

Mr Willy Kostka
Community Taba Representative

Thank you to our Excellencies, honorable ministers, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of Ratu Isaaiah and all the communities that are not able to join us tonight and all the members of the Taba participants, I stand before you tonight. We the communities of Taba participants have spent the last two weeks sharing community experiences in biodiversity conservation, championing success and exploring rules to inform policy. We come here tonight to congratulate you and to join you in celebrating the launching of this most exciting and pioneering initiative, the Micronesia Challenge.

Unlike other sectors, our biodiversity conservation sector has always been very timid, usually employing localized and small initiatives that do not impact the global community. With this challenge, you have made a difference, and have made a commitment to take the high road and to bring the rest of the world with us. And this is a noble cause, and I thank you.

We join you tonight not just to celebrate but also to put forward solutions that we have developed over the past week during our community deliberations. Recognizing that local island communities are the most closely connected to our natural environments and the biodiversity found within them, we live most directly with and in them, we use and subsist on them, we manage them, and if these resources are gone, we are the first ones to suffer. The very essence of our lives and livelihoods are dependent on these resources. Our resources are not just a source of nourishment for us, they are also an integral part of our identity, actually defining who we are because our cultures and traditions are linked to and shaped by these resources.

It is for these reasons that we have committed ourselves to be your eyes, ears and hands at the local level, and we urge you to also make a commitment to us and that you will provide us with the means to see better, listen better and have stronger hands to help you achieve the outstanding goals set in this challenge. We both share these goals, and it only makes sense that we work together in achieving them.

On behalf of the Community Taba members, and all the communities around the world, we thank you again for this opportunity to address you. With that I leave you with a Pohnpei proverb: *The power garnered from the collective souls of those who have gone before us, those who are living with us and those who are yet to come. With this power, we will succeed.*

Your excellencies, tonight you have made me the proudest Micronesian and the proudest Pacific Islander of all. Thank you.