

REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS



STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. PHILLIP MULLER,
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
DURING THE "SIDS" SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE
17TH MEETING OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
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Madame Chair,

The Republic of the Marshall Islands congratulates you on your chairmanship and aligns itself with the statements made by Grenada on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, and by the Kingdom of Tonga on behalf of the Pacific Small Island States.

Many of the sustainable development goals for small island developing states have already been researched and identified through the Mauritius Strategy. But the Mauritius Strategy lacks a closely coordinated implementation mechanism, and relies upon the goodwill of partners.

We now must directly address the barriers which stand in the way of direct national implementation. In this regard, the direct partnership Memorandum of Understanding between Pacific Island nations and Italy/Austria and the City of Milan serves as a helpful model in showing how direct national action can address shared development priorities, through "action on the ground" rather than only funding enabling activities. Visible implementation can and must happen now – we are concerned that we are at risk of being "overworkshopped" at the sake of implementation.

Madame Chair,

Climate change is a truly cross-cutting issue for the Pacific. Climate change not only threatens the development aspirations of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, but also our very existence as a low-lying nation. While we welcome the mobilization of international funding mechanisms, including the UNFCCC Adaptation Fund and GEF, we need to continue with two key goals – ensuring actual direct access to funding mechanisms, and the upscaling and mainstreaming of climate change adaptation strategies across all development sectors, directly involving multiple ministerial initiatives. Until barriers to funding are actually eliminated, unless we strengthen our own national capacity to capture projects, and until we arrive at non-competitive funding mechanisms, all of the political commitment for direct access will fail to turn into meaningful and observable results in our communities. Simply put, our small nations are at risk of becoming lost in the paperwork process.

In 2008 the FAO noted the need for the Pacific to further mainstream climate change into areas of food security and coastal management, and to move the commitments of international political debates into our local communities. The Republic of the Marshall Islands has responded to the FAO report by developing a national strategy which addresses food security, builds our domestic agriculture and addresses our vulnerability to coastal erosion through coconut tree replanting and rehabilitation, using drought-sensitive species. This initiative will reduce our unhealthy reliance on imported foods by boosting domestic agricultural production of our traditional crops. In addition, strategic planting of native species along our coastline will reduce the ever-growing vulnerability to coastal erosion. We seek the interest of partners in upscaling this project, which may be a valuable model for other SIDS.

We are also pursuing "bottom up" local strategies, such as the sub-regional Micronesia Challenge, in which our government works closely with traditional rural communities to build community resiliency while also defining integrated planning approaches to climate vulnerability, coastal and land management, as well as traditional and subsistence fishing. We are proud that the Micronesia Challenge is one of the world's most ambitious conservation goals, and it is an important part of our approach to climate adaptation.