



**PALAU**



*PALAU MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS*

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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**TO THE**

**12<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OPEN-ENDED  
INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON OCEANS  
AND THE LAW OF THE SEA**

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**NEW YORK**

Co-chairs,

At the outset, Palau associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States and the Pacific Island Forum.

Co-chairs,

Palauans have sustainably managed their clean waters and their healthy reefs to provide ample fish and food for over three thousand years. For Palau, it has always been, and continues to be, a blue economy or no economy. But, as we all know, the times are changing. Forces beyond Palau's control now threaten its resources.

Co-chairs,

Palau's fish are among the most valuable in the world, but they are in danger. Distant water boats do not respect Palau's laws and traditions. These boats come in great numbers for tuna, which are taken for pennies on the dollar. They also hunt, fin, and sell sharks for a tiny fraction of what tourists will spend to see those sharks alive. They bottom trawl our region's seamounts and destroy the base of the marine food web on which all else relies. And they do so with impunity.

Our reefs are also being stressed to the limit by global warming and ocean acidification. Countries continue to burn carbon recklessly, all the while knowing that by doing so they put our existence as a country at risk.

Co-chairs,

We suggest that to protect our blue economy, the Rio+20 outcome should incorporate three straightforward principles:

First, global fisheries should be fair. If distant water vessels want to come for fish that traverse Palau's waters, then they should respect our laws. They should fish within our limits and share the benefits of our natural resources equitably.

Second, global fisheries should be sustainable. Reckless practices that harm our fisheries should stop. This means that shark finning should stop. Bottom trawling should stop. And greenhouse gas emissions should be brought under control.

Third, global fisheries should be accountable. Countries have given great responsibility to Regional Fisheries Management Organizations to conserve and manage global fish stocks. But these stocks continue their depressing declines. The FAO reports that 85 percent of global fish stocks are now fully or over exploited. These are the worst numbers on record. RFMOs should do better. RFMOs should be more transparent. Their work should be open to journalists and to scholars. The ecosystem approach must be applied more meaningfully.

The General Assembly has the power to promote international economic cooperation by reviewing RFMO performance. In this vein, Palau looks forward to the upcoming General Assembly review of the measures taken, and not taken, by States and RFMOs on high seas bottom fisheries. The General Assembly needs to regularly review the performance of all RFMOs to ensure they do better.

Co-chairs,

The principles of equity, sustainability and accountability, which we call for to ensure Palau's blue economy, should be carried forward internationally. Rio+20 may provide the opportunity.

Thank you.