

His Excellency Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr. President of Palau

I hope you enjoyed those beautiful images and inspiring highlights of our Micronesia Challenge.

My friends, I am very honoured to once again attend the CBD's Conference of the Parties here in Bonn and to participate in this very special high level event celebrating Island commitments to Sustainable Livelihoods. I would first like to offer my sincere appreciation to our host, the government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, and thank them for this opportunity to recognize and celebrate the exciting initiative developing across the Caribbean. I also want to express my deep gratitude to President James Michel of the Republic of the Seychelles, who has helped bridge the distance between oceans and sow the seeds of a new vision, not only for the future of our islands, but of our planet as well. I know that he really wished to be with us all tonight.

Tonight I am speaking on behalf of the many partners that have made the Micronesia Challenge possible. Unfortunately, the most noteworthy of this group is President Mori of the FSM, who has provided his strong support to the strengthening of the Challenge could not make it here tonight due to transportation problems. I want to particularly acknowledge the delegates here from all five jurisdictions in the Challenge – the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the U.S. Territory of Guam, the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and my staff from the Republic of Palau.

Finally, as this will likely be my last high level event with the Global Island Partnership as the President of Palau, I must offer my heart felt thanks to all of those in and out of this room who have worked so diligently to convince the world to take the actions necessary to save our environmental and cultural future.

Brothers and Sisters, it is amazing to me that only three years ago in Mauritius, Seychelles and Palau worked together with international partners to start this Global Island Partnership.

This effort has been so successful that tonight we find ourselves able to highlight progress on the implementation of the Micronesia Challenge and other major conservation commitments through voluntary public and private action. Tonight, we also will welcome new countries and commitments to our growing Partnership. To say the least, this Partnership has far exceeded our wildest expectations.

In Micronesia, Brothers and Sisters, the visionary leadership and strong support of GLISPA and our international partners helped our five governments come together in a breakthrough commitment to effectively conserve at least 30% of our near-shore marine resources and 20% of our terrestrial resources by the year 2020. And as I speak to you tonight, I am happy to tell you that Palau will reach its goal before the end of this year.

In only two years since the Micronesia Challenge was signed, the FSM, RMI and Palau have worked together and gained the endorsements of the Global Environmental Facility and the Pacific Island Forum and have raised over \$12 million of the \$18 million necessary for the initial implementation of the Challenge. This financing includes very generous commitments from The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International that have been matched by the Global Environment Facility. We have also received generous donations from the Republic of China, Taiwan, Germany's Life Web Initiative, Turkey and private sources.

While each of our jurisdictions has its own financial sustainability goals, Palau's national goal is \$12 million for our Protected Area Network Trust Fund.

Just this month, Palau's legislature passed a law to generate approximately \$1.6 million annually for management of the Protected Area through a \$20 visitor's fee. These funds will be combined with the income from our \$12 million trust fund to establish a completely self-funded nationwide network of protected areas that conserves our very precious natural resources in Palau. I believe this will be the first such self-funded network in the developing world.

Most importantly, the People of Palau have demonstrated their support for this work through the declaration of a new protected area, the Ngerdok Nature Reserve, which protects Palau's largest fresh water lake. We hope to declare two other new protected areas before the end of the year.

To implement the Challenge, our five governments have also jointly developed a sub-regional action plan; established a regional Trust fund; created the Micronesia Challenge Steering Committee with a Regional Coordinator, and are engaging experts to help us develop practical measures to monitor our progress and the effectiveness of our management.

Palau is also developing a business plan for its Network, with help from TNC, which will serve as a pilot for the other countries of the Challenge.

For all five governments, the Micronesia Challenge is a long-term commitment to allow local resource users to sustainably manage their resources. We want to establish secure funding mechanisms and effective management for all the jurisdictions. We will continue to review and update the Challenge to meet the changing needs of our natural habitats and our society's security. And we will share our lessons with other islands around the world.

Brothers and Sisters, we are very encouraged that COP9 is discussing global action to address invasive species, since it is one of the primary threats to our planet's biodiversity and to our Challenge. Our regional leaders jointly committed to the international effort to combat invasive species at a recent Chief Executives' Summit held in Palau. This commitment is backed by a sub-regional government non-profit corporation that will put teeth into this effort.

In conclusion, and in line with the organizers' directive that strong partnerships do not require long speeches, I must emphasize that the Micronesia Challenge stands as a challenge, not just to our five jurisdictions in the Pacific, but to the world at large. A partnership requires generous partners. Maybe more importantly, a partnership requires trust, commitment and creativity. In only two years, we have worked together – as five leaders who love our islands – to lay the foundation for a partnership that will serve our people forever. And while our road is promising, it will certainly have its share of potholes along the way. But our journey will succeed, because we are all committing our own reputations and our very limited resources to achieve our goal of a sustainable future across our sub-region. What we need to accomplish this goal is your commitment, trust and creativity to help us succeed.

Please, in this International Year of the Reef, work with us to not only respond to the challenges of the present, but to creatively define our single global future.

Thank You.