

INTERVENTION BY PRESIDENT DAVID W. PANUELO AT THE
PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM LEADERS MEETING WITH THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL
SATURDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2019

Venue: Conference Room 7, General Assembly Building

Time: 11:30am – 12:15pm

- Secretary General
- Chair
- Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum

Chair, I congratulate you on your successful election as the 16th President of the Republic of Nauru, and for chairing this meeting. I also wish to express my personal appreciation to you, Secretary General Guterres, for bringing the United Nations closer to the Blue Pacific Continent. The recent resolution calling for a closer working relationship with the Pacific Islands is something we in the Pacific deeply value and appreciate.

I join the Chair in supporting the establishment of a Multi-Country Office in the North Pacific. The establishment of a Multi-Country Office in the Northern Blue Pacific is both desirable and necessary to further our collective efforts towards tackling regional issues. I look forward to meeting my colleagues from the North Pacific countries this afternoon with a view towards reaching consensus on this important subject.

Secretary-General, last month the PIF leaders met in Tuvalu for the 50th PIF under the theme of *Securing our Future in the Pacific*. I am pleased to note that the Pacific Islands Forum has submitted the 50th PIF Joint Communique and the Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Action Now. While the FSM is in support of this in full I would particularly highlight the need for addressing marine pollution. Beyond the visible and alarming issues of plastics and debris contaminating our oceans and fish, I note that multiple scientific literatures demonstrate that microplastics are increasingly present and hazardous to human health.

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is already creating hazardous conditions for fisheries and marine ecosystems. They have become so large that we cannot continue to ignore them.

We acknowledge our key role as coastal states in shaping suitable and practical solutions to this issue. There are implementing measures within the Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO) that prohibits fishing vessels from discharging plastics; and we further acknowledge that conservation and sustainable use strategies must result from meaningful consultation and planning.

In my view, key to addressing the transboundary effects of marine pollution is to ensure the compatibility of the high seas measures with those implemented in the national jurisdiction. Everyone in this room needs to be involved in the conversation to avoid creating a graveyard of debris out of the adjacent coastal state jurisdictions.

As Leaders, we know all too well that it is impossible to protect the oceans without solving climate change; certainly, we cannot solve climate change without protecting the oceans. Micronesia's dependence on ocean resources highlights the significance of sustainable oceans as a national priority.

The Federated States of Micronesia is among the island nations most directly threatened by long-term global warming resulting from an increased level of greenhouse gases. Climate change is already impacting our water resources, agricultural resources, human health, forestry, and our overall biodiversity. Worse, our tuna stocks are projected to shift eastward out of our EEZ, causing loss of revenue.

Responding to these intricately Climate-linked challenges, FSM is embarking on more ambitious targets for climate change action by changing attitude towards ocean resources and creating policy momentum that will enhance resilience and holistic adaptation planning.

During the Climate Summit this week, FSM will enter into a partnership with the Blue Prosperity Coalition (BPC), providing multi-year expertise, funding, and tools to create a comprehensive climate smart Marine Spatial Plan for the entire exclusive economic zone of FSM. This partnership will promote growth and prosperity while empowering sustainable management of marine resources and ecosystems. The Plan will seek to improve fisheries management and revenue, protect coral reefs, and identify at least 30% of the national EEZ for marine protected areas.

As the 13th largest Exclusive Economic Zone, this initiative of FSM covers a sea area of approximately 3 million square kilometers in total, making the 30% commitment one of the world's largest contributions to global MPA coverage.

In closing, I thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to share our views on these matters of global importance.