



REPUBLIC OF NAURU

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**THIRD CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

**MINISTERIAL SEGMENT**

**SPEECH TO PLENARY**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY**

**KINZA CLODUMAR**

**PRESIDENT AND MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**REPUBLIC OF NAURU**

**8 DECEMBER 1997**

Prime Minister Hashimoto, President Figueres Olsen, Vice President Gore, other distinguished Vice Presidents, President Ohki, Honourable Ministers, Chairman Estrada, Executive Secretary Zammit Cutajar, distinguished delegates, representatives of non-governmental organizations, members of the press corps, ladies and gentlemen:

May I express my most sincere gratitude to our hosts, the Government of Japan, and to the Governor and Mayor of Kyoto City. The beauty of this ancient city of Kyoto exemplifies the thoughtfulness of civic leaders to preserve the past for the enjoyment of the present. And in the same way, our meeting together here in Kyoto exemplifies the hope and optimism of so much of our world today – that we may conserve the present for the future.

For more than five thousand years, my people have inhabited what the ancient mariners called "Pleasant Island." Rain forests once abounded on Nauru, anchored by the Tomano tree and decorated by hanging orchids. Hundreds of bird species, including our treasured Noddy bird, made Nauru their home.

But the twentieth century has not been gentle with our island. First we lost our land; eighty percent of my country has been destroyed by phosphate mining, initiated by colonial powers. Although restitution has been paid, in place of the green rain forest there are now gray tombstones of fossilized coral that remain after the phosphate was removed. My people have been confined to the narrow coastal fringe that separates this wasteland from our mother the sea.

And now we face a new threat. The emission of greenhouse gases in distant lands is warming the earth and causing the sea level to rise. The coastal fringe where my people live is but two meters above the sea surface. We are trapped, a wasteland at our back, and to our front, a terrifying, rising flood of biblical proportions.

Our plight is not unique. In the Pacific alone, four other island countries face destruction unless global warming is arrested. Our island brothers and sisters in the Caribbean, Atlantic and Indian Oceans face the same desperate plight. Throughout the world, the story is the same; island countries are on the front lines of the global climate catastrophe. Indeed, all countries with low-lying coastal areas share our vulnerability to the rising sea.

Mr. President, we submit respectfully that the willful destruction of entire countries and cultures with foreknowledge would represent an

unspeakable crime against humanity. No nation has the right to place its own, misconstrued national interest before the physical and cultural survival of whole countries. The crime is cultural genocide; it must not be tolerated by the family of nations. The crime is no less when it is perpetrated slowly by the emission of invisible gases.

Mr. President, my plea is not merely an urgent request on behalf of island nations and cultures; it is also a heartfelt warning to the entire family of nations. Small Island States provide not only a moral compass; we are also a barometer of broader visitations wisely heeded by all.

Unchecked climate change would cause untold human and ecological misery not just in our remote island countries, but everywhere on earth. Already drought has afflicted much of the world of late, and caused raging bush fires. Recent studies by the World Resource Institute and the US Environmental Protection Agency project nearly a million deaths a year from the pollution coupled with greenhouse gas emission, mainly in developing countries. Already one person in eight dies of this cause in the largest developing country.

Mr. President, island countries are the microcosm of which all other countries are the macrocosm. Unchecked climate change promises not only our destruction, but pestilence, disease and famine everywhere on earth for all living things. These are the certain bitter fruits of inaction on our part in Kyoto.

We are all agreed that the developed countries must take the lead in solving this problem. This will require not simply the stabilization of greenhouse gas emissions, but their significant reduction in the future. President Bill Clinton promised that the US would bring to Kyoto a pledge for significant future reductions. Vice President Gore, we await your announcement with bated breath.

In his essay entitled *The Over-Soul*, the great American author and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote:

"The supreme critic on the errors of the past and present and the only prophet of that which must be is that great nature in which we rest as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere."

Mr. President, here in Kyoto we are granted the unique and priceless opportunity to rectify the errors of the past and present.

The Kyoto Protocol is our opportunity to honor that great nature in which we rest.

The Kyoto Protocol is our opportunity to restore softness to the arms of the atmosphere.

The Kyoto Protocol is our opportunity to spare ourselves the harsh judgment of our supreme critic.

Mr. President, the opportunity of Kyoto must not and will not slip through our fingers unnoticed. We know what we must do. We know it can only be done together. So let us get on with the task.

Let us create a Kyoto Protocol that we can show proudly to our children. Let us take action, effective action, prompt action, here in Kyoto, without reservation, without delay, for now and forever.

Let's just do it!

Thank you, Mr. President.