



REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

H.E. Mr. Christopher J. Loeak
President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands
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Mr. Secretary-General, President of the General Assembly, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor to convey to you the warm greetings of Yokwe from the government and people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Every September, world leaders take the stage of the UN General Assembly to broadcast our common concerns. But I am concerned that this poetic ritual too often buries the true degree of necessary political will.

This January, the UN Secretary-General outlined two key political priorities for leaders – addressing climate change risks, and the growing insecurity within Syria. As Autumn sets in, it is evident that efforts are falling short.

This year, Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum expressed strong concern at the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government, and called for leadership by Security Council members to resolve this threat. While I am optimistic over recent diplomatic developments, the common international voice may come too little and too late for what could have been already prevented. This is only one example, of a growing list, of the tragic human costs of inaction.

How many more mistakes will the world make in distant conference rooms?
For how long can we turn a blind eye to realities and headlines?

Mr. President,

Pacific nations are now dedicated to change the pace. This month, Pacific Island Forum leaders adopted the Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership. Though many of us are small, the common responsibility to act escapes no government, and no person, no matter how different we are. The Marshall Islands is well on track to achieve complete solarization of our outer islands – a goal we are meeting with the assistance from Japan's Pacific Environment Community funds, as well as assistance from the European Union, Taiwan, Italy, France and other donor partners.

The entire region is also aggressively cutting our own emissions through a Pacific New Energy Drive – and the message for our partners, the world's largest emitters, is clear – if we can do it, so can you.

Climate change is a risk that demands direct political ownership, and it is well time that other Leaders stand alongside the Pacific in creating the statesmanship so urgently needed. Simply repeating well-worn negotiation slogans will get the world nowhere – it is time for new solutions. I strongly urge my fellow Leaders to engage “eye to eye” at the Secretary-General’s climate summit next year – never has the need been so dire for true statesmanship.

Global efforts on climate change are falling short – and low-lying island nations such as mine are already paying the earliest costs of what is fast becoming a global crisis. In every sense, the world must build for future risks, and too often, we are still setting course for current conditions. It is the seas that are rising – not the islands that are sinking. I will not concede my own land or my nation; but nor will I rest until my fellow world leaders have signed onto to act, not just out of economic convenience, but out of a common responsibility of all to strive for upward momentum.

Mr. President,

Our Pacific legacy is not as small island states – but large ocean nations. We are stewards of what is a truly global resource – our oceans and fisheries. Even a casual glance of a map reveals a world of deep and vast blue, and not only scientists, but our own local communities, see our own waters at change. Local and global ocean impacts affect not only every region, but global food security. I join with other Pacific Leaders in urging dedicated treatment of Oceans as a Post-2015 UN Sustainable Development Goal.

Pacific nations, including the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, are leading the world in changing fisheries. We are leading the world in advancing not only sustainable fisheries, but at the same time, boosting our own economic growth. Perhaps no other effort and region is such a strong textbook example of sustainable development in action.

But for all of the “plenary sympathies”, common international responsibility – and existing legal commitment – to safeguard fisheries too often falls victim to the short-term trade interests of our partners. Pacific leaders will not sacrifice our resources, nor our growth and livelihood for quick returns; our future generations are not for sale. The threat of harmful fisheries sanctions from distant fishing nations – perhaps punishment for our own conservation efforts – is hardly a helping hand either to our regional development or to international food security.

Next year's international meeting on small island states and development partnerships, to be held in Samoa, offers our political partners a moment for careful reflection; is the global thirst for rare earth minerals beneath our waves, and is the hunger for our vast fisheries - so great as to outstrip our own rightful economic development, and our own conservation efforts? Perhaps it is due time island leaders set forward our own Island vision of partnership, and collaborate accordingly.

Mr. President,

We cannot forge progress through political will alone. Here, Pacific Island Forum Leaders have forged a ground-breaking mutual dialogue to enhance and improve effective UN partnership in our region. These are no isolated words; already, the UN, together with our bilateral partners, is playing a valuable role in working with the Marshall Islands to recover from a climate-driven drought and coastal flooding emergencies.

But we need not wait for disasters; in every sector of basic development and environmental efforts, our door is open for increased collaboration between the UN, our regional resources, and bilateral partners. The plenary statements of sympathy are too often not translating into effective, island-tailored results. Our in-country UN presence still has a long way to go in truly “delivering as one” and better addressing pressing threats. I encourage a direct discussion between the UN and our region in practical efforts to enhance in-country effectiveness and collaboration. No one people and nation can be passed over.

Mr. President,

Even as the UN enters into a new discussion in crafting the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, improved progress towards the Millennium Development Goals remains no less a priority. I would also like to recognize the contributions that Taiwan has made in helping my country in efforts towards the MDGs.

Mr. President,

Pacific Island Forum leaders have for the first time recognized the role of the United Nations in authorizing nuclear weapon testing during the Cold War, and welcomed the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur's recent report. Nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands is no mere historical event – but an international legacy which will stay with us for generations.

While unmet responsibility still rests with our historical administering power, the United States, the UN itself can no longer ignore it's own role during the Trusteeship era. I am strongly encouraged by the UN Secretary-General's commitment to address the ongoing impacts of nuclear testing in the Pacific, and look forward to practical efforts in this regard.

Mr. President,

My government is gratified to note that – with solid international support and cross-strait cooperation – the Republic of China (Taiwan) has increased it's meaningful participation in UN specialized agencies and mechanisms. We will continue to encourage positive interaction between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait in the international arena.

Mr. President,

Too often, despite our own aspirations, we struggle to move inches when urgency demands miles. Our own political will is before you, Mr. Secretary-General, and our hands are open for a durable partnership.

Thank you and kummol tata.