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Statement at the High Level Segment by
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Madam President

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to join previous speakers in expressing my delegation's sincere thanks and appreciation to the city of Durban and the people and Government of South Africa, for making us feel at home and for providing us excellent conference facilities.

Durban prepared hard for this conference and counts on us to deliver. The world is looking to us for the same. And my country, Micronesia, sends us here expecting no less.

We are approaching twenty years since the UNFCCC was established.

Yet emissions are still increasing.

2010 saw not only the highest emissions ever, but also the largest growth in carbon dioxide emissions on a year-to-year basis.

Meanwhile, we are continuing to witness increasingly damaging impacts from climate change, including the loss of land, homes and lives.

These impacts are relentless. They will inevitably grow worse and will likely even accelerate over time.

Clearly, we are on the wrong course and we are running out of time to change it.

But there is still a chance to safely stabilize the climate system if we act together and if we act now.

To that end, I will briefly outline three essential components of a successful climate change mitigation strategy.

First, we must reduce emissions of carbon dioxide. Annex I countries must show leadership so others can follow. This is the main priority with which we are all familiar: we must reduce carbon dioxide and we must start to do so immediately.

Science makes clear that to achieve the temperature goals already agreed by the parties to this Convention global carbon dioxide emissions must peak before 2020.

The need to immediately reduce carbon dioxide emissions is just as urgent for reasons of slowing ocean acidification. So, again, reducing carbon dioxide emissions is the overarching priority.

But in addition to reducing carbon dioxide, we must also reduce other warming agents, warming agents that combined cause 30-40% of all warming.

Therefore, in addition to reducing carbon dioxide, a second essential element of a successful climate strategy is to address the so-called short-lived climate forcers. By reducing short-lived greenhouse gases like HFCs and methane, and by reducing short-lived warming aerosols like black carbon, we can complement the reductions we need to make in carbon dioxide and bring about climate benefits even more quickly than if we acted on carbon dioxide alone.

According to the United Nations Environment Program and the World Meteorological Organization the fast response from reducing short-lived warming agents can cut the rate of climate change in half over the next several decades and can prevent up to half of one degree C of further warming by 2070.

These kinds of near-term benefits can help preserve and defend the planet's most vulnerable climate elements, such as the Arctic and the Tibetan Plateau. Reducing short-lived climate forcers can also slow the rate of sea-level rise over the near term and can therefore protect vulnerable populations such as those in the Pacific islands.

For those of us already suffering the most severe impacts of climate change the rapid benefits that can be attained by reducing short-lived climate forcers offer the best hope for the next 3 – 4 decades.

Finally, in addition to addressing both the long- and short-lived warming emissions, we also need to begin to think about eventually removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Indeed, we have fallen so far behind in our efforts to reduce new emissions and to stabilize concentrations that to achieve a safe environment, we will have to remove from the atmosphere carbon dioxide that has already been emitted.

Most climate models indicate that to achieve the goal of limiting warming to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius, a goal called for by over 100 parties to this Convention and a goal deemed necessary for the survival of many island countries and for the continued inhabitability of many others, we will not only need to bring emissions to zero, but will actually have to achieve net negative emissions on an annual basis in the second half of this century. Therefore, we must get started on the research and development that will be required to accomplish this. We must develop carbon-negative technologies as well as low-carbon energy.

Thank you.