

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU TO THE UNITED NATIONS



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. CALEB OTTO
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REPUBLIC OF PALAU TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
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Integration of the Three Dimensions of Development in Palau

Mr. Chair, Excellences, Colleagues, Friends

First, we wish to acknowledge, with pride, Samoa, one of the Pacific Small Island Developing States, for being one of the first to voluntarily report of their process for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We also wish to appreciate and congratulate Finland, Uganda and Germany who enlightened us with their national presentations. Thank you all.

Mr. President,

Palau is fully aware of the high level of ambition and transformative nature of Agenda 2030. And, while, well-resourced countries may be able to mount multiple initiatives to address several or all of the 17 goals and 169 targets, countries with constrained resources, such as Palau, must be more strategic. Today, I wish to share with you how Palau has embarked on an integrated approach towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by visioning one initiative to serve multiple targets.

In October 2015, Palau created, by law, a National Marine Sanctuary protecting not 10% of our coastal waters as called for by SDG 14 but fully 80% of our Exclusive Economic Zone. This is our chosen entry point for SDG implementation as well as our contribution to the Global 10X20 initiative led by the Government of Italy and the Ocean Sanctuary Alliance.

Palau's experience with marine protected is based on a traditional conservation practice called 'bul' that dates to antiquity. 'Bul' is a practice through which chiefs put a 'no-take' moratorium on any resource that diminishes to a certain critical point or level. 'Bul', together with modern science, assures us that a large marine sanctuary will reap many benefits including, enhancing resilience of the reefs, restoring the health of our oceans, rejuvenating biodiversity and allowing restocking of fishes. These actions combine to provide protective barriers against further ravages of climate change. Full realization of the benefits of the marine sanctuary, however, can only be achieved through simultaneous protection of our forests and lands. Thus, SDGs 13, 14, and 15 are addressed.

As our President, Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr., has frequently said in this chamber and many other forums, for Palau "our environment is our economy and our economy is our environment." Thus the National Marine Sanctuary supports our economy. It will restore the productivity of our near shore domestic fishing areas - the "supermarket" for our rural and low income households and will provide livelihood for household fisheries and in time, enable us to re-establish a domestic fishing industry that will provide employment, food security and health for our own people and local businesses while providing a value added component to our rapidly growing tourism industry. Thus, we address SDGs 2, 3, 8, and 9.

Mr. President,

New technologies could allow ocean-based energy options to assist us to address our INDCs as well as strengthen the growth of our economy. In fact, recent ocean-based economic growth, mainly in tourism has allowed us to accomplish the following: (1) approach full employment, (2) increase minimum wage from a base of \$2.50 to \$3.50 per hour, thus lifting many working households out of poverty, (3) expand health and social insurance protections, including the most vulnerable members of our society, the aged, persons with disabilities, the mentally ill and the homebound, (4) increasing our investments in health (5) and improve the quality of education especially in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) both already a part of our national development strategy. It is also our hope that these actions will provide sufficient incentives to strengthen retention of our young people. So the Marine Sanctuary has and will strengthen how we address SDGs 1, 3, 4, 8 and 10.

Finally, we underscore the fact that we are only able pursue this chosen strategy to realize the SDGs through a National Marine Sanctuary with the support of our many partners, and we take this

opportunity to those who have already partnered with us in this initiative. Partnerships through SDG 17 and the SAMOA Pathway are therefore integral for our future success.

We are aware that the National Marine Sanctuary does not address every goal and target. Other initiatives will be launched in time. The National Marine Sanctuary, however, will hopefully provide core domestic funding resource base that will, in time, enable new initiatives to grow and flourish.

Mr. Chair, our purpose in this statement today is demonstrate how Palau, a resource-constrained nation, conscious of the vast scope of the SDGs, can with a single bold transformative action, provide a mechanism for multiple goals towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. I encourage other countries in a similar position to consider a similar approach.

I thank you for your attention.