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Addressing the 71st United Nations General Assembly



Click on photo for video of President Heine delivering statement

In her address to the General Debate of the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly, President Dr. Hilda C. Heine shared the story of how the Marshall Islands, a small island nation– and a large ocean state– was defining its future.

First progress must be built on education, to ensure that young people have tools to lead the future. President Heine said the Marshall Islands must continue to improve teacher qualifications and design a curriculum that emphasizes on the Marshallese language and ways of being. She announced a new research partnership with Columbia University Teachers College that will assist with bilingual education and inspire the Marshall Islands to serve as a model for others around the world.

Second, the future must also be underpinned by economic security. The Marshall Islands has been

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reliant on the assistance of others for too long, said President Heine. While that has provided an important backstop for basic social development, it has also undermined self-dependence. The country face serious challenges as a small island state but has unexplored potential to grow. The Marshall Islands must expand the private sector, create jobs, and increase its gain from sustainable resources, especially fisheries, tourism, and copra. President Heine said as the country considers all of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, thinking all the way out to 2030, including 2023– when the economic assistance package under the Compact as Amended will be come to an end– the Marshall Islands must not only be ambitious with policy but define a solid financial pathway to get there.

National growth and well-being must be driven by a commitment to improve delivery on basic social development, focusing on health, food security and the environment, especially the most vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, those with disabilities, and single parents, said President Heine. The Marshall Islands has the highest rates of diabetes incidence in the world. The environment is challenged by overwhelming amount of plastic, metal cans, and trappings of the modern western world. The country is also vulnerable to natural hazards and

climate-driven events like droughts and coastal flooding. Even with its survival on the line, the Marshall Islands is committed to addressing the challenges with immediate action, said President Heine. To counter diabetes, the Parliament is considering an increase of import taxes on sugar added beverages. The country is also implementing a disaster risk reduction plan and measures with international support.

The Parliament is considering a national ban on plastic bags, on implementing recycling to clean local communities and provide modest stream of income. The country's environment agency was tasked to address water quality and security. The country is also moving toward reducing costly reliance on oil, through sustainable transport, and more efficient and renewable energy.

President Heine Commits Administration toward Renewed Focus on Nuclear Impact Issues

For so long the Government of the Marshall Islands has advocated for the rights of the Marshallese people at the United Nations in regards to the legacy of the of the U.S. testing in the Marshall Islands.

In her address to the UN General Assembly, President Heine said the Marshallese have been going to the UN for nearly 65 years to bring greater attention to the harm caused by nuclear weapons testing. The country remains the only instance where the UN ever authorized nuclear weapons testing, which the UN has never acknowledged, said President Heine. The Marshall Island was made a UN trust territory following the second World War and the nuclear weapon testing program was conducted with the full knowledge and blessing of the United Nations.

“...how many in the world would have truly experienced what we have– the physical, mental, environmental, and cultural burdens which last for generations– and the dislocation of our people from their ancestral islands? These are not mere historical events.”

“In light of our experience, it is our fervent hope that such weapons of mass destruction shall never again be tested or unleashed, and that all nuclear-armed nations will have the necessary political will and empathy to disarm...”

President Heine spoke on UN moral responsibility for the nuclear testing programs in the Marshall Islands. In 2012, a UN Special Rapporteur affirmed fundamental human rights issues and that the international community “has an ongoing obligation to encourage a final and just resolution.”

Words, without action do our people no benefit, said President Heine. Further stating, she has every right to not only ask but to demand full assistance and tangible results from the international community and the UN system.

President Heine is committing her administration towards a renewed focus on nuclear impact issues. She appealed to the government of North Korea to halt any further nuclear weapons tests and to achieve full nuclear disarmament.



Immediately following her address to the UNGA, President Heine was congratulated. (Photo L-R: Chief of Staff deBrum, UN Mission intern, Honolulu CG Edwards, President Heine, FSM President Christian, Ambassador Kabua, UN Mission intern, FSM Secretary Robert, UN Mission Ongra, Advisor Yamin, UN Mission Barker-Manase.



Left photo: PIF Secretary-General Taylor congratulated President Heine
 Right photo: President Heine, joined by Ambassador Kabua, receive words of congratulations from RMI friends and partners following RMI statement to the UN General Assembly.

Statement on UN Secretary General’s Ratification Ceremony for the Paris Agreement

The President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, H.E. Hilda C. Heine, Ed. D, has recorded the below statement on the occasion of the UN Secretary General’s Ratification Ceremony for the Paris Agreement which will be held later this morning (21 September 2016) in New York:

“Iokwe from the Marshall Islands.”

