



PALAU



PALAU MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT

by

**Ms. Joan Yang
Counsellor**

At the 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 by Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum.

We also would like to note and commend the decision of UNDESA to offset the greenhouse gas emissions of air travel for the representatives whose participation it funded. This decision shows one of the many ways we can manifest our commitment to mitigating climate change through our actions.

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. Unfortunately, the document does not reflect the reality that marine resources are important resources for industrial development.

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

All of these ecosystem services provided by coral reefs, as well as the vital roles they play in industrial development are inter-linked with and threatened by the issue of climate change. Increased ocean acidification, increased ocean temperatures and increased tropical storms and sea level rise are all a result of climate change and all threaten coral health and viability. The 1998 mass coral bleaching caused an economic loss of 700 million to 8.2 billion dollars in the Indian Ocean alone; and destroyed roughly one third of Palau's coral and cost our nation \$92Million in lost revenues. Projections of climate change indicate that such bleaching events will become more frequent. We would like to see the document reflect the importance of coral reef conservation and rehabilitation and the need for the support of the international community to realize this goal.

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 omitted from this current CSD outcome document. To ensure this crucial component of sustainable development is addressed as an issue of industrial development and climate change, Palau will be actively participating in the

CSD-15 negotiations and reserves the right to submit to the Chair additional text as required.

Thank you.