

*Palau National Statement*

*Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.*

Palau is a small island nation in the north Pacific. Like many Pacific SIDS, we are a non-producing country, yet plastics of unknown origins wash up on our shores daily. I pick up all kinds of plastics on my grandfather's beach, and it is heart breaking to know that the next day, there will be more.

Palau has a sophisticated waste management system and a newly opened national landfill. The landfill was built based on a survey of locally generated waste. The huge quantities of plastics that wash up on our shores are not traceable. There is no one to take responsibility for the pollution, but us. We must put it in our landfill, shortening the lifespan of the facility.

In addition, Palauans have grave concerns about the environmental, social, cultural, economic, human health and, food security impacts, of plastics pollution. This further exacerbates the climate change impacts we are already experiencing. We cannot manage this challenge without looking at this issue comprehensively, from sourcing of plastics to the end-of-life cycle management, and remediation of releases.

We hope by the end of this week, we have a clear way forward on how we will end plastic pollution. We need an ambitious and comprehensive global treaty, that includes control measures to protect our human health; the climate system and the environment; and to promote a non-toxic circular economy for plastics. Without these elements we will not succeed.

We need a clear program of work for the INCs - including intersessional activities and clusters for each stage of the life cycle, that promote dedicated conversations, on the design of the instrument and means of implementation, that will enable Pacific SIDs like Palau, to fully implement the objectives of the instrument. This includes clear mechanisms for capacity building, technology transfer and support for plastic pollution prevention. We have a robust national agenda, but this issue is bigger than us.

We have the eyes of the world watching us. Let's not replicate other agreements which do not get to the problem at source. We need something comprehensive that puts prevention at the heart of policy.

Pacific SIDS are disproportionately impacted by plastics and marine plastic pollution. The outcome of the INC will not only help Palau, but the rest of the countries here, safeguard the health of our people and our environment. I hope that in my lifetime, I will no longer have to pick up plastics of unknown origins, on my grandfather's beach.

Ko meral mesulang.