“In March I was very proud that the Marshall Islands became the third country in the world to ratify the Paris Agreement. The fact that my Government was able to ratify the Agreement within 50 days of taking

office was a big demonstration of our determination to lead this fight from the front.”

“Now we all need to work hard to ensure what we agreed in Paris at the end of last year has the force of law by the end of this year. It is time to get this done.”

“In Paris, we formed a High Ambition Coalition with 100 other countries and fought hard to secure some of the most ambitious elements of the Agreement which give my country a pathway to survival.”

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“But now we need to now turn our words into action. Without action, the Paris Agreement will just be a piece of paper.”

“This means we all need to do more to reduce emissions in light of our new temperature targets. This includes urgently reducing emissions from the aviation and maritime sectors and securing an ambitious amendment to the Montreal Protocol next month.”

“We also need to see finance quickly flow to those who it need it most, including so we can all implement our own ambitious plans to reduce emissions.”

“Without all this, there is no way we will be able to stay within 1.5 degrees.”

“It is clear there is a lot of work still to do, and the High Ambition Coalition will continue to take the lead.”

“Finally, I wanted to say *kommol tata* – or thank you – to our UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for



Every country was asked to provide a video outlining their country's progress towards ratifying the Paris Agreement. Click the photo above for President Heine's video.

his visionary and exceptional leadership in doing all that he did to make the Paris Agreement a reality.”

“As a mother and a grandmother, I know how important it is to bring people together to ensure we can pass on to future generations the beautiful planet that we call home.”

Marshall Islands Reiterates Call for Recognition of ROC (Taiwan)

In her address to the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly, President Dr. Hilda C. Heine reiterated the Republic of the Marshall Islands call on the United Nations for the recognition of Republic of China (Taiwan).

President Heine stated, “...the role of Taiwan as a key stakeholder, and its determination to contribute to global affairs, should be better recognized.”

She called on the international community to support Taiwan's efforts as an advocate for regional and global stability, peace, and dialogue, including the cross-strait relations.

“The UN should afford greater commitment to ensure Taiwan's fundamental right to participate in mechanisms, meetings, and activities of the UN specialized agencies,” said President Heine.

She added, “Taiwan should be recognized for its strong contribution in working with us and other towards the SDGs.”

The Republic of the Marshall Islands commits a section of its annual address to the United Nations General Assembly to call on the United Nations for recognition of Taiwan.

Outgoing ROC (Taiwan) Ambassador Chen Receives Presidential Award of Honor

Outgoing ROC (Taiwan) Ambassador Winston Wen-yi Chen received a Presidential Award of Honor in recognition of his efforts to advance the mutual interests and improve the relations between the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of China (Taiwan).

Presenting the Award to Ambassador Chen, on behalf of President Heine, was Education Minister Wilbur Heine, who received the Ambassador at the Ramada Plaza in Honolulu, Hawaii, on 26 September 2016.

Minister Heine expressed appreciation to Ambassador Chen for his efforts he exerted to enhance the bilateral relations between the two countries and wished the Ambassador every success in his future assignments.

On his part, Ambassador Chen conveyed gratitude for the Marshall Islands Government's cooperation during his tenure which he said contributed to the success of his mission. He expressed best wishes to President Heine, the Government and people of the Marshall Islands.



Photo: Education Minister Heine (R) presents Presidential Award of Honor to outgoing Ambassador Chen (L) at Ramada Plaza in Honolulu

The Presidential Award states that Ambassador Chen has “shown the calmness, clarity, dedication and judgement that are the characteristics of an outstanding Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and a true friend of the Marshallese people.”



Photo taken with Amb. Chen at the Airport VIP Lounge on the night of President Heine's departure for UNGA. Pictured L-R: Cabinet Admin. Officer Bollong, Mrs. Zackhras, MIA P Zackhras, Amb. Chen, President Heine, First Gentleman Kijiner, MIVA GM Alik, Protocol/logistics Lanki, Ms. Lani

Statement at the High Level Dialogue on “Sustainable Oceans and the Blue Economy”

At the margins of the 71st UN General Assembly, President Dr. Hilda C. Heine was amongst Leaders who spoke at the High Level Dialogue on Sustainable Oceans and Blue Economy, hosted by Norway Prime Minister Erna Solberg. Other speakers included Chile President Michelle Bachelet; Vice President Yusuf Kalla of Indonesia; Ms. Ségolène Royal, President of COP21, Minister of Environment, Energy and Marine Affairs of France; and Under Secretary Cathrine Novelli for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment, of the U.S. Department of State.

Statement delivered by President Dr. Hilda C. Heine on 22 September 2016:

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Prime Minister Solberg, I want to thank you personally for hosting this event.

