

ADDRESS TO THE 6th CONFERENCE OF PARTIES

**(UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK
CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE)**

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Presented By:

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ADDRESS TO THE 6TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
TOMMY E. REMENGESAU, JR.
President Elect, The Republic of Palau
Page 2

On behalf of the Republic of Palau, I would like to extend warm greetings from our island nation to the Kingdom of the Netherlands and to the nations attending this very important Global Climate Change Conference. It is truly a privilege to address this '6th Conference of the Parties' today.

Palau is very encouraged by the progress made to put into effect a realistic global warming action plan for the new millennium. While Palau is encouraged by the efforts of all participants of the Conference, we are also greatly concerned that there is a danger, because of the nature of the negotiation process, that we are losing sight of our primary goal. That goal is to take immediate steps, individually and collectively, to effectively limit the global emissions of greenhouse gasses.

It is my belief that, in order for the international community to find ultimate success, each member country must endeavor to recall the nature of this original commitment to our world's environment. And we must all acknowledge that our efforts will certainly fail if we continue to emphasize national and regional economic interests at the expense of progress towards global environmental health and security.

In 1997 and 1998, during the last El Nino event, coral bleaching destroyed at least one-third of our reefs. This resulted in the loss of significant fish food sources and tourism revenues. In addition, most of our primary traditional agricultural food source, (Taro), was devastated by both extreme high tides and drought. These events were not theoretical scientifically simulated losses. These were the real losses of the livelihoods and potentials of the Palauan people.

According to a recent report, the Republic of Palau is one of the four most vulnerable Pacific island nations to the effects of global warming. Other recent reports have confirmed that even the richest and most developed nations are beginning to, and will increasingly, feel the effects of climate change. The evidence continues to mount confirming the urgency of the problem for all nations.

In Palau, we clearly recognize that global warming is a current reality. As a small island nation, we know that the quality of our future existence depends on our ability to adapt to the negative environmental consequences that we are sure to face in the future.

ADDRESS TO THE 6TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

TOMMY E. REMENGESAU, JR.

President Elect, The Republic of Palau

Page 3

However, acting alone, even our best efforts will not succeed. Every country must share the burden of this effort to address the fall-out from developmental sins from the past and to avoid the future degradation of our environment.

For Palau and other island nations, adaptation is now an urgent issue. Our islands cannot wait and cannot tolerate attempts to further delay assistance by requiring additional analysis. Speaking for Palau, we have been analyzed to death. We now need concrete technical and programmatic support. The support Palau has received from Japan in establishing our International Coral Reef Center represents the type of immediate collaborative efforts that are needed now. Time is not running out. It has run out.

We cannot look only outside our own borders for a resolution to the problem. Nor can we waste time emphasizing alternate measures that fail to reduce our own domestic emissions. However, we are cognizant that we must put into place a Protocol that is flexible and workable for our developed country partners. The mechanisms that we put into place today must result in real progress towards greenhouse gas reductions tomorrow.

In order to ensure that our efforts succeed, we must institute appropriate and stringent policing mechanisms and establish real and binding consequences for non-compliance. And all nations must actively support and participate in the sound operation of these measures.

I look around me and see so many different faces from so many different nations. I cannot but realize that there are many and great differences among us. Yet we all face the very same peril. In this sense, we are united. I therefore ask for all of us to act as one, with each of us investing in these endeavors to the fullest extent of our individual abilities. For some, these investments will be in the form of funds and technologies. For others, they will come in the form of opportunities declined.

Clearly, we must succeed together or we will fail together. To Palau, failure is not a legitimate option. While this united action may often require that the rich give to the poor, if we are truly one, we will simply be giving unto ourselves. Mother Earth, and we, her children, deserve nothing less.

Thank You.