

**Third International Conference  
On Small Island Developing States**

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**Plenary Remarks by His Excellency,  
Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr.  
President of the Republic of Palau**

Good morning Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen. Let me first thank Prime Minister Tuilaepa and the people of Samoa for their magnificent hospitality. I think that this is going to be a very special event.

My friends, in this ‘Year of the Small Islands Developing States’ we surely have our jobs cut out for us. I don’t need to tell any of you that our future opportunities for a sustainable future will largely be defined through our efforts here during this 3<sup>rd</sup> Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

And it appears that our SIDS nations are placed in a very unusual position during this year’s lead-in to the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. While faced with developing our uniquely vulnerable nations, it is also our job to serve as our World’s sustainability conscience.

Fortunately, I believe that we are up to the challenge. And Ladies and Gentlemen, we must be, because I fear that no one else has emerged to lead this challenge of saving our planet from our global excesses.

Since the development of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS in 1994 -- Since the development of the Millennium Goals in 2000 -- and since the development of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI) in 2005, we have increasingly taken on this role. With this year’s unusual convergence of events, from the Recent Pacific Islands Forum in Palau, to this SIDS Conference in Apia, to the Secretary General’s Climate Summit in New York, we have a rare opportunity to solidify this role and to make a real impact on our global future.

As small islands, we have always understood that our economies, local livelihoods, cultures, food security, and sovereign existence depend on the health and vitality of our marine and coastal environments. This vitality has always depended, and will continue to depend on our ability to sustainably manage and conserve our marine and coastal resources.

That is why we understand the concepts of sustainability that seem to have been lost by our developed brothers. We must now bring them back into the fold.

In my island country in the Pacific, Palau, we expanded on the traditional ‘bul’ where in-shore fisheries were, from time to time, set aside to protect certain marine species, to initiate the Micronesia Challenge with our neighboring Micronesian States, which led to the development of other similar protected regional initiatives such as the Caribbean Challenge and the Coral Triangle Initiative.

In Palau, we are now closing the sustainability circle by announcing the creation of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary. When we formally establish the Sanctuary later this year, we will establish the process for closing over 80% of our Exclusive Economic Zone to commercial fishing. We will do this to allow our battered fish stocks to recover, to partner with our Pacific neighbors in a cohesive fishery management and to enhance our own eco-tourism economy. We will do this because we realize that at some point, someone has to say stop.

We must stop ignoring the root causes of Climate Change. We must stop polluting our oceans. We must stop the unsustainable over-harvesting of our marine resources. With sustainability as our guide, we must move towards reasonable and achievable sustainable development goals, being mindful of the failures of some of the prior Millennium Development goals.

And finally, we must take Prime Minister Tuilepa's vision of "Genuine and Durable Partnerships" to New York and beyond to ensure that this will become the generation that recognizes limits and lives sustainably.

Thank You.