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President  
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Madame President, Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen,

I bring you the warm greetings of Yokwe from President Zedkaia and the Marshallese people.

I wish to associate this statement with that delivered by the Foreign Minister of Grenada, His Excellency the Honorable Karl Hood, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, and that by the President of Nauru, His Excellency the Honorable Spent Dabwido, on behalf of the Pacific Small Islands Developing States.

Twenty-one years ago, the United Nations General Assembly agreed, as a matter of urgency, to negotiate a framework convention and multiple protocols with concrete and binding commitments for all nations taking into account the specific development needs of developing nations. The world was once united to avoid dangerous levels of climate change.

Twenty-one years later, that very urgency, once in our grasp, seems to have eluded us for an entire generation.

While we must protect the progress made – including the Kyoto Protocol's platform of binding targets, common rules, and market mechanisms, and the

important institutions agreed last year at Cancun – the international community has done little to tackle the problem. As a result, my country's future is now in jeopardy.

Every time the UNFCCC negotiations commence, a fence is erected to wall off our discussions from the outside world. This is the sign of a process that is slowly distancing itself from the science and the loud call from our people that it is time for action.

The present debate over continuing the Kyoto architecture or building a new regime may be an important project for negotiators, but this battle masks a much more serious moral deficit.

We must admit that there is a leadership vacuum within major economies to curb the pollution creating the problem. The international community is way behind in pledging action and targets to achieve the global goal of below 2 degrees Celcius of temperature rise, let alone the 1.5 degree goal advocated by the most vulnerable.

These numbers mean that the international community has yet to muster the political will, cooperation and creativity to ensure even the most basic of rights – our nationhood. We cannot afford to defer consideration of our

future into 2020 or 2030. The science and the risks are now clear. Climate change is not a “roll of the dice.”

Everyone in this room has already admitted that more must be done than what is currently on the table – but few have come forward to suggest how, and even fewer have tried to carve out the necessary trust and political conditions. The window is rapidly closing.

My country, the Marshall Islands, cannot “adapt” its way out of a one meter rise in sea levels. We are now at risk of losing our homeland; a situation no one in this room should be willing to contemplate. It is a situation that is unprecedented in our international system, and beyond the envelope of international law. It is therefore an issue which may need to be clarified by an international court or tribunal.

But I do not come to Durban to offer only criticism and convey despair.

In addressing climate change, the international community must be as ambitious and creative as we have been in sharply reducing threats from nuclear weapons – a goal which, just decades ago, seemed beyond our reach.

First, we must avoid the temptation to unravel our hard won, international rules-based regime. We do not have the luxury of time to start again. We must reinforce what we have – the Convention on the Kyoto protocol – and build upon it to reflect the changing circumstances, consistent with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

But we should also find ways to improve our regime. It is simply unacceptable, on an issue of such global significance, to be held hostage by the whims of one or two nations. Voting, as a last resort, would make us work harder to find the necessary compromises, instead of prolonging disagreements indefinitely.

Second, we cannot ignore the security implications of climate change. We must now directly address the unprecedented risks to our sovereignty, our borders and our population, and the UNFCCC provides few answers. Unfortunately, key nations continue to dodge the question, wherever it is raised. We will not.

Perhaps we might call into serious question the aspirations of those nations seeking to become permanent Security Council members, if they cannot demonstrate greater leadership on so crucial an issue as climate change.

Third, the Convention treaty clearly identifies the possibility for a group of nations to communicate how it intends to cut its emissions and address adaptation, binding commitments taken on over two decades ago. To build momentum towards an ultimate global system, we may very well need to carve out complementary agreements within regions and across “coalitions of the willing.” The most vulnerable can no longer wait indefinitely for negotiators acting without deadlines or direction.

Further, we must also better acknowledge and capture the actions and commitments of a wider range of international actors. For this reason, the Marshall Islands strongly supports the aspirations of Taiwan to participate in the UNFCCC as an observer.

International transport also has a key role to play, as do sub-regional and local initiatives, ranging from the largest cities to our own local communities in the Marshall Islands.

Our broad objective has been in place for years, and our national strategies and positions are well known.

But today, my fellow Ministers, we must move beyond entrenched positions and inadequate responses. At less than two meters above sea level, the

Marshall Islands does not need sympathy. Today, right now, we need solutions.

Thank you, and kormol tata.