



**Remarks by His Excellency Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr.
President of the Republic of Palau
General Debate of the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly
21 September 2017, New York**

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me first congratulate your Excellency, Miroslav Lajcak, for your election to lead our work in the 72st session. I would also like to thank His Excellency Peter Thompson for his exceptional service during his recently completed term.

At the outset, the People of Palau extend our deepest condolences to those who have had their lives devastated by the recent spate of hurricanes, typhoons, earthquakes and other natural disasters across Asia and the Americas. We must not forget that many do not have the resources necessary to rebuild. The international community must work harder to ensure they are not abandoned.

These record breaking storms are a harbinger of worse to come on a hotter planet. Palau and the Pacific have experienced firsthand the impact of climate extremes. For us, these super-storms are akin to ticking time bombs. No one knows when or where the next one will detonate, but we are keenly aware that it can wipe out years of progress in the span of hours.

Mr. President, your clear determination to focus future efforts on conflict prevention, peace, migration and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet is certainly timely and well attuned to the realities of our generation. In fact, your attention to these very different, yet related issues, demonstrates a clear understanding of the complex times in which we live and the need to connect the dots, the causes and the effects of the interrelated challenges that we face.

In this modern world, we must continue to expand our cooperation at every level; private, public, non-profit and political – within the context of a global network that establishes fair and transparent guidelines to guide our actions and reactions to these dynamic topics. The only body that can fill this essential void is the United Nations.

In the area of Sustainable Development, we recognized in 2015, with the creation of 17 Sustainable Goals, that a global, rights-based regime was necessary in the context of a global partnership if we are to successfully eradicate poverty, address universal inequalities and provide economic and social opportunities to all for the people of the world.

Through the creation of SDG 14, we recognized - finally - that Oceans are a resource of and for all the people of the World and must be protected as such. By coming together and finally agreeing to the Paris Climate Accord, we established a global commitment to begin the process of reducing green-house gasses to acceptable levels.

Yet even as we have worked to respond to these environmental global crises through joint actions, we find other issues of security and peace taking the forefront of our international conversation. As ISIS is pushed back from its strongholds in Syria and Iraq, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea fires missiles and explodes atomic and hydrogen bombs to threaten our worldwide peace and harmony. At the same time, migrants across the world are forced to flee their own countries to escape ever-increasing levels of violence.

Mr. President, these are issues that must be dealt with globally, through strong multi-national institutions and partnerships. If these partnerships are to be successful within the framework of the United Nations, the United Nations must be strengthened so that all of its members can believe in the fairness and effectiveness of the overall international negotiation and dispute resolution process. These are the issues that your global focus are aimed at -- "a decent life for all on a sustainable planet"

Ladies and Gentlemen, I believe that we can all agree that in terms of Peace and Security, inclusive sustainable development frequently prevents conflict and sustains peace. However, peace is not always achievable, and when this is the case, the UN must facilitate efforts to respond to aggression and violence. Palau therefore supports all efforts and UN Resolutions to bring North Korea to the negotiation table. The threat to the innocent people of Guam is a threat to us and the entire region. Palau also reaffirms our support of the international efforts to eradicate terrorism organizations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda.

We must also support the Secretary General's efforts to revamp the UN peace and security development and management architectures and procedures as a significant component of the overall reform of the UN organization. The Pacific Small Island Developing States face a unique set of security and development challenges. However, the UN's presence in the region is quite limited. Mr. Secretary-General, in shepherding this process, I urge you to recall the guiding principle that was so successful in delivering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: "Leave no country behind."

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Finally, taking into account the recent actions by North Korea, we must take seriously the long-term need to ban nuclear weapons. A good place to start is the accession to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. I must give credit to the leaders of my country, who, over 30 years ago, recognized the threat of nuclear weapons and banned the use, test and storage of nuclear weapons in Palau's Constitution. In their honor, yesterday I signed this Treaty.

Ladies and Gentlemen, if we are to find success in achieving our 17 goals in Agenda 2030, we are going to have to face the hard reality that the costs are very, very significant. Through all available partnerships, success will require the development of the necessary means of implementation in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.

In the area of Climate Change, we must continue to work to achieve the full implementation of the Paris Agreement. I would like to congratulate my colleague from the Pacific, the Honorable Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, on his imminent assumption of the Presidency at the upcoming 23rd Conference of the Parties.

To strengthen his efforts, Palau is seeking the appointment of a Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Climate & Security. The appointment of a Special Representative would significantly aid our preparation in confronting this multi-faceted challenge and augmenting UN reform proposals.

Mr. President, my country, although small, is very proud to commit itself to the achievement of our global 2030 Agenda. To help protect our oceans, we have created one of the largest protected areas in the World. Within this context, we emphasize our support for a new Implementing Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity on Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. We have also given our support to the 2016 IUCN Motion 53, promising to work towards designating and effectively implementing at least 30% of their national waters as marine protected areas by 2030. In addition, we have committed to action on addressing marine pollution in all forms.

At the recent Pacific Islands Forum, Palau also called upon other countries to join us in becoming members to the Port State Measures Agreement, an international treaty that will help stop the transfer of illegally caught fish and marine life at our ports. I would make the same request here today.

In our work to save our Oceans, we welcome the appointment of His Excellency Mr. Peter Thompson as the first Special Envoy for Oceans, which promises to bring greater attention to one of our most urgent priorities. Palau extends its congratulations to our close friend from Fiji.

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These types of commitments require the strong support of a broad alliance of partners. Fortunately, my country has a long history of strong partnerships. The United States continues to support Palau in its development and movement toward economic independence. We have a shared history and over decades, have become strong friends and recognize the unique relationship that we share. In these difficult times, we support and participate in the efforts of the United States on behalf of the World Community to combat terrorism, bring closure to the hostilities in Syria, and to reduce the nuclear threat emanating from North Korea. We also thank the US for its on-going support of our efforts to establish our Marine Sanctuary. We look forward, this year, to completing our Compact of Free Association Agreement with the United States, which reflects this close and special relationship.

Palau would also like to acknowledge the great friendship that it has with Japan and the very significant economic support that we have received over the years. We continue to express our support for the expansion and reform of the Security Council and Japan's Permanent Membership on the Security Council. We wish to express our sincere thanks for the Nippon Foundation's generous support to enhance collaboration in our marine surveillance and enforcement efforts.

We would also like to recognize the very broad list of partners across the globe who make our efforts at a sustainable future possible, including the Republic of China, Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, Monaco, Italy, The Netherlands, the European Union, private organizations, NGO's and Civil Society, just to name a few.

Mr. President,

At the end of the day, our success will depend upon the development and maintenance of genuine and durable partnerships at every level of society. The issues that we face are becoming increasingly severe, dangerous and global in scope. They cannot be dealt with at the national or regional level.

At no time in the history of my country, or indeed, Mr. President, the history of this world, has the need for a strong global partnership of countries, organizations, and people, through a single binding Assembly of nations, been more important. The United Nations has the potential to reconcile our global issues if, and only if, its members are willing to recognize the issues and to take the actions necessary to develop and implement appropriate solutions. Mr. President – Ladies and Gentlemen... my small country, however small, is willing to act in concert with the other nations of this great body to achieve a better life for our children.

Thank You.