



FEDERATED STATES
OF
MICRONESIA

ADDRESS

BY

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SECRETARY (MINISTER)

OF THE

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OF THE

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

BEFORE THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

AT ITS

FIFTY-NINTH SESSION

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MR. PRESIDENT,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Heads of States and Governments,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

I am honored by the opportunity to speak before the fifty-ninth Session of the General Assembly on behalf of the people of my Pacific Island nation, the Federated States of Micronesia, and on behalf of our President, His Excellency, Joseph J. Urusemal.

Allow me to extend my congratulations, Mr. President, on your well-deserved election to this high office. I would also like to recognize Mr. Julian Robert Hunte of Saint Lucia, for his distinguished service as President of the Fifty-Eighth Session.

Sadly, Mr. President, there have been so many recent disasters in which innocent lives have been lost, that time does not permit me to mention them all. Whenever we learn of human suffering brought about by the forces of Nature, whether by earthquake, storms or otherwise, our hearts go out to the victims. As Pacific Islanders, my people feel a special sympathy for the victims of recent typhoons and hurricanes in Haiti, Granada, in Jamaica, in Cuba, in the Cayman Islands, in the Bahamas, in Florida and in Japan and China, as well as in our own country and elsewhere in the Pacific such as in Guam, the Mariana Islands and in Niue. It does not take a scientist to see that such storms are now occurring with increasing frequency, and devastating intensity.

[terrorism and genocide]

We must also express our great sadness over the continuing losses of life at the hands of terrorists, and condemn in the strongest terms all those who wrongly think their causes are advanced by such misguided acts. All human life is precious, but the recent terrorist atrocity committed against schoolchildren, in Beslan, Russia, was particularly vile. The world must speak out with the one voice in utter contempt of those who were responsible.

In addition to the need to defeat terrorism, I regret to say that this Body also must find more effective means of combating government-sponsored or tolerated genocide. There must be no refuge from those who would deny to entire populations the basic right of existence.

It is obvious today that expressions of condemnation and even multilateral treaties do not deter such people. As our technology provides even more effective and readily available means of mass destruction, the bright promise of the coming years could be overwhelmed by an unthinkable nightmare.

The people of the Federated States of Micronesia know that even we, the inhabitants of a remote island nation, do not have the luxury of remoteness from the threats posed by these crimes against humanity. These are threats to which all are exposed and all are at risk. Though our numbers are relatively small, many of our finest young citizens are standing today with others on the front lines against tyranny and oppression. We will not shirk our commitment, but if there is any hope of making these crimes a thing of the past, that commitment cannot be conditional or selective. It must be universal.

Mr. President:

[UN roles in social progress and the environment]

Even if we summon up the will to act collectively to put down the darker side of human nature through collective action, we must work much harder and on a global scale to move toward eliminating the conditions that provide fertile ground in which the sponsors of terrorism and genocide are able to prosper. These include conditions of poverty, hunger, and inadequate access to clean water, sanitation, health care and education. All these, of course, are familiar topics to students of the United Nations Charter. Thanks in no small part to the work of this Organization, statisticians are able to identify significant, even dramatic progress over the last sixty years, and these trends can be expected to continue, as we dedicate ourselves to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

But, trends don't mean much to the children who will die of starvation today, tomorrow, and the next day. Growing GDP's are little comfort to the man desperately trying to support a family on less than one US dollar a day, who sees no hope of improving his situation. The world, through this Body and others, as well as with direct assistance, must redouble our efforts, because there is still a long way to go, and this planet of ours becomes more dangerous every day.

As if what I just mentioned is not challenging enough, we now know also that the global community faces a wide variety of complex tasks to protect the planet from environmental catastrophe. We humans sitting atop the genetic ladder have the capacity to foul the nest of Creation, and most agree that it is happening to one degree or another. One thing is clear – we are the only ones who can do something about it. Considerable cost will be involved, and not just in funds. Some say that the industrialized world must make pullbacks from deeply ingrained models of energy consumption, among other adjustments. Others say that the developing world must switch to more sustainable development approaches, at a higher initial cost.

Can the nations of the world afford the price tag to achieve all these things? The economic indications are that we can. It is a question of will, determination and perseverance.

There is no lack of wealth of all kinds in this world. People in the industrialized world today enjoy a far higher standard of living by just about any test, than has ever been known. Many developing countries are not far behind. But when it comes to actually taking the steps necessary to overcome the challenges I have mentioned, we confront the real challenge. That challenge is to determine the wisest allocation of our resources and to act accordingly, in the spirit of the eight Millennium Development Goals.

It does not take a great deal of wisdom to conclude that Mankind must continue to place a high priority on the eradication of poverty and hunger. Likewise, the need for prudence in protecting our earthly environment and its resources is increasingly obvious. But allocating our resources properly, identifying the correct timing and acting so as to attain those goals call upon virtually every scientific, economic, political and ethical capacity that we can summon.

The process must be followed with an even-handed approach that has no time for guilt, blame or jealousy. While there is great need for action, there is none for panic. The planet can still be saved, and social conditions of despair can be overcome. It requires, however, that we all join to play our proper respective roles, with commitment, compassion and an equitable division of responsibility. Mr. President, let us put aside the finger-pointing and the tyranny of self-interest, and set about the task.

Mr. President:

There are several issues of concern to my country on which, briefly, I would like to be more specific.

[Mauritius Conference — January 2005]

First, Micronesia keenly anticipates the convening of the International Meeting on Small Island Developing States in January 2005, in Mauritius. This will be the critical ten-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action, which focuses on the particular needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing states as we pursue sustainable development.