There are important underwater resources, but if the wrong decisions are made, we will steal both environment and economic benefit from future generations. Many might not know well all the small island nations in the Pacific – but our ocean area makes us 40 percent larger than Europe. Like our ancestors, we are natural custodians of our oceans.

Let me share with you an example of how we are putting sustainable development to work:

Our region has nearly half the world's commercial tuna – and almost all of this is fished by distant fishing nations. For many in the Pacific, fisheries is almost the only sector where we can grow as developing nations. The leaders of the 8 nations of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement have banded together to pursue both boost our national participation and benefit – as well as to increase sustainable practices.

And this is not “lip service” – we are now the largest tuna fishery in the world which is certified sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council. If the market – and distant fishing nations – continue to come on board, our nations will produce fully traceable cans of tuna. In short – we are changing the playing field of commercial fisheries. This is in our own economic interest – but also to ensure our youngest and future generations will benefit, and to advance global food security.

And markets are demanding sustainability. For example, last year, the Pacific PNA countries reached a marketing deal to import certified sustainable tuna to Norway, through Norges-Gruppen, a major Norwegian supplier. So, Prime Minister, our countries – halfway across the world from each other – are becoming more connected by sustainable oceans. Thank you and kōmmol tata.





Pictured L-R: Moderator Max Schorr, former UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres, Foreign Minister John M. Silk, & Global Partnerships Chairman Martyn Parker

Clinton Global Initiative Session on “COP21: The Time for Climate Action is now”

At the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Foreign Minister John M. Silk was a participant, representing President Dr. Hilda C. Heine, at the Clinton Global Initiative in the session entitled “COP21: The Time for Climate Action is Now.” The primary focus of the discussions was on partnerships between governments and businesses, or cross-sector partnerships, to combat climate change and meet the goals of the COP21 Agreement. Minister Silk spoke alongside Christiana Figueres, former UNFCCC Executive Secretary, and Martyn Parker, Chairman Global Partnerships.

Foreign Minister Silk encouraged business and government to work together to continue to drive forward the climate action agenda. Keeping warming within 1.5 degrees will not be possible therefore unless every country, every company and every sector, including aviation and shipping, is able to do more. Foreign Minister Silk said relocation is an issue for the Marshallese people because many have already had to relocate from the nuclear testing and don't want to go through it again. The Marshall Islands are home and hold the Marshallese heritage and hopes for the future therefore the Marshall Islands won't give up on the fight against climate change.



Signing of MoU with Columbia University

On behalf of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, President Heine signed the MoU with the Teacher's College of Columbia University, at the margins of the UNGA. The MoU is intended to provide a framework for cooperation in which both can encourage and support mutually beneficial academic exchanges. The signing was held at the Marshall Islands UN Mission in New York.

Minister-in-Assistance Zackhras Joins High Ambition Coalition Counterparts in New York

In the critical final week of COP21 in Paris last year, the Republic of the Marshall Islands helped to convene a group of more than 35 progressive Ministers and more than 100 countries that ultimately became known as the ‘High Ambition Coalition.’

Minister-in-Assistance Mattlan Zackhras said he was particularly proud that the High Ambition Coalition was able to unite behind the need for the 1.5 degree limit in Paris and deliver key parts of the deal that will help get there.

At the margins of the UNGA, during a press conference of the “High Ambition Coalition: Climate Change,” Minister-in-Assistance Zackhras stated, “Going forward with the “HAC” will be crucial for whether we can keep the window open to 1.5 degrees. This will be its primary goal.”

“Everyone now working to bring the Paris Agreement into force. We cannot lose sight of what is actually required to make Paris a reality. Otherwise the Agreement will just be a piece of paper,” added Minister-in-Assistance Zackhras.

On the evening of the UN Secretary General’s



Click on the photo of Minister-in-Assistance Zackhras for the video from the press conference of the “High Ambition Coalition: Climate Change.”

Ratification Ceremony for the Paris Agreement, Coalition Ministers and other high-level climate change champions gathered for a working dinner, organized by the Stanley Foundation, to discuss limiting global temperatures to 1.5 degrees. Minister-in-Assistance Zackhras delivered the opening remarks stressing on the importance of 1.5 not only for SIDS but for everyone and outlined the work required to keep the window open to 1.5 degrees, and demonstrate the world of the High Ambition Coalition in that regard.



President Heine Media Engagement

President Heine had an interview with Samantha Bee from the Full Frontal Samantha Bee show, a political commentary/comedy late night weekly show on TBS. The primary focus of the interview was on gender and politics and will air in October as part of a show with other women leaders of the world. During the interview, President Heine said women have a strong traditional role in the Pacific cultures, both in families and communities, including in resolving conflicts. Also discussed were Marshall Islands development challenges.

(Photo: President Heine interviewed by Samantha Bee at the RMI UN Mission)