



Republic of the Marshall Islands

STATEMENT by Hon. Casten N. Nemra, Minister of Foreign Affairs & Trade

High-Level Segment

Human Rights Council

Forty-Sixth Session

Introduction

Madame President, Excellencies, Iakwe.

The Marshall Islands congratulates Madame President on assuming the leadership of the Human Rights Council. This is a significant moment for the unity AND diversity of this Council. Voices from our region, and from small island developing states, must be heard wherever decisions are being made.

Securing human rights means making sure that the smallest states, the most marginalized populations, and those with the least resources have the same rights and protections as those with more. This is the perspective that the Marshall Islands brings to the Human Rights Council: that it is imperative that we champion the rights of all. We look forward to working with you, Madame President, to bring the spirit of community and cooperation for which the Pacific is known to the halls of Geneva.

RMI's Human Rights Record

Inclusivity is fundamental to securing human rights. These rights are universal, and the processes and institutions that exist to advocate and protect them must be inclusive if they are to succeed. The work begins at home. In the last six years, we

have acceded to 11 human rights instruments and protocols, and our National Human Rights Committee continually monitors our implementation.

We welcome also the recommendations made by member States during our 3rd UPR review and will continue to work to raise our standards and protect our people's rights without exception. We are pleased to note that we are in the process of amending our Constitution to establish the Ombudsman's Office, which will play a key role in monitoring, reporting, and implementing human rights in the country.

Gender Equality

The Marshall Islands has a strong matrilineal heritage. It is our firm belief, and a bedrock of our culture, that we can only succeed in protecting human rights when women and girls' rights are protected. Our national efforts are bearing fruit, with policies adopted to protect and promote labor, reproductive, and cultural rights of women and girls. As the climate warms, we will continue to fight for their rights as we face these challenges together, to ensure no one is left behind.

Climate Change

Madame President, Excellencies,

As a low-lying atoll nation, climate change is the greatest threat to our human rights. One cannot stand on our shores without understanding the danger that sea level rise poses. It threatens our ability to determine our political future, endangers our culture, and it puts our territory at risk.

The Marshall Islands government is working diligently to secure a safe future for our people. We were the first to submit an enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution and long-term strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and are increasing our resilience to climate impacts. We have been a leader in setting the standard for a green recovery, committing – along with members of the High Ambition Coalition – to allocate at least 60% of recovery spending on green and climate-friendly initiatives.

But action at a national level alone is not enough. Large emitters have a responsibility not only towards their own population, but also the population of other nations whose rights are also being affected. It is the responsibility of all states to adhere to the Paris Agreement goal to keep temperature under 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Failing to do so will result – and is already resulting – in devastating loss and unheard of damage to vulnerable states.

Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change

This is why the establishment of a mandate for a Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change is so important. If, as the High Commissioner recognized, climate change is the greatest threat that human rights have ever faced, this Special Procedure is the least this Council can do to address it.

Nuclear

As sea levels rise, the international community must not forget that underneath the Runit Dome, the remnants of over 12 years of nuclear tests are now leaking into the sea. Radioactive contamination has already affected our people's rights to a safe and healthy environment. We want people to see and understand the implications of nuclear testing in the real world. We have invited the special rapporteurs on human rights and the environment, toxic waste, and promotion of truth to see firsthand the implications on our people's rights. The Council must be aware that the consequences of this contamination are not limited to the Marshall Islands, and may be felt in the whole of the Pacific.

Conclusion

In 2021, you can count on the Marshall Islands to continue to stand in solidarity with citizens fighting for their rights around the world; those battling systemic racism and inequality; and with SIDS and low-lying territories fighting the effects of climate change. Kommol tata.