



Republic of the Marshall Islands

62nd Session of the United Nations
General Assembly

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Kessai H. Note

President of the
Republic of the Marshall Islands

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62nd SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
GENERAL DEBATE

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Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
My Fellow Leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I bring warm greetings of “iakwe” from the people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands on whose behalf I have the honor to address this 62nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

I wish to convey our congratulations to you Mr. President, on your election in the Presidency of this Session. I am confident that under your able leadership consensus on crucial issues will be achieved benefiting the entire membership, particularly the often-forgotten remote Small Island States of the Pacific. My commendation also goes to your predecessor for her successful stewardship of the work of the Assembly during the 61st Session.

Allow me Mr. Secretary-General to also congratulate you for your election as the 8th Secretary General of this Organization. Steering the UN in today’s interwoven world of complex trials and tribulations remains ever more challenging, and I wish to express my country’s confidence in your stewardship, and commend you for your current efforts in taking a range of measures to strengthen the UN’s capacity.

Mr. President,

For the past 62 years, we have come to this august Assembly to express various issues and concerns dear to our heart as they affect the daily lives of our citizens. Education, health, and environment are among the top of my country’s priorities, but these issues are nothing, if we – the community of nations – fail to attempt a rescue of the forthcoming ecological disaster. My people are concerned – or rather terrified – with the very issue of OUR SURVIVAL.

Will we even exist fifty years from today? If we are to exist, we must put a stop to the rising tide of destruction unleashed by Global Warming. We need the urgent attention of this Assembly -- we must take decisive action now. Our future or perhaps, our absence of future – depends on the decisive actions of this Assembly.

I find no pride in having coined the term ECOLOGICAL REFUGEE -- it is my deepest hope that no one – and certainly no one in the Marshall Islands, will have to bear that title.

Since my election more than five years ago, educating the world about the threat my people face as a result of sea-level rise and global warming has been one of my Government’s priorities. In addressing the climate change issue, actions and real progress are needed. In saying this, I am proud to announce the new alliance my Government established earlier this year with the local government

of Martin Luther King Jr. County, Washington, aimed to confront the threat posed by global warming.

The unwavering faith I have in this Organization is the reason why I am standing in this podium today on behalf of my people. On our shoulders, as leaders, lies the responsibility entrusted to us, to keep not only the peace to live in harmony and with dignity, but to preserve our environment to ensure the very survival of our children for generations to come.

I commend the Secretary-General for convening a high-level meeting on climate change this week. I am also hopeful that we, as leaders, will come up with the necessary agreements on the UN Framework Convention in December. While we are committed to playing our part, strong leadership is required by the major industrialized countries. We once again 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 Small Island Developing States in developing and implementing comprehensive adaptation strategies.

Mr. President,

I remain hopeful that the international community can have a consensus on taking forward the necessary agreements to achieve lasting peace, security, and diplomatic solutions to the seemingly endless web of issues. We are so integrated and interconnected today that we all face equal challenges, be it in terrorism or proliferation of nuclear weapons. I commend this august Assembly for adopting last September the historic United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy that will prevent the global scourge of terrorism. The RMI remains committed in the fight against terrorism and we continue to 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.

In the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, our collective efforts need to be invigorated to overcome stalemate. Nuclear weapons and the testing conducted in our islands in the past is a nightmare that continues to haunt my people. The 67 atmospheric weapons detonated on my home island of Bikini Atoll from 1946 to 1958 have inflicted pains and sufferings amongst my people to this day. The Marshallese people were under the care of the UN Trusteeship Council when the US Nuclear Testing Program was in progress. Again and again, I call on the United Nations and its agencies and Member States who share similar experiences and have the expertise to assist us with the restoration of our environment contaminated with radiation, and in providing the needed assistance of my people's health care needs that are linked to radiation exposure, as well as supporting the Marshall Islands' Changed Circumstances Petition (CCP) submitted to the U.S. Congress in 2000.

I commend the work of the Assembly last session for adopting a resolution requesting the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation to continue its work, including its activities to increase knowledge of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation from all sources; and for requesting the United Nations Environment Programme to continue providing support for the work of the Scientific Committee and to review and strengthen the Committee's present findings. I am confident that my people will benefit from UNSCEAR's work noting that previous policy and resettlement decisions based on misleading scientific opinions have caused so much suffering among my people.

