

H.E. Christopher J. Loeak
President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands
Opening of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's 21st Conference of Parties
Paris, France
30 November 2015

Check against delivery

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

I address you today not only as a President, but as a father, as a grandfather, as a custodian of my culture, and as a representative of a nation that lies just two meters above sea level and risks being submerged by the rising waves.

Everything I know, and everyone I love, is in the hands of all of us gathered here today.

The climate we have known over many centuries has, in a matter of three short decades, changed dramatically before our very eyes.

We are already limping from climate disaster to climate disaster, and we know there is worse to come.

For us, COP21 must be a turning point in history, and one that gives us hope.

Our Paris Agreement must set a path for the safe climate future we all strive for. We all know, and must acknowledge, that the targets on the table now are not enough to limit warming to below 1.5 degrees, although they are a start in the right direction.

Therefore, if it is to deliver the end we all seek, the Paris Agreement must be designed for ambition.

It must send a message to the world that if we're to win the battle against climate change, the fossil fuel era must draw to a close, to be replaced by a clean, green energy future, free of the carbon pollution that is harming our health, stunting our growth, and suffocating our planet.

It must set a rhythm for our action that sees us ratcheting up our national targets every five years.

And it must assure countries as vulnerable as mine that the world's helping hand will be there when climate change, unfortunately and unavoidably, unleashes its devastating impacts.

Mr. President,

No one can be left out. For this reason, the Republic of the Marshall Islands supports Taiwan's aspirations for meaningful participation in the UN system, in particular the UNFCCC.

Mr. President,

My country is in its hour of need. Like any other country, we cannot, and will not go along with an agreement that signs our sovereignty away. And today I have been presented a petition from 3.6 million people from around the world who stand with us in this quest.

Mr. President,

We admire your courage in having forged ahead with this COP at this very difficult time. We stand with you.

This is a time for human solidarity. But this is also a time for action. And this is a time for us to be the leaders that we were elected to be. Let's get it done.

Kommol tata and thank you very much.