



PALAU MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 575, New York, NY 10017 Ph (212)-813-0310 Fax (212)-813-0317

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT
BY
THE HONORABLE JOHNSON TORIBIONG
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU
TO THE 65th REGULAR SESSION
OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

24 September 2010

New York

Mr. President, Excellencies, Heads of State and Government, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last September I had the privilege of addressing this august Assembly for the first time as Palau's Head of State. It is an honor for me to do so once again this year.

Palau's national story is one of achievement and success. Palau was the last country to emerge from UN Trusteeship. As a new country, our Constitution incorporated the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is a testament to the efficacy of the United Nations. The United Nations also helped us form a strong partnership with the United States of America. This partnership was renewed on September 3rd when the United States and Palau entered into a new Agreement which will assist Palau's efforts for economic self-sufficiency.

Palau is also proud of our role in the international community, joining international conventions and meeting our international obligations. Our officers are helping to maintain the peace in fragile states. We have deployed Peacekeepers to Darfur, Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands.

Mr. President,

For Palau, environmental sustainability is not a recent construct. Respect for the environment and its preservation is Palau's most deeply ingrained tradition and is at the heart of our culture. Palauans have always known that caring for the long-term health of the environment is the foundation of our progress and survival.

With our traditions as our bedrock, I am pleased to say that Palau has achieved our Millennium Development Goals. Palau has succeeded in achieving universal literacy, gender equality, maternal health and access to education. We have eliminated poverty and hunger and reduced child mortality to a degree comparable with even the most advanced developed countries. We thank among others --our closest friends, the United States, Japan and the Republic of China on Taiwan -- for helping us reach this point.

We consider the MDGs a minimum and we will continue to strive for higher goals.

Mr. President,

We are a small country, but blessed in many ways. I reiterate that we have risen to achieve the MDGs by caring for our God-given resources. We have put in place a system domestically to conserve and preserve our terrestrial and marine biodiversity. We have also joined with our Pacific neighbors to address the health of our oceans together through the Pacific Oceanscape.

Mr. President,

Palau, and indeed the entire world, is connected by a web of life that is in peril. For too long we have focused our attention solely on commercial interests. We have abused

nature and must change our thinking. We must reorient our priorities to put biodiversity and the welfare of our ecosystems first. In doing so, we can serve both our long-term commercial interests and protect the natural bounty that sustains us.

One issue symbolizes the threat to our biodiversity succinctly: the fight for our oceans.

Last year I declared the world's first Shark Sanctuary from this podium. It was a good first step. I also advocated for an end to unsustainable, cruel and wasteful shark finning on the high seas at the Fish Stocks Agreement Resumed Review Conference. We cannot accept the loss of 73 million sharks a year for a bowl of soup.

Palau is doing all it can, but this work cannot stop at the boundary of one country. We are all connected. This is why I am proud that President Lobo Sosa of Honduras and I signed this week a Joint Declaration calling on other nations to stop unsustainable shark fishing.

Moreover, according to scientific studies such as "Patterns and Ecosystems Consequences of shark declines in the Ocean," the health of sharks is linked directly to the health of tuna. Palau and other countries rely on tuna as their principal fisheries resource, and the world community relies on it as an important food source. We must work together to ensure the continued viability of this important stock. This past year, I hosted a summit of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) to take steps to ensure that tuna remains plentiful. Along with the other leaders of PNA countries, we limited purse seine fishing, agreed to close the donut holes between our jurisdictions and implemented a vessel day scheme. These are steps which we believe are vital to ensuring the continued viability of our stocks.

Mr. President,

When Palau and other Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) joined together in the 63rd Session of the General Assembly to initiate General Assembly Resolution 63/281, "Climate Change and its Possible Security Implications," we did so recognizing that climate change is not only a development issue, but has now risen to the level of a security issue. The successful adoption of General Assembly Resolution 63/281 by consensus was a landmark occasion for PSIDS and a step forward for the international community. Accelerating conflict and dislocation caused by climate events warrant an urgent response from the Security Council. We repeat our call for Security Council action on this Resolution.

Mr. President,

After personally visiting the Pacific Islands earlier this year, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates, convened an historic summit between the Arab League and the PSIDS. The summit was a great success. Our two regions – which had never before engaged bilaterally – found a new understanding of shared culture and traditions. Palau is grateful to the League of Arab

States for being the first regional group to recognize the potential of the PSIDS as a strong, cohesive unit.

Mr. President,

We are hopeful that this is the year when we will make substantive progress on Security Council reform. Our position on the issue has been stated clearly and continuously in the negotiation room. If we, as an organization, are to maintain our relevance, we must reform the Council to one whose membership reflects the evolving membership of the General Assembly. Palau strongly supports expanding Security Council membership, particularly the addition of Japan as a permanent member.

Mr. President,

On the issue of security, Palau is hopeful that the return of Israelis and Palestinians this month to the negotiating table will bear fruit. The crucible of the world's Abrahamic faiths should not be the land of so much turmoil. The resolution of this intractable problem is of the utmost importance so that the region's reality reflects its historic message of peace on earth.

Palau can only add its voice to the chorus of support for a just, comprehensive and regional solution in accordance with the Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant Security Council resolutions. We welcome the opportunity to actively support the process in the UN General Assembly this fall.

World peace hinges on peace in the Middle East.

Palau also supports efforts of the international community related to disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Palau's was the world's first nuclear free constitution and so the elimination of nuclear weapons is of special concern. Having experienced the horror and devastation of war, we and our neighbors, including Japan, long for the day when the entire world is free of nuclear weapons. We therefore welcome all efforts to add the Middle East to the list of nuclear weapon free zones.

Mr. President,

The SARS pandemic shined bright light through the gaps in our collective ability to prevent the international spread of diseases. With Taiwan's participation, we can now help to fill those gaps. We congratulate the world community on making itself healthier by granting Taiwan observer status at the World Health Assembly.

Given the importance of a universal approach to global problems, Palau advocates for Taiwan's inclusion in the activities of the International Civil Aviation Organization and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The world needs its input to ensure civil aviation safety and security for everyone and to effectively tackle climate change.

Mr. President,

When I began my address, I related the success story that is Palau's emergence from Trusteeship. As I wind down my remarks, I will speak candidly about our challenges.

Palau still feels the pain from the wounds inflicted during our colonial days. Damage was done to our islands. One island, for example, was stripped of much of its resources making it difficult for those who live there to sustain the livelihood they knew before. This happened to our once phosphate rich island of Angaur. We call upon the international community for appropriate relief for this historic and lasting injury – a relief that will heal the gaping wounds on our island and bring justice to our people.

Additionally, as a result of the fierce battles fought on our islands during World War II, explosives were scattered on our land. Some of these explosives are still live and pose an extreme danger to the lives and limbs of our people. We appeal to the conscience of the world, especially those responsible, to remove this danger from our midst.

Finally Mr. President,

As a developing nation, Palau is thankful for the grants provided to us by our allies and partners. They have been invaluable. But our developing economy faces a crisis that grants alone can not address. Without a strong local economy based on private enterprise, our young people will continue to leave our shores to pursue employment abroad. We need more than humanitarian grants; we need private investment to spur and sustain our economic development. Therefore, I invite investors and entrepreneurs to come to Palau and to establish partnerships with our talented people so that we can create a vibrant economy for now and for our future.

Thank you.