The Republic of the Marshall Islands aligns itself with the statements of the Federated States of Micronesia on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States, and of Tonga on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum.

The Marshall Islands is pleased to join as a cosponsor of this resolution and congratulates Vanuatu and other core group members on successfully facilitating a resolution which ultimately serves to strengthen understanding of the obligations and actions of states in regard to climate change, under international law.

It is important that this has been adopted with strong support by the General Assembly. Even if there are reservations by some on the exact references or detailed terms, it is nonetheless imperative that the UN not shirk a wider global responsibility in enriching and engaging with international law. Such an outcome could be an important reference point and marker for future action between states. We must all look to a deeper responsibility, and look past divisions at the negotiating table.

This advisory opinion is not an exercise in which the ICJ would go further than where we ourselves have reached, as member states. And without dispute, and as emphasized repeatedly by the UN Secretary-General, global efforts are falling well short of what was agreed. But the years of repetition have proved inadequate in implementing common obligations as the global community- despite stronger structure, ambition has repeatedly fallen short. Atoll nations such as my own now face some of the sharpest and harshest impacts first, of a wider global threat and crisis.

In the 1992 Framework Convention itself, states parties agreed to “prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”. Those cannot be empty words, and nor are they general terms. But this obligation in particular remains unmet - even as it serves as a driver for stronger multilateral effort. And, the international community has expanded its understanding into the Human Rights Council and its core treaties, into the Law of the Sea and the Security Council, with much more to be done to connect and better realize the common threads across international law.

As the Marshall Islands, we will remain as we are now on the political map under our boundaries and baselines. Even as seas rise, our government is tirelessly committed to ensuring a right to remain, and the right of our youngest and future generations to live in and know our proud island nation and culture. Those are inalienable rights - they cannot be denied. But best protecting our population may demand complex outcomes and actions, locally and globally, and our pathway to achieving those is uncertain, at best.

From the perspective of a low-lying atoll state and small island developing state, the current projections of sea-level rise threaten to overtop our land, with no higher ground. This certainly seems to be the result of the “dangerous interference” which the world is obligated to prevent. If it is difficult to understand further under international law what
else, beyond the direct terms of international conventions, is a legal obligation, than one should be able to phrase that the dramatic scale of these projections for the Marshall Islands and other atoll nations - ought not to happen. Everyone in this hall today knows that such an outcome is wrong, unjust and beyond a lawful basis.

Today, time is well-past for the General Assembly to forge an opportunity to a strong and effective international action, which may spur greater political will. We cannot afford further silence, however complex the issue. As we look ahead to the comprehensive process of involvement of member states in addressing an advisory opinion, we urge wide and robust participation of member states in the multilateral process. Whatever the different interpretations of law or negotiation, every member of this body must remind ourselves that we are all underpinned by an international rules-based order, and that our collective progress must be driven by international law. We owe it to the world to spare no effort in achieving a strong and responsive outcome under international law.

Today’s adoption reminds us all that this is exactly why the United Nations exists.

Thank you and kommol tata.