



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS TO
THE UNITED NATIONS
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H.E. Dr. Hilda Heine
President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands
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check against delivery

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies,

I bring you warm greetings of Yokwe on behalf of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Mr. President, I congratulate you upon your election, and look forward to your leadership.

Mr. President,

We cannot ignore that our common multilateral progress is failing us in the hour of greatest need.

Perhaps most at risk are human rights - the fundamental freedoms which must be afforded every citizen of this planet. This accountability applies to all - without exception or double standard. The Human Rights Council must also work towards a balanced agenda, and inclusive approach to human rights within our diverse global setting. Our own unique legacy and complex challenges with nuclear testing impacts, with climate change, and other fundamental challenges, informs our perspective, that the voices of the most vulnerable must never be drowned out.

These convictions are why the Marshall Islands is a candidate for UN Human Rights Council term 2025 to 2027, with the endorsement of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders.

Mr. President,

For nearly a year, nations around the world have expressed grave concern regarding extreme violence in Gaza and Israel - not just the horrific events which led to this grave conflict, but also the disproportionate and devastating response visited upon an innocent civilian population.

Mr. President,

As we look forward to next year's UN Oceans summit in France, it is vital that the international community takes action to protect the health and biodiversity of our oceans. The youngest and future generations of islanders must not be robbed of the benefits we know today. Without sustainable ocean ecosystems, the economy, stability and cultural identity of our region will collapse.

Through regional institutions, our island nations are defining sustainable fisheries and changing the global market. Our distant-fishing partner nations at the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission - many of whom are also global superpowers - need to place long-term sustainability ahead of immediate commercial goals. Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported Fishing is not just a threat to our own economic future, but also global food security.

Mr. President,

The world needs to ensure that the high seas seabed is not stripped of its unique biodiversity before we even document it. Without a clear-eyed scientific understanding of impacts and risks - the world's oceans are too fragile to turn into a speculative experiment. The Marshall Islands joins the growing chorus applying a precautionary approach towards high seas mining, at least until there is adequate and meaningful agreement at the International Seabed Authority on binding environmental measures and the mining code.

Mr. President,

Sea levels have risen, and we are too late to prevent them from eating away at our shores. **But we must also be clear: we will not be wiped off the map, nor will we go silently to our watery graves.** Sea-level rise poses a threat to long term ability to remain in our islands, and to our fundamental security as a nation and within our ocean-locked Pacific islands region. But for small island developing states - our stability and legal identity remains fixed, in the future, just as it is now. The Marshall Islands strongly supports the recent Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of the Alliance of Small Island States on Sea-Level Rise and Statehood, and we urge other nations to join us in support.

The Marshall Islands welcomes this year's High Level Meeting on Sea-Level rise, and the ongoing work of the International Law Commission- as an opportunity to engage on complex multilateral questions, even where SIDS have already established state practice.

Mr. President,

We must do all we can to prevent further melting of the cryosphere. By February next year, every nation on Earth has committed to putting forward new nationally determined contributions that set out how they'll reduce emissions to keep global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius. We need governments to show both ambition and cooperation, as we all agreed last year, to triple renewable energy

deployment, double energy efficiency, and most importantly, to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels and end the subsidies that support them. Despite this, we have seen some of the planet's wealthiest countries break their pledges, as they double down on fossil fuels. **This failure of leadership must stop. No new coal mines, no new gas fields, no new oil wells.**

The financial needs for this energy transition, for adapting to climate impacts, and for repairing the rising loss and damage are in the trillions of dollars. In Baku later this year we will decide whether that money is made available to developing countries. We must see vastly increase contributions.

We must also find money wherever we can. Instead of rewarding some of the richest and most polluting businesses on the planet, we should repurpose these funds to the roll-out of renewables, and to directly supporting the poorest and most vulnerable.

Right now in the IMO, Pacific Island negotiators are leading efforts to agree on a universal greenhouse gas levy which gives the right incentive to drive decarbonization of the shipping industry *and* raises revenue in the billions - a portion of which should be used to address the climate impacts from shipping pollution and help build resilience in vulnerable countries. I urge every country to join us.

The Marshall Islands emphasizes the importance of the Advisory Opinion from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea regarding the marine environment from climate-driven pollution. We look forward to the Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice regarding the climate obligations of States.

Mr. President,

The Marshall Islands experienced 67 known atmospheric nuclear tests between 1946 and 1958, resulting in an ongoing legacy of death, illness and contamination. The impacts are handed down, generation to generation.

These impacts continue to challenge our human rights. In our culture, our identity is our land. Testing impacts left behind deep scars, with communities remaining in exile from their home islands, billions of dollars in unmet adjudicated claims, and a social and environmental burden upon our youngest and future generations. To help ensure nuclear risk is eliminated, the Marshall Islands is working towards accession to the 1963 Partial Test Ban treaty as well as the Treaty of Rarotonga and its nuclear free-zone.

