



PALAU



PALAU MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU

TO THE 61ST REGULAR SESSION

OF THE

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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New York

Madame President, Mr. Secretary General, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me begin by offering my congratulations, Madam President. We would also like to thank former President, Jan Eliasson, for his able leadership this past year. And, our deep appreciation to Secretary General Kofi Annan who has served this organization with skill and devotion.

Palau joins with others in welcoming Montenegro, the newest Member State in the UN, and we look forward to their participation in our debate. Participation in the United Nations has a special meaning for Palau. We were the last country to emerge from the UN Trusteeship System. During the Trusteeship, it was the UN that showed us that every country, regardless of size, has a role to play. The UN provided our nation with a platform from which we could achieve independence and establish our sovereignty and for this we are forever grateful.

Madam President,

Palau is often seen as a paradise of swaying palm trees and ocean breezes. But this simplistic view fails to recognize the challenges we face as Small Island Developing States. In this shrinking world, the actions of distant countries are having a profound effect on us. And, we come to you now asking for your help once again as we face these difficult issues.

Madam President,

One of the issues which we hope the General Assembly will act on this year is deep sea bottom trawling. As the Secretary-General has reported, bottom trawling is responsible for 95% of the worldwide damage to seamount ecosystems. This is an irresponsible practice and Palau has passed a law banning all bottom trawling within our

waters. In doing so Palau followed the lead set by Japan, the United States, Norway, Australia, and many other responsible countries.

Madam President,

It is time now to assure that similar measures are taken for international waters. This is why Palau has joined with our Pacific colleagues in Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, and Micronesia to propose an interim prohibition on unregulated bottom trawling. Our proposal represents the strong determination of our region to protect the oceans upon which we all ultimately rely.

Another issue of great importance is that of global warming. Coral bleaching, a rise in sea level, and altered fish migration all threaten the future of Palau and other small island nations. Reversing this trend is one of our top priorities and we continue to urge the international community to act aggressively to reduce emissions that lead to global warming.

Madam President,

Palau is a democratic society. Our children know the importance of culture and community. We guarantee human rights in our nation. We also know that flying our flag here at the United Nations carries with it certain obligations. And we have met them. Palau has deployed Peacekeepers to regional and international missions. When natural disasters strike, Palau responds willingly and voluntarily. When the international community called upon countries to preserve biodiversity, Palau came forward with the Micronesian Challenge. This initiative will protect 462 coral species which represents 58% of all known corals.

But, our future as a nation, Madam President, and the future of our children, depends on the viability of our environment, especially the oceans. Palau relies on the

health of its amazing reefs and waters to provide food for our people and to support our tourism industry. Without these, we will not be able to develop a sustainable economy that will allow our children to live and work in their homeland. To provide for them, we look to this organization – the United Nations – for leadership and support.

To that end, Palau remains open to ideas for harmonizing the environmental agencies at the United Nations. And, we applaud efforts to streamline the process of accessing these agencies to make them more responsive to small nations.

On that note, Palau would like to state that difficulties in accessing assistance for claiming our Extended Continental Shelf have made it clear that we will have a hard time meeting the 2009 deadline for submissions.

Madam President,

Last year, in this historic chamber, we noted our concern that the United Nations, its offices and organizations did not have a permanent representative in Palau. In June, it was announced that a coalition of UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA would open a total of eight new offices in Pacific Island countries, including Palau. We welcome this historic accomplishment. It is a giant step towards harmonization within the UN. And, for Palau it will give us one of the tools we need most for sustainable development – local capacity building.

And, let us not forget the continuing threat of terrorism. We recognize that terrorism anywhere is a threat to people everywhere. And, have looked for assistance to improve our anti-terrorism capacity. Palau has met and worked with the Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate to advance our requests for assistance, particularly in the area of combating money laundering and terrorism financing. Unfortunately, the efforts of the Directorate have been insufficient. Our hope is that during this 61st

session of the General Assembly, the United Nations will be able to help smaller countries in addressing this threat.

Madam President,

We would also like to take a moment to thank a few of the many partners who have assisted Palau this past year. The efforts of the GEF Small Grants Program deserve special mention. Their program in the North Pacific has resulted in an effective mechanism to protect our environment through grassroot projects.

Palau has also partnered with a number of countries that have supported our development. First, the United States has provided in-country diplomatic representation and years of support. We acknowledge the generosity of the United States in responding to natural disasters in Asia and the Pacific region and thank them.

Japan has also provided invaluable assistance to Palau. The addition of Japan as a permanent member of the Security Council would help inform other Council members who are less familiar with our regional needs and concerns. We have supported, and continue to support, the G-4 resolution and hope that this Assembly will address the resolution this year.

Another steady supporter of Palau's development has been Taiwan. We continue to assert that the world would benefit from Taiwan's membership in the United Nations and other international institutions. This year, Palau co-sponsored a UN resolution calling for a proactive role for the United Nations in addressing the tensions in East Asia. We were disappointed that the actions of the General Committee prevented a debate on this resolution.

Palau would also like to recognize Australia's steady commitment to stability in our region and its dedication to capacity building. Through initiatives such as the Patrol

Boat Program, Australia enables Palau to address Illegal Unregulated and Unreported fishing which threatens our sovereignty and the marine habitats that surround our island nation.

Madam President;

We would like to call on all parties in Sudan to work together to mitigate the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. As His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson recently stated, "The responsibility to protect must move from declaration to action. The horrors of Cambodia, Rwanda, and Srebrenica must not befall the people in Darfur."

Lastly, Palau would like to take this opportunity to express our hope that the Mid-East peace process can be successfully restarted. We are hopeful that the expanded UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) will bring peace and security to both Israel and Lebanon. We stress the need for full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1701, including its preamble, and we join in the call for the unconditional release of the kidnapped Israeli soldiers. It is critical that the reconstructed UNIFIL force will be effective and will be capable of enforcing the arms embargo as called for.

Madame President, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen: on behalf of Palau, a small island nation in the wide Pacific Ocean, let me thank all of you in my country's native language: *Kom Kmal Mesulang*.
