



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
New York**

H.E. Ms. Amatlain E. Kabua  
Ambassador & Permanent Representative of the  
Republic of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations  
National Statement  
70<sup>th</sup> UN ESCAP Meeting  
Bangkok, Thailand  
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Ministers, Excellencies, Executive Secretary,

The Republic of the Marshall Islands welcomes the 70<sup>th</sup> meeting of ESCAP and its focused discussions on both boosting regional connectivity as well as the UN's post 2015 development agenda.

Small Island States are nearly a third of ESCAP's membership, and almost a quarter of the UN's membership. For too long, we have been lumped into larger pools, in the wider Asia-Pacific region, and in the wider world, without due regard for our unique structural and geographic challenges. In three weeks, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon will join Leaders and Ministers from around the world in Apia, Samoa for the 3<sup>rd</sup> global conference on small island states. Today, and this year, as the year of the SIDS, we are coming into our own. While we may be dismayed that our negotiations towards an outcome roadmap were marked by larger political agendas not of our own making, when you come to Samoa, hear our voices, and see first-hand our challenges and opportunities.

The Marshall Islands is particularly pleased to see ESCAP's recent report on sustainable management of oceans and seas for sustainable development and poverty eradication in Pacific small island developing states. We have the ability to use our own resources to contribute to the world economy and global food security. And at the same time, we can also rapidly transform our own economy, and move core indicators.

And we will do all of this with sustainability at the heart – our tuna industry is the largest in the world to have achieved sustainability certification. But we cannot do so alone. We need to realize active and well-targeted partnerships with the international community to boost our own capacity for effective investment and growth. We need the political will of distant fishing nations to be our active partners. It is my hope, and expectation, that recent positive collaboration, including our ESCAP Ministerial outcome, on economic connections within Asia, does not overlook this critical opportunity. Further, the Pacific Small Island Developing States have stood strong for a stand-alone SDG Goal on oceans – oceans are a critical resource not only for the Pacific but the wider Asia region and indeed the world.

We are an active member of ESCAP with a goal to build stronger bridges between the unique Pacific Islands and the wider Asian continent. Enhanced cooperation, including through South-South partnership and investment, can offer us much. However, we need more specific attention provided not only as lip-service, but in international programs that are well structured for small islands. While there are positive successes, there are also gaps in effective delivery that seem to stretch as long as the many miles between Suva and Bangkok, and even longer to my home capital of Majuro. Too often we have been told that we are too far away, too small and too many of us. The end result today is that with such little interaction with multilateral assistance and institutions, that we are at times ill-prepared to capture valuable opportunities, and the rest of the world moves on without us on board. The UN SG is boarding the plane to Samoa – and our leaders will be asking him directly why, how and where do we work together with the international system. Our work in the wider Asia region and ESCAP setting must focus more closely on our unique character, and not simply lumping us in to larger pools by circumstance, not logic.

Finally, as the global community moves forward to a 2015 Paris Protocol on climate change, it is critical that everyone comes forward with strong action – which reflects both common commitment and also our unique national differences. As a low-lying state, with no higher ground, the very survival of the Marshall Islands depends on it. The Marshall Islands will join with others next March, including some of the largest powers in the Asia-Pacific region, in announcing a nationally determined contribution. But until we realize closer and more effective partnership with the international system, whether on climate change, or wider sustainable development efforts, we will struggle to close the gap between local results and international intentions.