



# REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

**Statement by**

**The Hon. Ruben Zackhras  
Vice Speaker of the Republic of the Marshall Islands**

**[Check against delivery]**

**61<sup>st</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
GENERAL DEBATE**

**New York, 27 September 2006**

Madam President,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Madam President,

I wish to congratulate you on your election as the President of this 61<sup>st</sup> session of the General Assembly. Please be assured of my country's support and cooperation during the session and throughout your tenure.

Marshall Islands commends all members of the General Assembly in their efforts, contributions, and cooperation throughout the 60<sup>th</sup> session towards achieving many of our common aspirations. Although we have achieved a good measure of success, there is still much work ahead. We must work together and pool our resources, our talents and our skills for the betterment of all citizens of the world. It is in this regard that I urge wealthier and more developed Member States to expand their generosity with official development assistance to address issues of human misery.

As one of the smallest Member States of the United Nations, Marshall Islands hope that this 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly will do more to protect and secure our people from issues that would threaten their livelihood and existence.

Madam President,

Marshall Islands is committed to various international and regional plans and agreements including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Mauritius Strategy- for the further implementation of the Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS-, the Pacific Plan and more recently the Micronesian Challenge- which sets ambitious targets for marine and terrestrial conservation areas across the Micronesian region.

We emphasize the need for full and effective implementation of the commitments, programs, and targets adopted, particularly under the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Program of Action for Sustainable Development of SIDS, and for the mobilization of the necessary resources from all sources for the effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

Given that the livelihood of our people depends heavily on the oceans, we again join our Pacific neighbors in requesting that our ocean resources are governed and protected from exploitation. As a nation whose single most important productive sector and key export is in fisheries, the state of the world's oceans and fish stocks and how these vital resources are being exploited remain our utmost concern. As a party to the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA), we recognize the importance of the entry into force of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPFC) and the subsequent conservation and management measures adopted thus far by the recently established Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

While we realize the implications and adverse impacts of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in the region, including the consequences of over-fishing on the national and regional resources, we continue to develop and explore ways and means for conducting and enforcing conservation and management measures as well as the development of our domestic fisheries. We seek a moratorium on bottom trawling until there are clear indications that it has no effects on the ocean biodiversity.

It is our hope that regional efforts, such as efforts being undertaken by Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) to spread the knowledge of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, are strengthened and enhanced by international assistance.

Madam President,

On the national level I wish to share with you and Member States the progress we have made in terms of Government leadership and national development. Our National and Local Government leaders met early last month to review our progress in achieving our long term National Development Plan. This provided a chance for both our national and local governments to renew their commitments to work together to bring about a better Marshall Islands. It also paved the way for government officials to discuss issues of critical concern that continue to obstruct our development opportunities in the areas of education, health, and environment among others.

Another important issue also discussed at the home front is that of the nuclear weapons testing done in the Marshall Islands. Our people have paid a disproportionate sacrifice for helping the world understand the power of the nuclear bomb. We have paid with our own lives, our health, and the well-being of our land and waters that are so sacred to us.

Since the Marshall Islands became independent in 1986, we have undertaken efforts to better understand the impact of the activities that took place on our islands during the Cold War. We are finding that the effects of the 67 atmospheric weapons detonated in our country were much worse and much more widespread than previously understood, although we still have a great deal more to learn.

As a small country with limited resources, we naturally focus our efforts to address the nuclear legacy. We call on the United Nations and its agencies and Member States who share similar experiences and have the expertise with the restoration of environments contaminated with radiation, and the care of health needs linked to radiation exposure to assist and support the Marshall Islands' Changed Circumstances Petition (CCP) submitted to the U.S. Congress in 2000. As knowledgeable and responsible leaders of this global community, the United Nations has the capacity to positively influence the well-being of the citizens of the Marshall Islands, who were under the care of the United Nations Trusteeship Council when the U.S. Nuclear Testing Program was in progress after WWII from 1946 to 1958.

Marshall Islands reiterates its firm commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Treaty's objectives of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, fostering the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and furthering the

goal of achieving general and complete disarmament. We urge those countries that have not already done so to become a Party to the NPT; and those countries that are a Party to the NPT to fully cooperate with the IAEA and fulfill their obligations under the Treaty.

