



# **REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

**Statement by  
H.E. Mr. Kessai H. Note  
President  
of the Republic of the Marshall Islands**

**[Check against delivery]**

**59<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
GENERAL DEBATE**

**New York, 22 September 2004**

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

I am honored to address the 59<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly on behalf of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Allow me to extend my congratulations to you Mr. President on your election, and to wish you well in your endeavors throughout the session.

Mr. President,

This year has seen important landmarks for the Marshall Islands at the domestic level. On May 1st we celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of our Constitution. The same day also marked the entry into force of our amended Compact of Free Association with the United States. The renewal of this agreement reaffirms the special relationship between our two countries.

At the regional level, we continue to place great importance on our membership of the Pacific Islands Forum. Over the past year, the Forum has conducted a comprehensive review of existing regional mechanisms. Last month Pacific leaders met in Samoa, where they endorsed the terms of reference for a new "Pacific Plan", which will develop a strategy for broader regional cooperation based on the key goals of economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security.

Mr. President,

At the international level, the Marshall Islands reaffirms its solidarity with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), which continues to act as a powerful voice for Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

It has long been recognized that SIDS suffer from unique vulnerabilities and disadvantages. In January 2005, the international community will meet in Mauritius to conduct the ten-year review of the Barbados Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS (BPOA). Over the past year, members of AOSIS have been engaged in a detailed process of preparation for the International Meeting. At an inter-regional meeting in January, SIDS adopted the AOSIS Strategy for Further Implementation of the BPOA, which addresses critical issues including climate change and sea-level rise, renewable energy, trade access, and others.

It is vital that we maintain the momentum in the lead up to Mauritius, in order to ensure a successful outcome for SIDS. I encourage the international community to engage in the ongoing preparatory process, and to participate in the International Meeting at the highest level. It is our fervent hope that the meeting will produce practical outcomes that will assist SIDS in implementing the Program of Action to benefit people at the local level.

Mr. President,

In this increasingly globalized world, the Marshall Islands faces challenges shared by many other small island states. Our environment is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change and natural disasters; our small population faces the challenge of managing high levels of major diseases such as diabetes, and the risk of the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and other STDs; and our limited resource base and remoteness restrict our ability to integrate into the global economy.

With these challenges in mind, the Marshall Islands is particularly concerned about the following issues.

Firstly, sustainable development.

The Marshall Islands has developed a national sustainable development strategy, and we are in the process of establishing a taskforce to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are fully integrated into our national strategy. In striving to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, we are severely constrained by our lack of human and technical resources. Thus, we continue to seek to form partnerships that will assist us through capacity building and technology transfer.

We were pleased that the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Sustainable Development focused on water, sanitation and human settlements. We are working hard in the Pacific region to improve access to fresh water and to develop environmentally responsible waste management systems. We seek the support of the international community to assist us in the implementation of regional projects such as the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management. We look forward to CSD 13 providing further policy guidance on these areas.

Mr. President,

An ongoing issue of the utmost concern for the people of the Marshall Islands is that of nuclear weapons testing. Between 1946 and 1958, the United States conducted a series of nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands, which included the detonation of 23 atomic and hydrogen bombs. On March 1st this year, we commemorated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bravo test at Bikini Atoll. The Bravo blast was 1,000 times more powerful than Hiroshima, and its fallout spread radioactive debris across the neighboring islands.

Today, many of our people continue to suffer from long term health effects, while others remain displaced from their homes because of ongoing contamination. We urge the United States government to fully address the issue of adequate compensation for populations affected by the nuclear testing program, and to fulfill its responsibilities for the safe resettlement of displaced populations.

On broader issues of disarmament and non-proliferation, we urge the international community to retain a focus on disarmament by the nuclear weapon States, as well as

non-proliferation measures. We look forward to next year's Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and we hope that the Conference will produce substantial progress on the Thirteen Steps towards complete nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President,

I wish to reiterate our critical concern regarding climate change. Along with other low-lying island nations, we are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. We are already experiencing these dramatic effects – sea levels are rising, weather patterns are changing, and coral reef systems are being harmed. Urgent action is needed at the global level to halt and ultimately reverse the devastating impacts of climate change. Without such global action, our national efforts at sustainable development will ultimately be rendered meaningless.

While we are committed to playing our part, strong leadership is required by the major industrialized countries. We renew our support for the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, and we call upon all States that have not yet done so - in particular the major emitters - to ratify the Protocol without further delay. We also call upon the international community to assist SIDS in developing and implementing comprehensive adaptation strategies.

Mr. President,

As a nation whose livelihood depends on the resources of the sea, we are becoming increasingly concerned about the state of the world's oceans and fish stocks.

At the regional level, we cooperate closely with other members of the Pacific Islands Forum to ensure that the oceans and marine resources in our region are managed in a responsible and sustainable manner. The Pacific Islands Regional Oceans Policy, adopted in 2002, will be implemented throughout the region under a recently developed Framework for Integrated Strategic Action. Another notable achievement in the region is the entry into force of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.

While such developments are encouraging, we reiterate our concerns regarding the prevalence of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing. Like many SIDS, we rely on fisheries resources as a primary means of survival, yet we lack the capacity to adequately monitor our exclusive economic zone. Regional and international cooperation must focus on addressing the problem of IUU fishing, and assisting SIDS by building capacity for monitoring and surveillance.

Mr. President,

I have briefly mentioned a few of the major priorities for the Marshall Islands. There are, of course, many other important issues to be addressed during the upcoming session.

International terrorism is obviously one of the biggest challenges facing the global community today. The reality is that no State or region is immune. All States must take action at the national level, as well as cooperating at the regional and international levels to ensure that we combat terrorist threats with comprehensive and unified action. Within the Pacific region we continue to cooperate closely to ensure that effective regional action is taken to combat threats to peace and security.

At the national level, we are in the process of implementing the twelve core anti-terrorism conventions and the relevant Security Council resolutions, and we have taken many steps to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

Mr. President,

The Marshall Islands, as a State Party to the Rome Statute, welcomes the ongoing progress in the International Criminal Court. We are pleased that the Court is now fully operational, and has begun its first investigations. We are confident that the Court will play a valuable role in the administration of justice at the international level, and we urge those States that have not yet done so to become Parties.

Mr. President,

Another important issue requiring action by this body is the continued exclusion of Taiwan from the United Nations. Taiwan is a peace-loving sovereign State, and its democratically elected government can be the only legitimate representative of the interests of the people of Taiwan within the UN. The Marshall Islands reiterates its full support for the ongoing quest of the people of Taiwan to be granted membership in this global body, and in various other international organizations.

Finally, Mr. President,

The Marshall Islands reiterates its support for the expansion of the Security Council, in both categories of membership. We support the allocation of a new permanent seat to Japan, and we believe that the representation of developing countries on the Council must be increased. This expansion is crucial if the Council is to retain its legitimacy.

My delegation looks forward to a productive session under your able leadership.

Thank you Mr. President.