



**Remarks by His Excellency Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr.
President of the Republic of Palau
United Nations Ocean Conference
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Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:
Fellow Children of the Ocean:

I have come here today to address this great assembly with tremendous pride. Before I chose a course in life that would eventually lead me into this storied hall, I was a fisherman – as was my father and his father before him. And like my forefathers, and like all island people through the millennium, our people were inevitably and historically connected to the ocean. The ocean was a part of our daily lives and, to this day, we depend heavily on the ocean for our economy, our food security and our identity as Pacific Islanders.

Unfortunately, in an expanding world economy, the industrialized world, in its quest for wealth, forgot that we must protect the goose that laid the golden eggs. We forgot that the Ocean is an integral part of our planetary home and that, like a child, we need to provide it with our respect, our care and our love. Because of the prolonged lack of attention to our Planet's biggest resource, we now find ourselves at a dangerous crossroad.

But today, as a proud Pacific fisherman, I can finally say that our world leaders have listened to the ancient fishermen of our Planet and once again have decided to give our Ocean a primary and a respected place in our home. In fact, the ocean plays a critical role in how we address the other sustainable development goals, be it climate change, sustainable energy, health, poverty and others.

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And while not all nations of the world may be listening to what science is telling us, the global community as a whole has chosen to follow reason and to step forward with our global blueprint agenda 2030; 194 countries have joined in the Paris Agreement and decided to make science the code to a healthy and sustainable future, and thus, take the necessary steps to heal our planet and preserve the Ocean for our children.

Mr. President, the signs are crystal clear. Our Ocean is in trouble. We are depleting our fish stocks at a rate that is rapidly reaching a point of no return. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing results in global losses of as much as 26 million metric tons annually, worth up to \$23.5 billion dollars. According to some scientists, large predatory fish species stocks have been reduced by as much as 90 percent since the Industrial Revolution. Compounding these pressures, global carbon dioxide emissions are contributing to ocean warming and acidification and marine pollution is poisoning our sea life. Together, these cumulative stresses present the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific and one of the greatest challenges for the entire world.

For the great majority who understand the practical and moral imperative to listen to what science is telling us and to take immediate and decisive action to rescue and regenerate our ocean, I join and applaud you. Together, we can all be leaders in the fight. Together, we will put into place an integrated implementation plan with comprehensive strategies that responds to real threats. We will develop a new model that reverses the existing failed approach to oceans governance – where poorly managed or unregulated fishing is allowed everywhere except in isolated reserves – to a truly responsible and precautionary approach where fishing is only allowed in regulated Fishing Zones once certain conservation and management conditions have been met.

A critical component of this global conservation and management will necessarily involve the establishment of marine protected areas. Mr. President, in my country, Palau, we have set aside 80 percent of our maritime territory—193,000 square miles of ocean—as a no-take marine sanctuary. The remaining 20 percent will remain accessible for regulated and sustainable domestic fishing to ensure food security for Palauans now and in the future.

At a global level we must work together to establish, by 2020, an effectively managed and well-connected system of marine protected areas within and beyond areas of national jurisdiction, covering at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas. We should also, in line with the science, increase our ambition and protect at least 30% of our marine areas by 2030 including designating marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Within this worldwide network of protected areas, we must take into account the need for sustainable development and create opportunities for food security initiatives in developing

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countries by enhancing small-scale and artisanal fisheries and building capacity in sustainable fisheries, tourism, and aquaculture.

Within this emerging network of protected areas, we must advance multi-country and multi-stakeholder partnerships on whole domain management, partnerships to tackle IUU fishing, human and drug trafficking, and to address harmful fisheries subsidies. Within this context, I would encourage all states to immediately ratify the port state measures agreement.

And we must use this Ocean platform to mobilize real and accessible resources for the development of these ocean-related activities, particularly in developing countries, including SIDS and LDC's.

To accomplish this, we must identify linkages to existing funding mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and also identify new and unique funding mechanisms focused solely on Ocean issues. And let's call it the Blue fund. In our new world order focused on action and implementation, we must also immediately stop the practice of offering funding mechanisms and then turn around and make their accessibility impossible for LDC's and SIDS based upon claims of lack of capacity.

Mr. President,

Goal 14, and this Conference, provide us all with a transformational opportunity. But what happens after this conference, is key and important to the necessary follow up, the importance of Partnerships, the coming together of science, business and society. To help ensure that all nations and all stakeholders are rowing together to meet this great challenge, I would like to propose that the conference name two oceans champions to help guide our collective efforts until the next oceans conference.

For those who choose not to lead, I would caution that the world will move forward without you, with a moral and science based response to a global imperative. Our children would expect nothing less of us.

Thank You.