Marshall Islands and French Polynesia know all too well that colonial powers are willing to use territories other than their own to conduct dangerous nuclear weapons testing. In this regard, we call on the United Nations to continue to press for the decolonization of all nations in the Pacific region.

We also call on the United Nations to admit the 23 million citizens of Taiwan to the United Nations family. Taiwan, who shares the Organization's view on the principles of universality and self-determination, has been enjoying a democratic government of its own for over half a century. Taiwan's denied membership into the United Nations again and again questions the legitimacy of the Organization. I, therefore, urge this body to welcome Taiwan into its membership. Furthermore, Marshall Islands wishes to express its disapproval over the General Committee's illegal action with regard to the amalgamation of Taiwan's two resolutions. This prevented the consideration of resolution item 41 and item 155 on their own independent merits-a clear violation of Rule 40. As a co-sponsor of these resolutions, we strongly protest the illegalities of limiting the number of speakers before the General Committee on each resolution and the combining of the two issues into one. Such arbitrary practice constituting political judgment, without transparency, of two entirely distinct issues should not be allowed to happen in this august body of sovereign nations.

Madam President,

Marshall Islands wishes to reiterate our support for the reform, restructure and expansion of the UN Security Council. In particular, we give emphasis to the inclusion of Japan for Permanent Membership in the Security Council and fully endorse Japan's proposal on the methodology to be used in the preparation of the UN scale of assessments for the period 2007-2009. We are convinced that the entire UN membership would benefit excessively from Japan's Permanent Membership and its proposed scale of assessment structure.

In the regional arena, last year, Marshall Islands joined two of our neighbors in requesting that the UN step-up its presence in the Northern Pacific to pursue various development agenda not only in our country but in the Pacific region as a whole. I am pleased to inform you today that three UN agencies, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF have agreed to establish offices in various countries in the region, including the Marshall Islands.

Moreover, our government has been working extensively with others in the region to implement the Pacific Plan, endorsed at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting in Papua New Guinea in October 2005. I wish to join my colleagues in thanking our development partners for their assistance in making the plan viable. Marshall Islands remains confident that the Pacific Plan will provide a useful framework for continued regional and international cooperation.

Internationally, the Marshall Islands joins other Pacific countries in reiterating our interests and asking the international community to recognize the vulnerability of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). SIDS need the continued support of the developed countries to build up their capacity to manage vulnerability, strengthen food security and build resilience to economic, social and environmental change. We appeal to the international community to support and enhance existing and new capacity building efforts of and among the SIDS. We need the assistance of the international community to establish mechanisms to enable the SIDS to cope with and adjust to globalization and trade liberalization.

The Marshall Islands consists predominantly of low lying atolls that are an average of 2 meters above sea level. Our small atolls and islands are dwarfed by our surrounding Economic Exclusive Zone, which consists of approximately 2 million square kilometers of ocean. While we rely on our ocean as a means of sustenance and survival, it becomes our biggest concern during increasingly severe weather conditions, and we are fearful of the sea-level rise that is threatening the very existence of our islands.

Therefore, we wish to reaffirm our grave concern regarding the vulnerability of SIDS to the impacts of climate change, and the need for urgent action to be taken at the global level by the major emitters of CO<sub>2</sub> among the developed and the developing industrial countries to halt and reverse these devastating climate change impacts.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank President Jan Eliasson for his excellent management of the General Assembly presidency over the past year, and to congratulate him on his appointment as his country's Minister of Foreign Affairs. President Eliasson, the General Assembly has accomplished a great deal under your able leadership and I would like to commend you for your achievements. I wish you well in your new post.

Mr. Kofi Annan,

The people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands join me in wishing you and Mrs. Nane Annan well in your future endeavors. I wish to convey our sincere appreciation for your gestures of friendship and good will during your tenure as Secretary General of the United Nations.

Madam President

In closing, I would like to assure you that my country will continue to work with the United Nations to meet our common challenge. 61 years on, the General Assembly members must move deliberately and decisively to overcome the dangers that lie ahead. We must meet our responsibilities to our respective countries and to each other as members of the United Nations General Assembly to ensure that we arrive at a better future.

Thank you.