

23rd Pacific Islands Environment Conference

“Make a Difference”



Remarks of
H.E. Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr.
President of the
Republic of Palau

Small Island Developing States (SIDs)

- Are blessed with a unique blend of environment, resources, and potential.
- We are also faced with unique challenges that demand innovative approaches and solutions on the part of our decision-makers and those responsible for the implementation of our policies.



Sustainable Prosperity

- Prosperity' means more than economic growth. It defines a lifestyle based upon our unique cultures, societies, and natural treasures.
- 'Sustainable prosperity' therefore describes a system wherein a balance must be struck between the past, the present, and the future.



Achieving Sustainable Prosperity

- We must assess our needs and potential, then
- Plan and implement the actions necessary to ensure that sustainable prosperity becomes a reality.





Our history of Sustainable Development

Our history shows that:

- Striking a balance has not in, many cases, been done very successfully.
- The underpinnings of sustainable development have been neglected in our drive for economic development.

Our Current Realities

- I firmly believe that we cannot chart a straight and clear course towards the new Millennium without first understanding how we arrived at our current reality.



Waste Management

- A little over a century ago, Palauans were still largely self-reliant, and looked to their environment to provide the food, materials and tools needed to live comfortably.
- The introduction of modern amenities changed this. We quickly developed a taste for western technology and luxury.



The Shift

- As a consequence of the introduction of western products, we have become import nations and have done far too little to establish appropriate disposal mechanisms for the residue from these luxury goods.
- We have been left with large piles of unsightly garbage that pose serious public health and environmental risks to our populations.





Palau's Progress in Waste Management

- Using the Fukuoka Method, we will convert the national landfill in Koror into a semi aerobic landfill.
- As part of this process, we will be implementing segregation, recycling, and reuse mechanisms to reduce the volume of waste going into our landfill.
- Once we have built our capacity in these areas, we will move towards the establishment of a new modern dump.

Regional Approach to Solid Waste

- Our individual capacity to deal with more difficult waste products such as cars, used oil, and hazardous wastes, is limited.
- For such issues, we must join together to solve what must be considered a regional problem that needs regional solutions.





Western Micronesian Chief Executive's Conference

- Representative members include Palau, Yap, Saipan, and Guam have resolved to:
 - Share shipping costs for recyclable materials.
- Regional recycling holds the key to tackling this problem.



Opportunity for Clean Energy

- While much of the developed world rely on fossil fuels for their immediate energy needs, we developing island nations have the opportunity to define a different course.
- We have the opportunity to create an energy reality that is clean, efficient, and cost-effective.



Regional Strategy

- The Western Micronesian Chiefs Executive's Conference is working to jointly explore regional opportunities presented by alternative renewable energy sources.
- With the assistance of our partners from the United States and the international community, we will ultimately develop a regional database on renewable energy to aid in the diversification and reliability of our energy systems.

Alternative Energy

- Rather than developing our energy infrastructure to rely solely on fossil fuels, we must look towards alternative renewable energy sources to provide the power needed as we grow.
 - Solar
 - Wind
 - Biomass
 - Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC)
 - Geothermal



Responsible Growth

- In the past, we have relied too heavily on the United States during and after the Trust Territory period.
- Now it is time that we take responsibilities for our own growth and the maintenance of our own growth systems.





Capacity Building for Responsible Growth

- To accomplish our goals, we need:
 - Technical assistance
 - Operations and maintenance training, and
 - On going tools for the upgrading of our in-country capacity to effectively manage our facilities.
- Only through the allocation of sufficient resources to our utilities corporations and public works departments for operations and maintenance can we expect these systems to function reliably.



Common Threads

- First, we must recognize that we currently lack the capacity to adequately deal with these problems at this time. We must be innovative to successfully resolve these issues.
 - Increased awareness among decision-makers is need for proper planning and implementation of solutions.
 - We must empower our citizens through public awareness and education so that they may actively participate in solutions.



Common Threads

- Second, both our economies and our environments will benefit or suffer as a result of our successes or our failures.
 - We must rely primarily upon tourism and the bounties that natural habitats offer to be the main driving force for economic prosperity.
 - Without our cultural, societal, and natural environs, we have little to offer the world.
- We must protect and nurture all aspects of our environments if we are to be economically strong and self-sufficient.



Common Threads

- Lastly, our islands have many similarities that offer a potential for collaboration.
 - By working together we can achieve that which we cannot do alone.
 - We can build on each other's experiences.
 - We can exercise greater influence on the world stage to ensure that our international interests are protected.

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Preserve the best, improve the rest.

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