

**His Excellency, Redley Killion**  
**Vice President of Federated States of Micronesia**

His Excellency President Tommy Remengesau, Jr  
Distinguished Ministers and Heads of Delegation  
Sponsors of this Side Event  
Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am most pleased and honored to join President Remengesau in welcoming all of you to this side event showcasing the Micronesian Challenge - a collaborative initiative that exemplifies the best in the Micronesian spirit of working together toward common objectives and shared concerns. By incorporating the visions articulated in the Pacific Islands Statement on Island Biodiversity as well as the Programme of Work on Island Biodiversity, the Micronesian Challenge represents our commitment to ensuring a better tomorrow for ourselves and our future generations. It is a regional framework that is aimed at poising the Micronesian island governments toward achieving the targets and objectives set forth in the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Millennium Development Goals.

I recognize President Remengesau for his lead role in advancing the Micronesian Challenge on our behalf. I also want to thank all of the individuals and organizations, both government and non-government, that were involved in the formulation of the Micronesian Challenge concept.

As an island state, the Federated States of Micronesia, like the other Micronesian and Pacific island countries, faces a unique set of opportunities and challenges. Many of our forests and reefs are currently threatened by over-harvesting, pollution, invasive species, and unsustainable development activities. To successfully address these threats requires increasing awareness and action by our citizens and government. Like most Pacific countries, our economic activity consists primarily of subsistence farming and fishing.

The Federated States of Micronesia is a small island developing state located within the western Pacific region with a total jurisdictional area of over 1.6 million square kilometers of ocean – an area that is slightly larger than the continental US. Our country is comprised of 607 islands with an estimated 14,000 square kilometers of coral reefs, the largest area of shallow marine ecosystem in the Micronesian region with over 200 known endemic species. Our population of 120,000 is made up of nine ethnic Micronesian and Polynesian groups, inhabiting 65 of our islands that vary geologically from mountainous islands to low, coral atolls. Although our territorial waters are extensive, our total land area is just 702 square kilometers.

The Micronesian Challenge initiative also takes into account the ecological and geographical features of our country. Our geographical isolation has long been a major challenge in our nation-building endeavors, and which has become glaringly clear in our ecological conservation efforts. The difficulties in our conservation efforts, aided in part by our poorly developed infrastructure, are likely to remain as major impediments to long-term growth – unless they are also addressed alongside our efforts in managing and conserving our biodiversity in a sustainable manner.

There is no doubt in my mind that we in the Federated States of Micronesia have a long way to go in responding to the call for effective management and conservation of our biological diversity and natural resources. The Micronesian Challenge is formulated primarily to accelerate our efforts to meet the targets set forth by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and incorporated in the Convention on Biological Diversity.

To effectively address our resource management and sustainable development challenges in a comprehensive and coherent manner, we have formed a Presidential Sustainable Development Council, a coalition of government and non-governmental partners, which I chair as Vice President.

Similarly, our Government has successfully completed its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), including its Blueprint for Biodiversity Conservation which also focuses on the identification of Areas of Biological Significance. Measures for the implementation of the NBSAP at the local levels have also been completed.

In December 2004, our Government and a number of local partners signed a National Implementation Support Partnership agreement pledging to collaborate and support the implementation of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas which was adopted at COP-7. This agreement has led to the creation of our Protected Areas Network or PAN. In light of the high priority that my Government places on the PAN initiative, we have created and filled a new government position with budgetary support to coordinate the work of the PAN.

Parallel to the formation of the Protected Areas Network is the designation of the director of one of our local NGOs as a fellow in the Pew Marine Fellowship program. The Pew fellow and the coordinator of the Protected Areas Network will work closely with private and government partners to facilitate the establishment of the Protected Area Network throughout the nation.

In June of 2005, the Utwe Walung biosphere reserve in Kosrae, one of our four states, became one of the first biosphere reserves declared in the Pacific region through UNESCO's "Man and the Biosphere Program."

One of our most notable successes is in the area of sustainable financing for the activities outlined in our NBSAP. The Micronesian Conservation Trust, or MCT for short, was officially launched in 2002 as the first conservation trust for the three Micronesian Small Island Developing States – namely, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. The Micronesian Conservation Trust has been rated AAA by the UNDP/UNOPS.

Headquartered in Pohnpei State, the capital of the Federated States of Micronesia, the MCT is working toward the objective of seeking and mobilizing funding from various sources to build an endowment to provide long-term support for sustainable natural resource management and conservation in the Micronesian region.

The creation of the MCT works as a living, innovative collaboration among partners to support private and government participation in environmental protection and sustainable resource management at substantial cost-savings to the government. In addition, MCT will be able to leverage additional external funding in a meaningful way. For our country, the endowment of the Micronesian Conservation Trust is a critical component of implementation of the Micronesian Challenge initiative.

On the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity here in Curitiba, I am most pleased to witness and co-host the launching of the Micronesian Challenge. As a collaborative regional initiative, the Micronesian Challenge represents a historic opportunity for the Micronesian governments, along with our partners, to work together to meet our responsibilities and obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

This evening I delightfully join my colleagues from the Micronesian region, particularly President Remengesau, and our supporters in reaffirming our commitment to the goals and objectives set forth in the Micronesian Challenge initiative. In reaffirming our collective commitment, we acknowledge the critical importance of the donor community and like-minded countries as

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partners in contributing to the success of the initiative. Therefore, we welcome and appreciate any support that may be extended to us so that, in the true spirit of partnership, we can move the Micronesian Challenge forward.

Thank you.