get attention and action is to explicitly call your closest friends and allies by name instead of talking around the substance.

President Xi and President Biden—both of you are friends of Micronesia. I respect both of you and your peoples and your countries. As the two superpowers in this world, you both set the tone and cadence for global conversations. It is my wish that you can respect each other so that you can see with eyes wide open that it is Micronesia's strongest desire, and the desire of the rest of the Pacific Island Countries, that you resume cooperation on tackling Climate Change. Micronesia says this to each of you bilaterally and multilaterally, in the quietest conversations in the Presidents' Office and in the loudest conversations streamed across the World, because it is our most important issue. Your capacity to cooperate on Climate Change is necessary towards ensuring our World is habitable for future generations, and does not suffer from civilizational collapse.

Mr. President,

Ours is undoubtedly an inter-dependent world where we share common goals for sustainability; I am of the view that, through cooperation, we have a better chance of building healthy societies that we can proudly pass on to our children, and a World that values the rights of every individual and every society.

Mr. President,

I want to personally thank the leadership of this organization and its Members for the support extended to my country in establishing the Multi-Country Office (MCO) for the North Pacific. I am proud to announce that the establishment of the MCO has added value to our response to COVID-19, and accessing available funding sources and technical support

through the United Nations System. Small Island Developing States such as Micronesia are in dire need of support from our partners to support our country-driven development strategy.

Distance continues to be a challenge in providing service delivery and, with the efforts provided by the UN MCO, I wish to acknowledge and commend the UN Agencies for their diligent work in making sure that they reach every island in my country and in the Micronesia sub-region, including the vulnerable outlying islands.

Mr. President,

While acknowledging our interest in strengthening our tourism sector and developing value-added agricultural products, investment in the Blue Economy is our main aim, whereby our government works closely with the private sector for the benefit of all. Sustainable fisheries management and protection of the environment are therefore essential in our endeavor to sustain marine life for our future generations.

In 2022, we have focused a substantial amount of work on the Ocean, with mixed results. While the outcome of the Our Ocean Conference in Palau and the 2022 UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon both concluded successfully, critical works remain to be accomplished when it comes to fully protecting the Ocean resources considered as common heritage of mankind.

In March of this year, we, as an international community, were unable to finalize an international legally binding instrument to conserve and sustainably use marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (or BBNJ); and, just last month, we had to pause the 5th Session of the Intergovernmental Conference because we ran out of our allotted time. It is imperative that we finalize this work as soon as possible, so that we can protect Ocean resources effectively. Micronesia looks forward to the resumption, and conclusion, of the BBNJ negotiation very soon.

This past summer, Micronesia announced that we were joining the Alliance of Countries for a Deep-Sea Mining Moratorium, alongside a number of fellow Pacific SIDS. It is the view of Micronesia that deep seabed mining in the international seabed Area should not occur until the Precautionary Principle, Ecosystem Approach, and the Polluter Pays Principle have been implemented. In the international seabed Area, no such implementation can take place in the absence of the finalization of a robust, responsible, and comprehensive set of exploitation regulations by the International Seabed Authority. To do otherwise will be a dereliction of our duty to protect and preserve the marine environment and respect the common heritage of mankind.

Turning to maritime areas within our national jurisdiction, the vast expanse of Micronesia's maritime zones represents both an opportunity and, at the same time, an enormous challenge. We have some of the largest fishing grounds in the Pacific, covering an area of 1.1 million square miles, and one of the most productive tuna fisheries in the Western and Central Pacific.

Our maritime zones are exposed to the threats of transnational crimes and illegal activities. We need our partners to support us in capacity-building efforts towards law enforcement in the areas of maritime surveillance, money laundering and terrorist financing, drug trafficking, and other transnational crimes.

We are thankful to Australia for donating two Guardian-Class patrol boats, and also grateful to Japan for complementing these assets with four smaller patrol boats for nearby coastal waters. We recognize the U.S. Coast Guard as an enduring partner in protecting our expansive ocean territory.

But, given our vast EEZ and extended continental shelves reaching beyond 200 nautical miles, we invite additional countries to assist us in acquiring more assets with much more advanced maritime surveillance capabilities such as drones and submersibles. Our law enforcement, border management, and maritime surveillance teams would benefit from more partnership in capacity-building and support to continually enhance their law enforcement maritime skills.

Mr. President,

Speaking further about the common heritage of mankind, Micronesia wishes to express our gravest concern about Japan's decision to discharge, starting next year, nuclear-contaminated water, otherwise known as Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS) water into the ocean. We cannot close our eyes to the unimaginable threats of nuclear contamination, marine pollution, and eventual destruction of the Blue Pacific Continent. The impacts of this decision are both transboundary and intergenerational in nature. As Micronesia's Head of State, I cannot allow for the destruction of our Ocean resources that support the livelihood of our people.

Mr. President,

The Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum face the future with a lot of optimism. As Leaders, we adopted key structural reforms for the Forum that strengthen our Region through the Suva Agreement. The reforms include selection and sub-regional rotation of the Secretary General position, hosting of a sub-regional office of the Forum in Micronesia, hosting of the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner in Micronesia, and the filling of the head of this office by Micronesia. We are implementing these reforms in good faith to strengthen unity among the Pacific nations as one family.

We also adopted the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. This Strategy represents an important bridge into the future—a unique opportunity for our region to develop long-term approaches to address our common challenges. The solidarity of our region will strengthen our collective sense of Pacific regionalism; and, on this premise, we ask our partners to assist us—not divide us in any way.

The key message, Mr. President, for the United Nations as an organization, and all countries in the world that engage with the Pacific, is that Micronesia and the rest of the Pacific Islands Forum solicit all countries who engage with the Pacific to support and respect the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. This strategy is our Pacific Region's roadmap for sustainable development and growth, and we can only succeed if we work together with the support of our international partners.

Mr. President,

I wish to conclude by explicitly calling on all Peoples and Nations who hear me today to know that the People and Government of the Federated States of Micronesia extend to you peace, friendship, cooperation, and love in our common humanity. We need you, all of you, to stand with us, as nations united, to take actions today for our global prosperity tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. President, and God Bless our United Nations.