



His Excellency Tommy E Remengesau Jr.
President of the Republic of Palau

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President, the Honorable Prime Minister of Fiji and President of the 23rd Conference of the Parties,
Excellencies,
Friends,

I would like to congratulate my colleague from the Pacific, the Honorable Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, on the Presidency of the 23rd Conference of the Parties.

On behalf of the People of Palau, I would also like to extend our deepest condolences to those who have had their lives devastated by the recent spate of hurricanes and typhoons across Asia and the Americas. The world must not abandon the affected communities in their time of need. Make no mistake, these are not natural disasters. As vulnerable countries have warned for decades, they are the inevitable consequence of short-sighted policy choices.

The world must start listening to vulnerable countries.

Mr. President,

Palau is under no illusions about the impact one small island nation can have on the planet. But we have nonetheless chosen to lead by example. Our small size - often a disadvantage in the global economy - makes us nimble enough to embrace new solutions. Modest resources can have a transformational impact. Indeed, small islands can be the incubators of new ideas and new approaches.

That is why my country has committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 22% by 2025 -- 50% below business as usual. At least 45% of our electricity will come from the sun and the wind. This is not just good climate policy. It is also good economics. Renewable energy will

bring more stable energy prices, and improved fiscal outlook, and far greater energy security. Palau is ready to free itself from the burden of fossil fuels.

We are working hard to implement our NDC and encourage private sector investment, but we cannot do this alone. Palau is grateful to have received initial technical support from a number of sources:

- IRENA is finalizing the Palau Energy Roadmap.
- New Zealand is conducting grid analysis and installing rooftop solar on the community college.
- Japan International Cooperation Agency is supporting work on maintenance and repair of our current transmission grid.
- And US National Renewable Energy Laboratory has provided technical support on energy efficiency standards among other issues.

This is what international cooperation looks like, and we *all* will need a lot more if we are to achieve our Paris goals.

Palau also recognizes the important link between the climate and the ocean, and we applaud the efforts of Fiji to bring attention to this issue. This is a space in which Palau has been a leader for many years.

Our contribution to the restoration of our precious global commons is the Palau National Marine Sanctuary. We have set aside 80 percent of our maritime territory — 500,000 square kilometers 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. The Sanctuary is critical to building the resilience of our fisheries and coral reef ecosystems to the impacts of climate change, acidification, and other human impacts, and to maintaining the ocean’s capacity to serve as an effective carbon sink.

Here, too, we are relying on our partners to assist in the implementation of the Sanctuary and the enforcement of its restrictions on commercial fishing. Palau is grateful for assistance provided by Nippon Foundation/Sasakawa Peace Foundation, which is helping us develop and implement a monitoring and enforcement plan. Google has also become an important partner, lending their immense global mapping capacity to the effort. Other countries and organizations are stepping up as well.

Mr. President,

Big ideas can come from small places. Palau is doing all it can to demonstrate that our internationally agreed goals do in fact mean something, and are the guiding star as we navigate toward a sustainable future. We are ready to show the world that a better future is possible.

My friends, it is time to start listening to vulnerable countries.

Thank you.