

Statement by Minister Tony A. deBrum
Head of Delegation of the Republic of the Marshall Islands
High Level Segment of the 18th Session of the Conference of Parties
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Doha, Qatar
December 5, 2012

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives, Ladies And Gentlemen,

Allow me to express my appreciation to His Royal Highness Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Amir of the State of Qatar and the Presidency for your warm hospitality and leadership.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands associates itself with the statement of Nauru, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Islands States. I also extend warm support for Fiji as incoming chair of the G77.

Mr. President,

The very physical survival of the Marshall Islands – and other low-lying nations – is now far more than a distant and theoretical risk – but now a clear and present danger. This fact is confirmed not only by scientific consensus, but on observed impacts experienced by our local communities - including coral bleaching, ocean acidification, saltwater intrusion, coastal erosion and sea level rise – with projected risks so great that climate change threatens not just our livelihoods, but our very security and homeland.

Earlier this week, our neighboring island nation of the Republic of Palau was pounded by super typhoon Bopha, with 250 kilometers winds and 25 feet waves. The specter of increasing intensity of such events in the future will plunge island nations around the world into irreversible chaos.

Mr. President,

The URGENCY of the issues facing the most vulnerable countries, and the political will needed to carve new solutions, can no longer hide behind the veil of self-interest and finger-pointing of the major economies. The Marshall Islands – and small island states and least developed countries around the world – firmly refuse to become collateral damage or casual discards because of the absent leadership of the most powerful.

We ourselves are leading, not only through our politics, but our own actions. The Marshall Islands is crafting locally-driven adaptation and energy initiatives to implement our national climate policy. Our local mayors in the Marshall Islands are just like New York City Mayor Bloomberg - they too demand the national government's climate leadership. We are taking large strides on local adaptation efforts, including through the Micronesia Challenge and climatized Reimaanlok conservation process, but we are still walking when we must run. We are also working towards introduction of the world's first commercial ocean thermal energy conversion plant, providing not only affordable clean energy and water security, but also hydrogen exports to help power a global green growth. I challenge the thick web of climate finance actors to work with us in building our own capacity, in learning by doing, to focus on small island states as a unique category, and to recognize that the success or failure of adaptation results is not reflective of our political will, but more so of your delivery.

Mr. President,

As small island nations, every year we are asked to incur greater risks to our survival, our own essential rights, in the name of "flexibility." And every year, major emitters are also asked to compromise paper principles – really nothing at all - also in the same spirit of flexibility. This, Mr. President, is our own view of the "equity" debate. We have

lost the luxury of time to sit back and wait for alleged solutions which compromises our survival into neat packages of years and numbers – adequate solutions never seem to arrive. Mr. President – the only true solution is common political will necessary at the highest levels.

Mr. President,

The Marshall Islands was present at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, and twenty years later, we remain politically strangled by the ‘you go first’ dynamic. Long term and singular solutions, in a short term political process, is a recipe for failure. We are crying out for political leadership of the largest nations, and their engagement in creative solutions to break our deadlock. In particular, I urge the United States of America – the closest friend of the Marshall Islands – to continue to work through and above it’s domestic challenges and to bring it’s strongest political leadership to these negotiations.

Last year in Durban, Ministers committed both to achieving a single legal Protocol capturing efforts by all nations, and urgent political work to realize further and immediate emissions cuts. We will need the efforts of all parties but must also engage with the full spectrum of non-party actors – including cities, private sector, the civil society, networks and all other actors – indeed, all must do more.

Mr. President,

The Republic of the Marshall Islands affirms its unequivocal position of support for Taiwan’s meaningful participation as an observer within the UNFCCC. Taiwan has not only put forward some of the most ambitious emissions goals in the Asia-Pacific region, but is also a close partner in assisting the Marshall Islands, and many other parties, with our own clean energy goals. Such important efforts deserve full and appropriate recognition.

Thank you, and kimmol tata.