Iakwe and greetings from the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

I would like to acknowledge and commend the Undersecretary General and all participants to these meetings for the excellent array of background material and thinking that has gone into the draft Ministerial Declaration. Although much does not obviously apply to our situation—we have no rail links or overland connectivity with Europe—we fully recognize that investment in green transport has lagged far behind other sectors and this region now has a major game of catch-up on our hands. We can support in general terms, the body and intent of this draft Declaration and commend the drafting team for their excellent work.

As a representative of the climate most vulnerable nations, it would be remiss of me not to underscore the critical importance of tackling decarbonisation of the transport sector and the importance of this region taking on this challenge head-on and at speed. As the excellent background papers state - the Asia-Pacific region concentrates two thirds of the global seaborne trade and is home to nine out of ten world’s busiest container ports. While the Marshall Islands are not home to one of these, our flag flies on about one-in-ten of the ships using these ports. As a nation state, we are also heavily invested in this debate.

The setbacks of COP26, and for the shipping sector, the slow-moving pace of change at the IMO is still very fresh in our minds. Even as the pandemic still cripples and disrupts our world, the climate emergency is now very much upon us. All sectors must now pick up the challenge, peak and reduce carbon footprints – before 2050! It is the only pathway for our survival. I would kindly ask that this urgency be reflected more prominently at the outset of this Declaration.

The Asia-Pacific region is vast, it encompasses the biggest and continental of countries to the smallest of island Ocean states. There is no “one size fits all” solution. In my own country for example, we only have 50 miles of roads and our micro-communities are separated from each other by 100s of miles of open ocean. For us, it’s all about the shipping.

I was pleased to see direct reference in the background papers to the Pacific Blue Shipping Partnership – our multi-country-driven call for $500million in blended finance investment to catalyse a transition to clean domestic shipping for our states However, we cannot do this alone, we need all willing partners – including ESCAP - to support our national efforts in pushing this initiative forward without any duplication but synergies in place. Therefore, I again wish to kindly request if our PBSP initiative can be cited as well under our collective Ministerial Declaration.

Of course, domestic transition is just one side of the coin. To face the climate emergency, we need all the tools possible. The Marshall Islands continue its role and responsibilities at the
international scale solemnly. With our Pacific neighbours, we have brought to IMO the most ambitious measures possible, including our proposal to double the level of ambition commensurate with 1.5 degrees. We have designed the first carbon price mechanism for shipping bunker, a universal GHG levy with an entry price of $100/tonne carbon equivalent. This measure will generate between $1 and 2 trillion in revenue before 2050 and we are advocating for the majority of this to be reinvested into the global south.

With those comments Chair, I again thank you all for your hard work. The Marshall Islands remains committed to supporting ESCAP and the important work it does for our region. Diverse as we are in geographies, populations and location we all face a common and increasing threat none can avoid in isolation. Far better we face it with collective purpose.

Kommol Tata