Palau National Statement Agenda Item 2

Review of progress made, challenges to address and forward looking policies to enact in order to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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Alii! Good morning from the Government of the Republic of Palau. First, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and express my sincere appreciation to the government of the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting this very important conference. Second, I would also like to thank the UN ESCAP and other partners that helped organized this conference.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Palau, I further take this opportunity and reaffirm Palau’s commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, and the outcomes of subsequent reviews. Palau government further affirms its full commitment and cooperation towards the Beijing + 25 Review and we contributed towards this process by submitting our National Beijing +25 Review Report. Our National Report provides a detailed account of our gains, key challenges and opportunities in accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, however, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight specific issues in which Palau wants to emphasize in this meeting:

Palau has identified top five priorities through the National Beijing +25 Review Report which fell under the areas of Education, Health, Culture, Economic Empowerment, and the Environment Accelerating progress for women and girls and to achieve our sustainable development goals.

**Education**

Palau has always placed a high value on education, thus, gender parity in education has been achieved. It is our government’s goal in the next five years to raise the level of teaching in the classroom and increase qualifications by having all teachers have AA degrees and trained for early detection of psycho-social and physical disabilities. We further want to ensure that training is provided for school counselor for males and females as well as mentorship program for tutoring and after school programs for all students as well as Focus on life skills (i.e. farming and fishing), technical skills, traditional values and practices.

**Culture**

Palau is a matrilineal society and has a gender balance system where women hold traditional positions of power and respect and at the same time has the role of appointing the High Chief of every village. The annual Mechesil Belau Women’s Conference (traditional women leadership conference) has successfully advocated for 25 national laws, 3 constitutional amendments, and 1 traditional law relating to culture, health, education and the environment. The Council of Chiefs, as mandated by our Constitution, is the key advisory council to the President of the Republic of Palau. The Council of Chiefs receives annual budget from the national government and the Mechesil Belau Conference receives annual budget for their conference.

In the public service, women dominate the Judiciary branch of the government and many sit on public sector boards and commissions. Nevertheless, women remain under-represented in the national congress, and cabinet.

**Health and Environment**

Palau has made significant gains in the areas of legal protection measures for women subject to domestic violence through the enactment of the Family Protection Act (FPA), 2012.
Succession rate in the reporting of domestic violence has increased, and our justice system including the law enforcement places a high priority in handling cases of domestic violence. The FPA has a coordinator to coordinate agencies in the Implementation Plan and Education and Awareness Program; a Human Trafficking Office and Temporary Shelter have been established. Comprehensive surveys and reports on family health and protection have been completed to track progress on health indicators. An Action Plan for the Palau National Youth Policy is being implemented. And since our last report on CRC in 2016, Palau has done the early child protection survey audit, and has established a structure to provide an office desk for child protection officer through the Bureau of Aging, Disability and Gender.

**Economic Empowerment**

In our national effort to accelerate economic advancement and participation for women, creation of low interest loans, grants, and financial services has been put in place to help women in this area. This effort is not just geared towards young women but also to retired women and elderly women who still has the energy and thrive to be part of the local business industry.

Over the past five years, the Republic of Palau has taken specific measures to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Measures such as the Belau Family Health and Safety Survey; Temporary Shelter (48 h) for victims of violence and human trafficking; Maternity Leave Bill introduced and passed to second reading; Republic of Palau Non-Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Strategic Plan of Action 2015-2020.

**Challenges**

However, as a country with limited resources, our island continues to face many challenges that we call on our partners for assistance and support. Major challenges Palau faces are (1) the crisis of non-communicable diseases, (2) a comprehensive gender disaggregated data collection and reporting process to linking information between government, state, community and private organization to track progress; (3) effective enforcement of existing protective legislation about human trafficking, prostitution, domestic violence; (4) the impacts of Climate Change across all sectors.

The Government of Palau has learnt that despite the many efforts on some priority areas the Beijing Platform for Action can be accelerated through the platform in the post 2030 era. The first area being that of women’s right to a safe environment, communities and nation threatened by climate change and disaster. Non-communicable diseases are a major challenge for the overall health of women, girls, men and boys. Economic participation for Women in Palau remains low and continues to be a challenge for Palau, this requires a paradigm shift in the perception and behavior towards women’s capabilities, a sustained investment towards re-shaping attitudes and perception is needed. Violence against women and girls is increasing and taking many forms such as trafficking, forced sex work and through technology which requires concentrated attention and practical solutions.

With our size and isolation, we are not only most vulnerable to the challenges of climate change, but much more affected to global views constant changes and challenges to our cultural, social and economic endeavors. Nonetheless, this isolation also forges us to be more experience
and resilience, people and community, and we can largely, contribute to our global responses to the Beijing Declaration Platform for Action in Asia and Pacific, thus accelerating the platform for action embedded priority targets and outcomes through the global Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

In conclusion, Palau wishes to emphasize the importance of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Asia and Pacific. It is this type of platform that pulls all of us together and provides all of us the opportunity to share and learn from one another as neighboring islands and states. A collaborative effort with key stakeholders, development partners, and civil society organization in addressing our many challenges and achieving our goals. This is a special place where we as Asia and Pacific come together as one and promote what is good for our nations, for our children, and for our part of the region in this world.

Again, thank you very much for the opportunity, and Palau looks forward to a fruitful and positive conference in the coming days. Kom Kmal Mesulang!