Mr. President,

My people's survival and well-being also rely on our ocean resources. We are encouraged by international and regional agreements and treaties that aim to protect these scarce resources. However, Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing continues to threaten our major source of livelihood. In protecting our ocean resources from exploitation, we continue to seek assistance from Member States with the expertise and capacity in conducting and enforcing conservation and management measures, as well as in the development of our domestic fisheries. I reiterate once again my support for a moratorium on bottom-trawling until there are clear indications on its negative effects on the ocean biodiversity. The Micronesian Challenge, a commitment led by the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands aims to conserve that biodiversity and our vulnerable ecosystem by effectively conserving at least 30% of the near-shore marine and 20% of the forest resources across Micronesia by 2020." The Micronesia Challenge is part of a much larger and growing commitment by island nations throughout the world to take the international lead in preserving primary ecosystems. I call on the international community to support the efforts that have been put in place and to develop and resource realistic financial plans in support of conservation and sustainable use of our natural resources.

Mr. President,

Within the Pacific region, we continue to cooperate closely to ensure that effective regional actions are taken in our pursuit to combat our vulnerabilities in the areas of economic, social and environment, which are priority areas highlighted under the Pacific Plan and Kalibobo Roadmap endorsed by the Pacific Leaders almost two years ago. My Government has had the pleasure of hosting and actively engaging in several regional meetings held to that effect. The 8th Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders (PICL) which I was honored to chair in Washington, DC, the 7th Annual Micronesian President's Summit held in Chuuk earlier this month, the 7th Meeting of the FAO South West Pacific Ministers for Agriculture held in April, as well as the Micronesian Conservation Conference held last June in Majuro, provided the opportunity for our leaders, development partners and non-governmental partners to meet with other leaders from the region to address a wide range of issues and challenges that continue to plague the Pacific.

In my view, successful implementation of regional commitments international obligations can only be achieved with the support and commitment of member countries, regional and international organizations, development partners, and a range of stakeholders.

In this regard, I wish to emphasize that the assistance of the international community, which has played a crucial role for us to meet current and emerging challenges is still very much needed. There is only so much that we can do as Small Island Developing States; thus, now more than ever, I continue to call on the international community for considerable investments and comprehensive assistance, including the much needed policy reorientation to address the interlinked issues of economic, social and environmental security.

Mr. President,

The Marshall Islands was founded on the ideals of freedom, democracy and respect for human rights. We continue to observe and stand for these democratic values, and the defense and promotion of human rights. The United Nation's noble ideals of good governance, democracy, multilateralism, and respect for human dignity serve also as my guiding light as the high steward of my people.

However, while the UN continues to work with States in resolving disputes peacefully and in helping create democratic societies; it still turns a blind eye on the 23 million people of Taiwan, and silences their voices. The absence of Taiwan in the United Nations creates a gap in the global network for cooperation, goes against the ideals and concept of justice upheld by the United Nations, and contravenes the principle of universality.

We reiterate our support for the UN Security Council reform and expansion and for a criteria-based approach under which potential members, such as Japan, must be well qualified, based on factors such as: economic size, population, commitment to democracy and human rights, financial contributions to the UN, and contributions to UN peacekeeping.

Mr. President,

During the General Debate of the 60th Session, we noted in this historic chamber that the United Nations, its offices and organizations did not have a permanent presence in many of the Small Island Developing States of the Pacific. In June 2006, it was announced that a coalition of UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA would open a total of eight new offices in Pacific Island countries. We welcomed this historic accomplishment and the progress it marked towards harmonization within the UN; and for the assistance and support the new offices would provide in developing national capacity and meeting the MDGs.

As Member States who pay our dues, deploy peacekeepers, and discharge our responsibilities in the international community, we deserve offices which give relevance to the United Nations and the implementation of its doctrines.

The Marshall Islands is appreciative of the work currently underway for the establishment of a joint UN presence in our country by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which will be the leading agency on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). We, however, ask the General Assembly and the Secretariat to ensure that offices befitting the ideals and reputation of the United Nations are established in the other identified Pacific countries.

Mr. President,

In closing, I wish to reassure you that the Marshall Islands remains committed to the implementation of the commitments made over the last decade and we expect our partners to fulfill their commitments as well. Sustainable development of Small Island Developing States, such as the Marshall Islands, can only be achieved through a genuine partnership within the international community. Only then, can we realize the commonly shared goal of universal peace and prosperity.

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

Komol tata, and God bless us all.