

*Check against delivery*



**President Surangel S. Whipps, Jr.  
United Nations General Assembly  
National Statement  
Sept. 25, 2025**

**Madam President, Secretary-General, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,**

**It is my great honor to address this Assembly at a milestone moment—the 80th anniversary of the United Nations.**

**Eighty years ago, nations scarred by war came together to say “never again.” They built this Organization on the belief that cooperation, not conflict, could guide humanity forward. Today, as we reflect on that founding vision, let us remember: the United Nations was not built for the powerful, but for all nations — large and small alike.**

**In Palau we have a saying: “Ng di sengsongd e mrecherchii a klengoes”—“Small twigs banded together can bring a pot to boil.” This wisdom reminds us that even the smallest among us, when united and determined, can drive meaningful change.**

**The recent International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion affirms this truth, that our voice—though often overlooked—carries the weight of justice. We thank Vanuatu for their leadership, and recognize the Pacific youth who co-led this charge.**

**The advisory opinion confirmed what we have always known: 1.5 degrees is not optional. It is now the benchmark for global action under international law. Let us defend this limit as the political, moral, and legal anchor of the Paris Agreement.**

**The world is at war. Defense spending is at an all-time high, approaching 3 trillion annually! Small island states like Palau are also at war. Our shores are being invaded by seawater. Our homes are being blown away by storms. Our roads are being washed away by torrential rain. Our reefs are overheating. Our fish are disappearing. And our land is on fire. This is our daily battle.**

**Ahead of COP30 in Belem, we must see new Nationally Determined Contributions submitted particularly from major emitters, and they must be aligned with a 1.5 degree trajectory.**

**We applaud Australia's leadership in setting incredibly ambitious and achievable 2035 emissions reduction targets and developing clear strategies to reach its net-zero emissions pathway by 2050. Australia leads the way in supporting Pacific Island countries in accelerating the energy transition. This is a testament to the kind of leadership needed to defend and ensure a safe and prosperous future.**

**Ambition without implementation is an empty promise.** For SIDS, the fight also depends on climate finance. Too often our countries are trapped in systems that are overly complex, slow and inaccessible. Finance must be predictable and adequate. It should not create new debt, freeing us to implement our NDCs, adapt to climate change impacts, and address loss and damage. The 1.5 degree Celsius limit remains our lifeline, and finance is key to achieving it. We need investment to combat our greatest threat. It is not aspirational; it is the scientifically grounded guardrail that protects the most vulnerable from the worst of climate impacts.

**Madam President, our region has served as the world's moral compass on climate justice. We helped secure the 1.5°C goal in Paris. We pushed for the mechanism on loss and damage.**

**If the world is serious about 1.5°C, we urge you to come to our region, to see with your own eyes what the Pacific is facing and be moved to act.**

**That is why COP31 must be a Pacific COP: hosted by Australia – shaped in partnership with the Pacific islands.**

**Madam President, on the issue of climate solutions: deep-sea mining has been incorrectly promoted as a silver-bullet for the climate crisis. If we rush forward without understanding the consequences, we risk inflicting irreparable harm. The loss of biodiversity, the release of carbon, damage to the water column, and the destruction of fisheries that sustain our people is unfathomable.**

**At UNOC 3, 38 countries including Palau came together in support of a moratorium and our message is clear—we must let science guide us before we exploit the deep sea.**

**The historic BBNJ Agreement enters into force in January. While Palau is proud to be the first ratifier, we couldn't have lit this fire alone. Like the Palauan proverb of the twigs — *crossing* the collective effort of over 60 countries demonstrates that we are better together. While we celebrate this achievement, we need even more nations to join this commitment to truly safeguard our ocean's future.**

**Colleagues, the BBNJ Agreement presents an unprecedented opportunity to design new ocean governance institutions where SIDS have a voice from the start. We are big ocean states. And we call on our partners, including the EU, to support a SIDS seat in the BBNJ governance structure.**

**Excellencies, the stakes for SIDS could not be higher — our economies are small, our vulnerabilities acute, and our fiscal space painfully narrow. The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS gives us a blueprint for resilient prosperity, but it cannot stand without tools. That is why the Sevilla Commitment matters: the world has finally recognized that the financial system cannot be fair if it measures only income and ignores vulnerability.**

**Multilateralism is our only shield, yet too often SIDS are sidelined, blacklisted, cut off from finance, and boxed in by rules we did not write. We demand a seat not as bystanders, but as equal architects of our shared future.**

**We call for the full and immediate integration of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) into the policies and frameworks of international financial institutions, multilateral development banks and international organizations. It is time we move the MVI from theory to practice.**

**As we commemorate 80 years of this United Nations, we must look honestly at its strengths and its shortcomings. We welcome the Secretary-General's UN80 initiative. But let me be clear: reform must not be cosmetic. This UN must be more responsive, more equitable, and more focused on solutions and delivery.**

**Madam President, Palau knows too well the heavy cost of war, having endured the devastation of World War II on our islands. That history reminds us not only of the suffering left in the wake of conflict, but also of the sacred value of peace. Palau has always stood for the dignity of every human life and for the peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue and respect for international law. Our positions, whether in support or restraint, are always guided by a deeper purpose — the pursuit of peace that is just, lasting, and stable. We believe that a durable solution — one that envisions two peoples, Israelis and Palestinians, living in two democratic states side by side, in peace, security, and dignity, within mutually recognized borders — is essential for a lasting peace. And we say with equal clarity: Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine is a stark reminder that when international law is disregarded, peace everywhere is placed at risk. It is only through respect for the rules-based order that all nations, large and small, can live in security.**

**Continuing in that spirit of respect for life and stability, I must raise an issue of principle. Years ago, China wrongly interpreted UNGA Resolution 2758. Today, it continues to claim that Taiwan**

is part of the PRC, which results in the silencing of 23 million voices and keeping Taiwan from fully participating in the UN system and contributing to the world. Palau believes that inclusivity strengthens the United Nations, and that no community should be barred from contributing to the solutions our world so desperately needs.

Madam President, let me close with another Palauan proverb: “Dolch ra idis”— a rising tide lifts everyone. The choices we make *together* are about lifting all of us, ensuring the next generation inherits a world that sustains them, just as it has sustained us.

As we face today’s greatest challenges — climate change, ocean decline, debt, inequality, wars and conflicts — no nation can solve these issues alone. But together, guided by the spirit of the UN’s founding and strengthened by 80 years of hard-learned lessons, we can turn the tide.

Let this Assembly be remembered not only for the words we speak, but for the actions we take — for the resilience we build, the justice we uphold, and the future we secure for generations yet to be born. We are better together.

God bless you. Mesulang. Thank you.