During the past ten years we have seen progress in implementing the Programme of Action, with the close involvement and support of the UN Secretariat. However, progress needs to be accelerated. The International Meeting will enable us to identify and make essential course corrections. Naturally, over ten years time we have also seen the emergence of new challenges, and issues not originally addressed. These can also now be considered. Overall, the outcomes of the International Meeting should be target oriented, so that progress in implementing the Programme of Action can be tracked and measured.

Of course, the International Meeting will be successful only if island States representatives are enabled to attend. Micronesia thus calls upon the donor community to provide generous support to the Trust Fund, so that island States may be adequately represented at the Meeting. In that regard I must acknowledge and express appreciation to those countries who have already contributed.

Developing country partners and developed countries should also make every effort to be represented at the highest possible political level, to ensure that the International Meeting receives the political support it needs, for effective implementation of its outcomes.

Mr. President:

[climate change]

Perhaps foremost among our vulnerabilities in Micronesia, along with other members of the Alliance of Small Island States, is our extreme exposure to the adverse effects of global climate change.

For more than a decade now, we have been vocal in this Body and elsewhere, on just about every aspect of the Climate Change issue. There is one side of it that gives me increasing concern as the debate evolves beyond whether climate change is real, to what should be done about it. This has to do with environmental ethics.

In Micronesia, as in most of the island States, our people have a tradition of living in harmony with Nature. Consequently, our ecological "footprint" has been small. While we in the islands can and need to do more to curb unsustainable practices, it is clear that we have contributed little to the climate crisis, and that we can contribute little to its solution. Yet, we are among the first to be affected and even face possible extinction.

For the populations of low-lying small islands, however, practical options are few. Land in the islands is in short supply in the best of times, and it has long been taken. Contrary to romantic fantasy, there are no deserted islands available. Populations already tend to be concentrated. Previous efforts to relocate island populations have brought suffering and cultural loss to the people concerned. To those of us faced

with the prospect of cultural eradication, the unabated advancement of already-inflated lifestyles in the industrialized world does not seem to us a "greater good".

We continue to support the AOSIS call for immediate implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

Mr. President:

[fisheries]

Export and licensing income from the bounty of Micronesia's waters and its vast Extended Economic Zone is by far the greatest contribution to the Nation's budget outside foreign assistance. Fisheries are also a vital resource to virtually every Pacific Island country. A cooperative approach by coastal states and distant water fishing nations in the sustainable conservation and management of these resources is essential, since we now know that they are not inexhaustible.

Thus, Micronesia welcomes the coming into force of the Convention on the Conservation Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Central and Western Pacific, made pursuant to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. We call upon all States and entities that have participated in the process of establishing the Conservation and Management Convention to assign a high priority to cooperating fully in its administration.

Mr. President:

[deep sea trawling]

I would like to register my country's growing concern over the practice of deep sea trawling. The Region of the Pacific contains literally thousands of seamounts, which scientists are finding to be extremely rich in biodiversity, holding great potential value to future generations. Yet, short-sightedly, too many are dragging trawl nets over these deep-ocean areas, unknowing and uncaring of the damage they cause to the seabed below.

There is an urgent need for improved and coordinated scientific focus on identifying and managing risk to biodiversity and the environment in the deep oceans. We need to broaden our presently inadequate knowledge about these unique ocean habitats, and to ensure that they are managed in a sustainable way. Meanwhile, given the risk posed by present practices, we urge the international community to impose and observe a moratorium on deep sea trawling.

Mr. President:

[continental shelf]

Despite the extension in 2001 of the timeframe set by the parties to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea for delimitation of the continental shelf, Micronesia and many small island developing states face continuing difficulties in meeting our obligations in this regard. The problem is a lack of financial resources, and scientific and technical expertise needed to acquire and collate the highly complex scientific data. Without targeted assistance from the donor community, countries like Micronesia will find it extremely difficult to make the required submission on the Limits of Continental Shelf, even within the extended timeframe.

Mr. President:

[support for RMI nuclear claims]

As neighbors and fellow islanders, we have saddened by the inability of the people of the Republic of Marshall Islands, after almost fifty years, to secure full compensation for the death, sickness and destruction suffered by them as a consequence of nuclear weapons testing. Recently declassified documents make it clear that original settlements were not based on the full story of what happened to the Marshallese people, and other peoples of the former Trust Territory as well. We join other Members in calling upon the United States to meet its responsibility in full.

Mr. President:

Again, this year Micronesia wishes to express its support for UN reforms, particularly for reformation of the Security Council and the inclusion of our neighbor Japan, among its permanent members. We are increasingly concerned over the seeming lack of progress on this critical matter.

Mr. President, my final topic is Security in the Region of the Pacific.

Our President shared with Leaders at the recently-concluded annual meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum in Apia, Samoa a common concern that amidst all the current attention to global security issues the nations of the Pacific islands are being left largely to our own devices to deal with threats related to organized crime and terrorism. We are working hard to address our vulnerabilities in these regards, but I would like simply to note here that the rest of the world, especially the North, is not serving its own best interests by giving short shrift to the possibilities for criminal and terrorist exploitation that are presented by our vast region. Over and above other traditional ODA, we need a range of targeted assistance in our area.

Mr. President:

[conclusion]

Once again it has been our most valued opportunity to appear and address the General Assembly. The need for this Organization has never been stronger, and as each year goes by, it seems that the significance and relevance of our Charter increases. In these difficult times we in Micronesia choose not to lose heart, but rather to take heart that we, the Nations of the world gathered here, can work together to build not just a better world, but one that is worthy inheritance for our future generations.

Thank you, Mr. President.