

Country Induced Opportunities for the  
Private Sector for the Forum on Climate Change Panel

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Statement by H.E. Stuart Beck, Permanent Representative

We express our thanks to Athgo International for this opportunity to address you about Palau's efforts to combat climate change. As the world struggles to adapt to and mitigate climate change, it will be the innovative ideas and creative thinking from your generation that will help lead the way, so it is an honor for Palau to participate in today's panel.

Palau has been an independent nation since 1994. It is a group of about 300 islands in the South Pacific which in total are slightly more than 2.5 times as large as Washington, DC. These islands are home to approximately 21,000 people. However, only 8 of the islands are inhabited.

That Palauns have been able to live on such a small land mass for more than 3,000 years is a testament to our environmental stewardship. We have been able to do so because of our natural resources, especially our coral reefs. They provide us with fish for food and export and a thriving ecotourism industry; the reefs draw tourists from all over the world to scuba dive and admire their beauty.

**practi** Palaun chiefs have traditionally regulated fishing to ensure the health of the reefs and the fish stock. This conservation strategy has paid off, ensuring that Palau's reefs are some of the healthiest and most spectacular in the world and that the fish stock is maintained. The Palaun government has formalized this traditional practice and created a protected area network of 460 square miles of coral reefs and lagoon waters.

**on the** We feel that it is our duty to share what we have learned about successful conservation with other countries and regions. Palau's President, Tommy Remengesau Jr, in November 2005 challenged Palau's neighboring island states to take up the Micronesia Challenge and conserve 30 percent of their near-shore marine and 20 percent of their land resources by the year 2020. Four other nations have signed on. This project is the first of its kind in the world and will help protect 10 percent of the world's coral reefs, 59 percent of all known corals and 66 threatened species.

**environ** Palau believes that despite its small size, it can have a regional and even global impact. President Remengesau has charged the Permanent Mission of Palau to the United Nations with advancing environmental conservation projects on a global scale. In 2005, Palau led the charge against deep sea bottom trawling, a destructive fishing practice, which led to a General Assembly resolution. This is now being translated into enforceable

practices at the regional level. Recently, at a meeting of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization, the practice was effectively outlawed in almost a quarter of the world's oceans.

While we Palauns are proud of our accomplishments in environmental conservation to date, we still have many challenges in front of us. As a small island nation, we know that we can not succeed in our efforts alone. We call on the private sector to help us strengthen investment in capacity building, education and skills development. We need technical, financial and managerial assistance to launch sustainable development initiatives.

Palau offers a unique opportunity for small-scale sustainable development projects. Even a small investment has the potential to make a big difference.

Like many small island developing states, rising fuel costs combined with a heavy dependence on petroleum places an enormous financial and environmental burden on Palau. As such, there is an opportunity to develop cleaner, renewable energy sources. For example, a tidal turbine could provide enough energy to light the bridge that connects the two main islands of Palau. Palau is blessed with abundant solar energy which remains underutilized. Other opportunities in energy efficiency, climate change

adaptation, waste management and low GHG energy technology projects exist as well.

The commitment of the government and the people of Palau to sustainable development as well as our wealth of natural resources is an untapped asset. We seek public-private partnerships that will capitalize on these resources and will help us advance our mission of preserving our natural wealth while providing economic opportunities for the people of Palau.