

Hon. Mr. Wilbur Heine
Minister-in-Assistance to the President
Republic of the Marshall Islands
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Mr. Secretary-General, Mr. Prime Minister, Madame Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honor to bring you warm greetings of Yokwe on behalf of His Excellency President Christopher Loeak and the people and government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and to thank our close friend Japan for its warm hospitality in hosting this summit.

Just 7 days earlier marked the 4th anniversary of the Great Japan Earthquake and the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster, and today, I wish to reiterate our condolence and solidarity with the government and people of Japan as they continue the recovery and healing process.

The People and the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, join me in offering our sympathy and prayers to the People and Government of Vanuatu during this difficult time in which they are dealing with the aftermaths of Cyclone Pam, and we offer condolences to the people of other Pacific Island states, including Kiribati, who were also severely affected by the cyclone.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands aligns itself with the statement of Maldives on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is honored to strongly affirm its support for the Sendai Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Already, the world faces severe challenges in effective planning, response and recovery from natural hazards – we need only look outside these walls to understand the serious challenges faced by Japan only three years ago.

The Post-2015 Disaster Risk Reduction framework rightfully looks ahead to our common future, and across the cross-cutting elements of the wider UN post-2015 outcome this year. For if we already have difficult challenges now – we must all play our role in preparing for a much more difficult future.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is a low-lying atoll nation – our thousands of small islands are often so narrow that you can stand in the lagoon, and see the ocean waves crashing on the other side. We have no higher ground – and very few options to relocate out of harm's way. As evidenced by our drought two years ago, and by repeated flooding, our food and water security, and our very human security, is fragile. We lack the full technical and financial capacity to readily respond to the risks at hand – let alone to rebuild more wisely. As our joint national action plan on disaster risk and climate adaptation makes clear, we cannot afford to wait until disasters occur.

We cannot address this through paper policies – there is a clear national responsibility to turn words into realities, and to implement on the ground. Leadership must start at home – and we are proud of a new range of policies, including many tied to measurable indicators in our national plan. But our best efforts must also be matched by our partners – our closest friends and new sources of assistance – and too often the resources we already have at hand are not closely focused on helping us avoid risks before they happen. And too often, the best of international intentions for small islands have failed to make a full impact in our local communities.

Today I must ask about the future – we are measuring increased rates of sea level rise, not only as islanders, but in our tide gauges. What will the Marshall Islands – the Pacific, and other atoll nations and small islands – look like within my lifetime? And what of the next generation? It seems that the most vulnerable have one of the most complicated planning challenges – cutting across every sector – and the fewest resources to address them. Vulnerability – and not capacity to report - must be at the forefront of international decision-making.

While perhaps these questions might be sharpest in my own nation, they are also questions facing the whole world. The Post-2015 Disaster Risk framework is only one piece of this puzzle, and the approach to use specific goals, targets and indicators to measure our collective progress – addressed in both the Sendai outcome and the wider draft Sustainable Development Goals – is important to tie down broad political commitments into action. At the same time, we will be working towards a realistic approach – in small nations, those who “do” and those who “report” are often one and the same. In the Pacific we have developed a Strategy for Climate and Disaster Resilient Development which our regions guide for further efforts to address climate and disaster risk within the context of resilient development. Such a regional commitment will enhance our capacity to address the outcomes in Sendai.

My emphasis on the growing specter of climate risks is not alarmist – even if we have been saying some of these same things for 30 years. This December in Paris nations are on track to adopt a single legal Protocol under the UNFCCC – and this is already marked by the efforts of all major economies to come forward with post-2020

commitments to reduce emissions. The Republic of the Marshall Islands will join you with our own strong commitments on climate change emissions, we are demonstrating this through our endorsement of the Majuro Declaration, along with Pacific Leaders – because everyone must play a part, regardless of where we may fall on the development spectrum. But it is likely our best emissions efforts this year, as a world, will still fall short of the benchmarks for safer outcomes.

It would be short-sighted – in Sendai, in New York, or in Paris – to focus all of our political effort this year on compensation for loss in the years to come. The Marshall Islands can tell you, perhaps better than many others, that this seems a loaded proposal with few clear and immediate results. Instead, our view is one of common global solidarity – that we must all break through the barriers and divisive finger-pointing that have held us all back from actual progress.

Our achievement this week in Sendai will set the mark this year for us all. It all starts here.

Thank you and kormol tala.