

[Checked against delivery]

STATEMENT BY H. E. TOMMY E REMENGESAU JR,

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[Pleasantries and all protocols observed]

Alii, good morning and buongiorno!

Mr Director General, Excellencies, Honorable Ministers and representatives;
Secretariat and staff of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization;
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed my great pleasure to be here with all of you today and to deliver this statement on the occasion of the 40th Session of the FAO Conference.

At the outset, let me begin by thanking the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO) for the excellent arrangements. This is my first visit to Italy and to the UN FAO and on behalf of my delegation, grazie mille for the warm welcome and hospitality.

Many of you here today know well that the Pacific Ocean is one of the world's greatest treasures. Looking at pictures of the Earth, your eyes have been trained to seek out land. The most prominent features are the continents, with the oceans there, merely to give them shape. However, if caught at just the right angle, the planet turns completely blue - the Pacific Ocean is the only thing you can see. It is enormous and it is beautiful.

And zoom in a little closer, and you would start to see tiny specks of green and gold - our islands. While we may not be able to see our islands in every photo or on every map, we know where they are. Surrounded by this great expanse of water, we have an intimate understanding of just how Large of an Ocean State we are.

My country Palau is a Small Island Developing State located just 6 degrees north of the equator in the Pacific Ocean. While it is small in land, at only about 180 square miles, it is a Large Ocean State or roughly the size of France, under its jurisdiction.

Needless to say, our natural resources are limited, and one of the great ironies of life on a small island is that, though we are defined by the ocean around us – it underpins our culture, our food security, and our economy.

Ladies and Gentleman, on a Small Island Developing State, we have an inherent appreciation of the interconnectivity between people and the ocean, the land, and the ecosystem as a whole. We grew up in a culture that emphasized the need to respect nature and the need to live sustainably today for the benefit of current and future generations – these are ideals that all here today share.

Perhaps, part of our challenges is the notion shared by some that we are the last of the human race on earth. That we have to harvest every opportunity before us and just let the next generation care of themselves. This is the mentality that would not ensure a sustainable planet for the next generations.

Therefore, for a future full of hope when we have before us a set of Sustainable Development Goals, and the most important goals in relation to Food Security and Livelihood fall under the work of the UN FAO: Eradicating Hunger, Clean Water and Sanitation, Oceans, Climate Change and Partnerships, to name a few.

It is good to know that since the adoption of the SAMOA Pathway and the Agenda 2030, the UN FAO has been in the forefront of the UN System in its reform to ensure that the organization is more results oriented and cost effective for its members, and most importantly the first UN agency to begin implementing the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA), or the Samoa Pathway.

Let me pause and commend the work of Director-General Da Silva in his leadership, because the reforms are an example of what is needed in the UN System.

Furthermore, under his leadership, the SIDS have been highlighted within the FAO system; for example, in the last year there has been an increase in the Pacific SIDS becoming accredited to FAO: Tonga, Palau, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Samoa. There has also been a staff increase from the Pacific region and for Palau a first historic time to work in the UN system through FAO, along with PNG, Fiji, Tonga.

For my country and many in the Pacific, oceans and climate change continues to be the priority, and therefore the Port State Measures Agreement is important for all of us, who have to deal with the challenge of combating IUU. FAO accreditation to the GCF is also a welcomed development, as we will be able to partner in the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Further improvement is definitely urged in the UN FAO system, for instance if we could also provide the full recognition of the special requirements of SIDS in achieving Agenda 2030 and the SAMOA Pathway.

We would also urge an additional seat for the South West Pacific in the Council.

We note the progress and achievements, including reports from the Regional Conferences and the Technical Committees that will be considered at this Conference. Despite our small administration, Palau participates actively in ocean and fisheries matters.

Indeed, the people of the Pacific are stewards of the largest ocean on Earth – 98% of our region is ocean. Our countries' futures depend upon the health and conservation of our vast ocean and coastal resources, which affects every aspect of the sustainable development agenda in the Pacific region.

At the opening of the First Meeting of the Parties to the Port State Measures Agreement held in Oslo at the end of May, I called on the meeting to send a clear and strong commitment to the international community, that we are serious about the effective implementation of the PSMA as one of the means to fight Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing. The Parties certainly stood up to the challenge. I call upon States that have not done so to consider joining the Port State Measures Agreement. After all, the effectiveness of international efforts to combat IUU fishing depends on the participation of everyone.

In the first week of June, another historic event occurred. The United Nations Ocean Conference in New York effectively set a baseline for the international community to measure progress in the implementation of SDG 14 goals and indicators. Among other achievements, the Ocean Conference also attracted over 1390 voluntary commitments and established partnerships between States, the private sector and civil society. We must now follow through with the commitments we have made towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Excellencies, Honorable Ministers and representatives, later today we will be officially launching the Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States. I commend the FAO for taking the lead in the development of the Global Action Programme and for responding to the call in paragraph 61 of the SAMOA Pathway. The Global Action Programme is an opportunity to accelerate action on food security and nutrition in Small Island Developing States to support sustainable development.

Excellencies, Honorable Ministers and representatives, events like this Conference help us to focus and recognize the critical importance of food security and livelihood to our environment, to our land, our ocean and especially to our people. We have an important duty to ensure sustainability of resources for the benefit of present and future generations of our peoples. It goes without saying that the consequences of not taking this duty is severe.

Thank you for listening me this morning and good luck with the rest of our agenda.