



PALAU

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT

BY

MR. SEBASTIAN MARINO

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER

PLENARY SESSION

OF THE

**UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT, RIO+20**

22 JUNE 2012

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

Madame President, Mr. Secretary General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Twenty years ago, the world set out a bold plan for international action on the environment.

Twenty years later, we are back in this wonderful city to proclaim ‘The Future We Want’.

I would like to tell you, Madame President, about the future we need. The future that we must have, not just the one we aspire to.

First and foremost, the future we need is one of declining greenhouse gas emissions. We knew twenty years ago that these emissions were harmful. We know today that the problem is far worse than we had imagined. And yet emissions are at their highest levels in history - and they are rising as I speak.

Climate change threatens every pillar of sustainable development in Palau. It affects our food security, economy, health, culture, and identity. Tackling rising global emission is not just a part of the future we want. It is what we need to survive.

We have taken innovative steps in Palau to reduce our emissions. We have solarized our airport, our government buildings, and our highways. By 2020, we will generate 20% of our energy from renewable sources. We have also created a successful green mortgages program to assist the financing of greener homes.

But we face a stark reality. We cannot solve the problem on our own. Cutting our emissions to zero will not stop the rising seas. It will not stop the ocean from acidifying, our coast from eroding, or the water from inundating our crops.

We depend on the international community as a whole to tackle climate change. That is why Palau will continue to advocate for action in every corner of the international system – engagement from every part of the United Nations. For there is no way to adapt when your survival is at stake.

Madame President,

The future we need is also one with healthy oceans. The oceans are Palau’s lifeblood. Their bounty has sustained us for thousands of years, and they continue to feed and enrich us today.

For Palau, it has always been, and continues to be, a blue economy or no economy.

That is why, through the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, we have limited purse seine fishing, agreed to close the donut holes between our jurisdictions, and implemented an innovative “vessel day scheme”.

It is why we have conserved 58% percent of our in-shore marine area, banned bottom trawling, and declared the world's first shark sanctuary.

It is also why Palau champions three straightforward principles for global fisheries:

First, global fisheries should be fair. If distant water vessels want to come for fish that traverse Palau's waters, then they should respect our laws. They should fish within our limits and recognize our right to realize the benefits of our natural resources.

Second, global fisheries should be sustainable. Reckless practices that harm our fisheries should stop. This means that shark finning should stop. Bottom trawling should stop. We should use every means at our disposal to achieve stocks levels that will ensure healthy fisheries for the long term. This includes closing fisheries when necessary.

Third, global fisheries should be accountable. Reports show that 85 percent of global fish stocks are now fully or over exploited. These are the worst numbers on record. Regional Fisheries Management Organizations should do better, and should be more transparent.

Madame President,

Our declaration today is a strong one. It is a clarion call for more responsible, sustainable development, and the eradication of poverty. It acknowledges the grave threat of climate change, highlights concrete steps to save our oceans, and reaffirms the world's commitment to support Small Island Developing States by convening the Third International Conference for the Sustainable Development of SIDS in 2014 in the Pacific.

I thank Brazil for its leadership in helping us to reach this moment. It is a crucial first step. For we must now turn our lofty words into determined action if the future we want, and the future we need, is to be the future we get.

Thank you.