



PALAU



PALAU MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

by

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**At the discussion on Climate Change at the
15th Commission on Sustainable Development**

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New York

Mr. Chairman,

Before we begin, our Delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made on behalf of AOSIS.

Mr. Chairman,

Fisheries and tourism, which rely on the viability and health of coral reef ecosystems, form the economic backbone for many countries including Palau. Tens of millions of people rely on coral reefs for their livelihood and over a billion people rely on reef related fisheries worldwide. Reef and beach-based tourism added \$89 billion to the GDP of the Caribbean in 1990, and reefs annually generate \$1.6 billion in Florida in the U.S. and \$2 billion in Australia. As such, a special consciousness must be paid to the environmental impacts tourism has on our coral reef ecosystems and atolls. Enhanced capacity to promote sustainable development in the ecotourism and small micro-enterprises is very much required.

In addition to reefs' importance in industrial development, they provide other ecosystem services which are vital to sustainable development. Reefs protect nations from damage caused by erosion and storms and flooding from waves. Over time, reefs have allowed for the formation of lagoons and protected areas where seagrass beds and mangroves can grow. Coral reef ecosystems support the most biodiversity and productivity in the ocean, and they are one of the most productive ecosystems in the world. Their biodiversity holds a huge potential for biologically derived drugs and medications to treat diseases. Reefs, interacting with mangroves, provide protection for fish hatcheries and support many species of fish used for commercial and substance

fisheries. Coral reefs, much like ice cores, provide scientists with climactic data to model historical climate patterns.

We need to develop policies which focus on the protection and sustainable management of our coral reef ecosystems.

Mr. Chairman,

Close to half of all UN Member States have coral reef ecosystems. For countries like Palau, survival and sustainable development are impossible without our coral reef ecosystems. Reefs must not be left out of the outcome document.

Thank you.

Palau has been an independent nation since 1994. It consists of

about 300 islands, of which 130 are inhabited. The total area is slightly more than

2.5 times as large as Washington, D.C. These islands are home to

approximately 20,000 people. However, only 8,000 are employed in the

The Palau government has been able to maintain a low profile and

more than 1,000 people are employed in the government. The

have been able to control tourism, and to manage their own

reefs. They are also the only country in the world that has

economic stability and growth. They are also the only

diver and snorkeler's heaven.