



**REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

**STATEMENT BY THE HON. WITTEN T. PHILIPPO
MINISTER IN ASSISTANCE TO THE PRESIDENT**

**TO THE UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT
NEW YORK, 29 APRIL 2004**

Mr. Chairman
Honorable Ministers
Excellencies and Colleagues

Mr. Chairman,

I will focus on the thematic issue of water. My delegation commends the views expressed yesterday by the Honorable Minister from Mauritius regarding water resources.

As our national report to CSD 12 indicates, our main source of fresh water is ground water, which is very limited. With no surface water, we rely on rainwater caught by roof catchments in the outer islands and collection of rainwater from the airport runway in the Capital Island. In this regard, our report specifies priority areas which will require the assistance of the international community.

Our report also indicates the efforts my Government is undertaking on water resources management. We are not constrained by management issues alone, but also by capacity and human resource issues, sea transportation, and unique fragile water resources coupled with our vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, sea level rise and climate variability.

Thus, we acknowledge the need for suitable frameworks on integrated water resources management, and we seek the support of the international community for regional initiatives such as the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management.

Where investments have been made on water, these have typically involved the upgrading and/or replacement of existing urban water supply schemes, for example in the capital Island of Majuro. Some of these investments have been accompanied by associated institutional reform and separation of the water provider from the core government services, through corporatization and/or privatization.

However there has been difficulty in developing adequate water resource management schemes. We therefore, will continue to collaborate with our Pacific regional and SIDS partners and further seek the assistance of the international community.

The notable attention accorded to water governance by the development agencies, in terms of institutional strengthening especially of water service providers, has been very encouraging. However, national integrated water management, catchment scale and community governance have been a challenge to us. We acknowledge that community engagement is a very important element of water resources management and have sought to further involve our community in this process. In this regard, we also understand that the general focus on creating legislation and regulatory tools needs to be strengthened with better public awareness and education. Assistance is required in this area.

Mr. Chairman,

At the national level, we are using National Environmental Management Strategies (NEMS) to provide an overall strategic approach for water management and its relationship with other aspects of sustainable development. Momentum created by the WSSD and the 3rd World Water Forum has resulted in my Government embarking on more holistic initiatives on water resources management.

In conclusion, our challenges relating to sustainable water resources management can be categorized into three thematic areas: unique fragile water resources, lack of financial and human resources, and the complexity of water governance; these are key to addressing sustainable water management in small island countries.

Thank you