



**Palau Statement at the 79th United Nations General Assembly
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Delivered by:

**The Honorable J. Uduch Sengebau Senior
Vice President and Minister of Justice**

Secretary-General António Guterres, President Philemon Yang,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Alii and warm greetings from Palau.

Mr. President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your election as President of the 79th General Assembly session. We also extend our deep gratitude to former President Dennis Francis for his leadership over the past year, and to Secretary-General Guterres, we commend you for your tireless efforts in advocating for a more secure, prosperous, and sustainable world. It is this shared vision that unites us today.

This year, Palau proudly celebrates 30 years of independence. On October 1, 1994, Palau became a sovereign nation, and shortly thereafter, the 185th member of the United Nations. To honor the journey that has brought us here, we have chosen the theme: “A Rechad a Otil a Kerremellel Belau” — “The People are the Anchor of Palau’s Conservation and Identity.” This phrase encapsulates what has sustained us through decades of both challenges and progress. Our people are the foundation of our efforts to protect our environment, culture, and way

of life. This was further underscored during our Voluntary National Review (VNR) presentation this year, which centered around the theme: "Harnessing our cultural heritage to build back better for a sustainable future." It highlighted the pivotal role of our culture and people in shaping a future that not only fosters development and enhances quality of life but also safeguards our natural resources, homes, and the environment that has sustained us for generations.

Mr. President, Palau begins its pursuit of equality with the critical role that women play in our society. It is crucial to leverage our recent advancements and collective experiences. This was highlighted at the first-ever "Meeting of Women in Elected Leadership," held in Palau on September 20, 2023.

Over the past four years, we have undertaken initiatives that empower women in their traditional roles, such as the keepers of the mesei (taro patch), enabling them to scale their entrepreneurial ventures and raise their profiles. These efforts are giving our women a pathway into entrepreneurship and business, amplifying their voices in new arenas.

Food security is central to Palau's long-term resilience. We have set a national goal to reduce food imports from 80% to 60% by 2030. By promoting local food production, we not only preserve our traditions but also combat non-communicable diseases linked to over-reliance on imported, processed foods.

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Palau, like many others, confronts unique challenges that threaten our economic development, environment, and survival. While SIDS contribute less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, we bear the brunt of the climate crisis.

Palau has experienced the unmistakable signs of climate change firsthand. More intense storms, landslides, and prolonged droughts are becoming the new normal. The ripple effects of climate disasters globally

have caused the cost of imported goods to skyrocket, further jeopardizing our food security and economic stability.

The global response to climate change is a matter of life and death. Through the Paris Agreement and other international frameworks, we have underscored the vulnerabilities of island nations like ours.

One of the most urgent challenges for SIDS is sea-level rise. Many of our islands sit just a few meters above sea level, leaving us vulnerable to coastal erosion, flooding, and storm surges. This is not only a present threat but an existential crisis for future generations. In Palau, we are taking steps to relocate critical infrastructure, including our national hospital and schools, to protect our people from rising waters and climate-related disasters.

Adaptation is vital for our survival. Our National Adaptation Plan (NAP) prioritizes both immediate and long-term actions to build resilience. We focus on protecting our mesei, vital ecosystems, and sustainable development, guided by our traditional conservation practice, bul, which has sustained us for generations.

Mitigation is equally important. Palau is committed to reducing carbon emissions and transitioning to renewable energy. Solar, wind, and ocean energy provide opportunities to reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels and secure a cleaner, more sustainable future. Our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) reflect this commitment, and we remain mindful of the environmental impacts of renewable energy waste, such as solar panels and batteries, which require responsible management.

As Co-Chair of the Ocean Panel, alongside Norway, Palau plays a vital role in shaping global ocean governance. The High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, now composed of 19 nations with the addition of the UAE, remains committed to advancing the sustainable

use of oceans through science-driven policies. We expect the 2025 UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France, to be a pivotal moment for accelerating ocean action, and we encourage more nations to join us in this mission.

As the first to ratify the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, Palau remains steadfast in conserving and sustainably using marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. This treaty symbolizes global unity in safeguarding our oceans, and we urge international solidarity to ratify the BBNJ treaty swiftly so it can enter into force.

Palau has also declared a national moratorium on deep-sea mining, reaffirming our unwavering commitment to preserving marine ecosystems. We call on the global community to exercise vigilance in protecting marine resources until we have a thorough understanding of the impacts of deep-sea mining.

Our commitment to a sustainable blue economy is reflected in the Unlocking Blue Pacific Prosperity (UBPP) initiative, launched at COP28. The UBPP unites Pacific Island nations in addressing the dual challenges of climate change and ocean health. Supported by the Bezos Earth Fund and other partners, we aim to achieve 100% effective ocean management and protect 30% of the Blue Pacific Continent, covering over one billion hectares.

Mr. President, Palau is set to assume the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island Developing States (AOSIS) from 2025 to 2026. We are committed to leading the group of 39 member states in advancing the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS), ensuring that our voices remain central in global discussions. Our priorities will include expanding access to climate finance, strengthening resilience, and promoting a sustainable future for all island nations.

Mr. President, Palau highlights the importance of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) in assessing the challenges faced by SIDS. Traditional metrics like GDP do not capture the economic and environmental shocks that disproportionately affect our nations. The MVI offers a comprehensive assessment to help us advocate for the support we need from financial institutions and global partners.

Mr. President, we must address the urgent need for Security Council reform. The world has changed dramatically since the United Nations was founded, and the Security Council must evolve to meet today's realities. Equitable representation, including permanent and non-permanent members, is essential. We support Japan's bid for a permanent seat and believe that SIDS should also be represented on the Council to provide a voice for those on the frontlines of global challenges.

Finally, we continue to strengthen our national security through partnerships with allies, including the United States, Australia, Japan, and Taiwan. As Vice President and Minister of Justice, I emphasize the need for robust law enforcement and maritime cooperation frameworks. With INTERPOL membership and enhanced cyber defense capabilities, we are better equipped to protect our borders and our people.

Palau reaffirms its strong and enduring relationship with Taiwan and calls for its meaningful participation in international organizations. Taiwan's exclusion undermines the principles of inclusivity and cooperation that the United Nations represents. UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 does not preclude Taiwan's involvement in efforts related to the Sustainable Development Goals, and we urge this assembly to support Taiwan's rightful inclusion.

Today, I stand before you with a call to action. We must unite to confront the existential threat of climate change, protect our oceans, and ensure that no nation—no matter how small—is left behind. We must prioritize

science, conservation, and the well-being of our people. As President Whipps said earlier this year, “The road ahead requires unity, resilience, and collective action.” Palau cannot mitigate the climate crisis alone. We need global cooperation to reduce emissions and safeguard our planet for future generations.

Mesulang, Thank you.