Mr. President,

We did not choose this nuclear fate - it was chosen for us. UN Trusteeship Resolutions 1082 and 1493, were adopted in 1954 and 1956 respectively, despite petitions to the contrary by our Marshallese leaders. These tests were undertaken by the United States, acting as the United Nations Administering Authority.

These resolutions remain the only time in which any UN organ has ever explicitly authorized the detonation of nuclear weapons. We can't undo the past. But as a United Nations, we owe it to ourselves to make amends through the adoption of a

resolution which formally apologizes for the failure to heed the petition of the Marshallese people. By doing so, all of us will begin the process of healing, and to re-establish faith and trust in this institution.

Mr. President,

Our strong work on human rights and nuclear testing impacts is a fundamental and foundational effort to address transitional human rights - and we call attention to document HRC/57/77, the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the nuclear legacy in the Marshall Islands and its human rights impacts.

In particular, I emphasize my nation's unequivocal support for the High Commissioner's important conclusions and recommendations on further action for my own government, for the United States and for the United Nations.

Mr. President,

As a nuclear-affected state, we seek to work with other affected nations and peoples including in Kiribati, French Polynesia, Australia, Algeria, Kazakhstan, North Korea, in the Xinjiang Province of mainland China, and within the United States. **All should realize that the responsibility to fully address the harms resulting from the use, detonation, or testing of nuclear weapons lies, respectively, with the Member States that have done so.** This is the basis of UN General Assembly resolution 78/240, on victim assistance and environmental remediation. And all must know that the scars upon our collective lands and peoples are firm lessons for nuclear weapons elimination.

Mr. President,

The Marshall Islands welcomes this year's adoption of the Antigua & Barbuda Agenda for SIDS as a companion to the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. It is vital that island-driven strategies are better addressed. We are particularly pleased to welcome the strong efforts of the new UN Multi Country Office for the North Pacific in the Federated States of Micronesia, and we look forward to a groundbreaking ceremony for the new UN complex.

Mr. President,

This year's Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, hosted in the Marshall Islands, demonstrated the region's continued commitment to advancing gender equality with a focus on the health of women and girls, gender-responsive climate justice, and gender-based violence to strengthen and uplift women and girls across the Pacific. It is important in our work going forward that we progress national implementation at scale and builds intersections with UN Women and international system assistance, including as a full region, and with the UN North Pacific Multi-Country Office.

Mr. President,

We have long understood island-led security in our region. But, for many, we are only starting to build formal security foundations, at a time when full policy

strength is needed to turn the Pacific Islands Forum Boe Declaration on Regional Security into action. Recent UN action, under the Secretary-General's peacebuilding fund, is a key step-up to strengthen treatment of the link between climate and security. We now need to address - with our own direct Pacific voices - geopolitical tension, to ensure that our democratic island priorities drive our future, free of external influence and coercion.

Climate impacts pose a grave security challenge alone - but tackling them with core institutions under external stress, coupled with our underlying fragility, risks epic disaster.

Mr. President,

Russia's continued aggression against Ukraine is a threat to basic democratic norms, human rights, and international accountability. As island democracies, and as vulnerable nations in the shadow of changing geopolitics, the war in Ukraine is of great concern to the Pacific Islands as though Eastern Europe was next-door.

Mr. President,

The Marshall Islands looks forward to the upcoming high-level visit of the Pacific Islands Forum "troika plus" grouping to New Caledonia. In addition, we support ongoing Forum engagement with Indonesia and West Papua, to better understand stakeholders, and to ensure human rights.

Mr. President,

If we are truly serious that "no one is left behind," the UN would not be blinded to Taiwan's efforts and partnership towards achievement of the SDGs.

Only this independent, democratic government can represent its 23 million people. UN Resolution 2758 does not mention Taiwan and should not be used as a pretext to exclude Taiwan from participating meaningfully in the UN system. This resolution has been misused to threaten cross-strait and regional peace and security - this was never its original intent. It cannot serve as a sound basis to prohibit Taiwanese citizens and journalists from the UN premises. The UN Secretariat should maintain neutrality, and should not be complicit in limiting media freedom.

Mr. President,

As key risks worsen in and around the world, multilateralism must be strengthened. For small and vulnerable nations, the United Nations, despite all its faults, remains the only institution which offers us a vital platform to voice our concerns, issues, and at times, seek shelter from the ravages of conflicts and climate change.

The word multilateralism can be expressed in the Marshallese proverb, "Wod In Kanol", meaning the coral where all the fish congregate to seek shelter and feed. Mr. President, the United Nations *is* that very coral. Let us all

nourish and maintain it for ourselves and future generations, and let us leave no country behind.

Thank you and kम्मol tata.