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74th UNGA Second Committee

Agenda item 19: Sustainable Development

Statement by Jane Chigiyal Permanent Representative

New York, 15 October 2019

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Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for this opportunity to take part in this debate of the Second Committee on this important agenda item before it.

As we meet here, Mr. Chairman, the Japanese people are dealing with the effects of one of the worst typhoons to hit the country in more than half a century. Allow me to express the heartfelt sympathies and solidarity of the Micronesian Government and people with the Government and people of Japan over the devastation caused by the recent earthquake and Typhoon Hagibis. The extreme exacerbation of climate change's impacts on communities around the globe is truly saddening and concerning.

We need more dialogues than negotiations, and in that regard strong political will and effective, positive leadership like our Secretary-General's initiative on the Climate Action Summit to raise ambition and raise climate action is indeed commendable.

Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of the Federated States of Micronesia congratulates you on your assumption to lead the deliberations of the Second Committee during this 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly. And through you, my Government conveys also its congratulations to the members of your Bureau, and expresses our confidence that you and the bureau will lead the work of the Committee to commendable results.

Mr. Chairman,

The distinguished representatives of Palestine, Belize, Tuvalu and Fiji have already spoken on behalf of the Group of 77 & China, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), respectively. Micronesia belongs to these groups and fully associates itself with these statements.

Mr. Chair,

I speak as the voice of the inhabitants of an island State, a State of many small islands many of which barely rise above sea-level. Micronesia is not alone. Within this Committee, representatives of all vulnerable countries around the world, including those in the Alliance of Small Island States, and the Pacific Small Island Developing States and many other low-lying coastal countries face the growing risk of extinction from climate change and the sea-level rise that it will cause.

We grow increasingly alarmed over the glacial progress of the world community toward taking steps to confront the indisputable threats posed by human-induced global warming and its consequent sea-level rise. Not only will the inhabitants have lost their ancestral homes, but the world will have lost most of the low-lying islands in the Pacific. Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, some may still not take very seriously the threat of sea level rise, because the phenomenon does occur gradually and at rates that are variable under differing conditions.

Not to be overlooked is an issue of sovereignty that could affect Micronesia and the entire Pacific Region. Our exclusive economic zone the current source of our economic livelihood and sustainable development, could substantially diminish in size, as present maritime baselines as measured, located mostly on the atoll islands, may forever be submerged underwater. We welcome the decision earlier this year by the International Law Commission to study the topic of sea-level rise in relation to international law, and I urge the international community to develop State practice that respects the permanence of maritime baselines and zones irrespective of sea-level rise.

Mr. Chairman,

This session like every other sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, we have spared no effort to make the case that international cooperation strengthens the ability of our nations to address the challenges of our sustainable development. We have used every opportunity to reach out to our partners and our statement in this Committee is no different.

The Second Committee has a full and compelling agenda. All nations of the world, developed and developing, must approach the crucial problems our environment faces with far greater commitment to timely progress them if our planet is to be made a more secure and habitable place for all its peoples.

Appeals for new commitments and political have been made within these hallowed halls for years, but have rarely been listened to. We take encouragement, however, from the great processes sponsored by the United Nations including the agenda for environment and development, the Kyoto Protocol, the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway, among others. These instruments have a strong appeal to the small island developing states (SIDS), as a matter of common sense and survival. But all these must acquire a sense of urgency to implement with adequate and dedicated financial support as a crucial component which is not now present, as our best hope for the future.

Mr. Chairman,

The ocean is a critical component of the livelihood of island people like us in Micronesia. The vast oceanic area under our jurisdiction has been a source of livelihood not just for us but also for other countries and requires careful management to preserve it. Preservation of this resource and maintaining its marine diversity is critical to everybody's future and the sustainable development of island countries.

As a Big Ocean state and responsible steward of the ocean, my country is engaged in initiatives to take actions today for our world's environmental prosperity tomorrow. We are partnering with the Blue Prosperity Coalition to create a comprehensive climate smart Marine Spatial Plan for our exclusive economic zone (EEZ). This partnership will further enhance national capacity to conserve marine resources and ecosystems, including by establishing marine protected areas (MPAs) in at least 30% of our EEZ. This MPA coverage will become one of the world's largest. We are also committed to strengthening the monitoring and control of fishing activities through the Technology for Tuna Transparency Challenge, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy. This initiative implements electronic monitoring in tuna fisheries to reach the goal of 100% transparency and coverage by 2023.

Mr. Chairman,

The time for action to implement and meet the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is now, but small island developing states simply lack the necessary financial and technical resources to progress this, and to implement the sustainable framework set out in the SAMOA Pathway.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, in our part of the North Pacific, we were delighted and very grateful for the Secretary-General's expressed support towards the establishment of a dedicated multi-country office (MCO) for the North Pacific, to focus on the needs of the five Micronesian countries. Clearly, a new approach to meet the challenges of a vast region of the Pacific is of significant importance to us in our efforts to implement the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda. We need the help and support of the international community, yes, all member states of this Organization, with a proper sense of priority, to progress forward this initiative into a reality. The Federated States of Micronesia is tremendously indebted to our sister states of the North Pacific, namely: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Nauru and the Republic of Palau and our Pacific region as a whole in honoring us to be the home of a proposed MCO for our sub-region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.