

WELCOME FROM THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU*

STEVEN KANAI†

His Excellency Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Senator Gareth Evans, His Excellency Colin Keating, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Honourable Kuniwo Nakamura, President of the Republic of Palau and on behalf of all the people of Palau, I would like to express our deepest appreciation to the Australian Government and the organisers of this historic conference for inviting Palau to join with you to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the world's largest and leading international organisation, the United Nations.

The anniversary of the United Nations is always a special day for Palauans. We actually celebrate October 25th, the date of the founding of the UN, as a legal national holiday. This is because Palau has had a very special and unique relationship with the United Nations for almost a half century.

On 18th July, 1947, only two years after the inception of the United Nations' Charter, the United Nations signed an agreement with the United States of America entrusting the daily lives and the future of the people of Palau to the United States as administrator of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Simultaneously, the United Nations maintained its obligation under Article 75 of the Charter to ensure the well being and promotion of a better future for the Palauan people.

To provide an oversight for the United States obligations under the agreement and to offer a forum for the Palauan people to voice their concerns, the United Nations Trusteeship Council for five decades. Throughout those years, Palau became an integral part of the United Nations and developed a very close relationship with the United Nations.

We, the people of Palau, have been deeply influenced and touched by the wisdom, the caring, and the vision of the United Nations. Forty-eight years ago, the United Nations envisioned that Palau would become fully capable of self-government and would be able to contribute to world peace and security. And only six months ago, on 1st October, 1994, the United Nations realised this vision by having Palau enter into free association relationship with the United States and declared independence. That is why, we in Palau believe that an independent and sovereign republic of Palau is a lasting example of one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations.

* At the time of the conference, the Republic of Palau had recently been admitted as the newest member of the United Nations.

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Having said this, it is not that difficult to understand Palau's decision to join the United Nations as the organisation's 185th member on 15th December, 1994. Because of Palau's close experience with the United Nations, it is our sincere belief, despite the scepticism of some, that United Nations can and does achieve more than what nations apart could, and we would like to strengthen that by joining the United Nations. And, particularly because of our experience during the second World War, we seek to be a part of the United Nations crusade for world peace and security and protection of basic human rights.

For Palau, becoming a member of the United Nations also represents a clear acknowledgment of the fact that Palau is at last an independent nation. Joining the United Nations means, of course, more than just recognition. As a newly developing nation, Palau's eligibility to utilise the assistance from many suborgans of the United Nations is particularly useful.

Perhaps even most importantly is Palau's ability to have equal voice in the family of nations just as valid as that of any other member nation. This is especially meaningful to the Palauan people after over a century of foreign dominance.

Finally, as the newest member of the United Nations, Palau seeks to join with all other member nations in facing the new challenges of the 21st century.

In closing, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Palau, The Honourable Kuniwo Nakamura and on behalf of the people of Palau, I would like to convey our sincerest thanks to the Security Council of the United Nations and the United Nations as a whole for its indispensable role in the creation of our nation.