

**Statement by
The Republic of the Marshall Islands at the
Round-table meeting of the
Mauritius Strategy for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further
Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island
Developing**

New York, 24 September 2010

Honorable Heads & Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is beyond question that climate impacts pose cross-cutting and complex challenges, especially for low-lying SIDS like the Marshall Islands – with narrow atolls and no high ground.

Many have commented on the urgent need to make fast start climate finance flow, and more needs to be done to turn commitment into visible reality. But equally important is the need for SIDS to broadcast concrete national strategies to boost energy security through emissions cuts, and to safeguard the most vulnerable, with forward-looking plans well-integrated with development goals.

We often criticize, but we must do more to propose specific plans. In this regard, we encourage SIDS and our partners to join the Dutch-led “fast start finance dot org” website initiative to provide transparent information, to put forward our own strategies, and to reflect actions taken.

We also face another key challenge. For the Marshall Islands and for many SIDS, fisheries represent almost a singular development pathway. With geographic barriers to economic diversification, fisheries becomes an “all or nothing” issue. In our region, we see only a tiny fraction – about 3 percent – of participation in a \$4 billion annual tuna fishery.

In addition, we are fighting hard and have driven progress towards positive measures to reduce overfishing and ensure fishing levels are sustainable and based on science. More needs to be accomplished. The MSI Plus Five Review and this year’s UN Fish Stocks Agreement review both affirm the need for larger development processes, specifically the MSI, to inform fisheries negotiations and vice versa. Our national development cannot be left solely in the hands of our partner’s fisheries departments, who may lack a complete understanding of SIDS development issues and barriers.

Also, both of these reviews spoke to the need to identify specific strategies which ensure we receive a greater share of benefit from fisheries. More has to be done to build active partnerships. We expect that our partners will remember their commitments in the MSI-plus-five outcome when it comes time to make difficult decisions on shared fisheries management policy.

Until we realize global commitment on a modern approach – one which has measurable benchmarks, similar to the MDGs, and which formalizes a category of vulnerable small island nations – the international community will continue to go in circles without understanding where – and why – little progress has occurred. This is not necessarily an issue of more assistance or resources – it is ultimately an issue of effectiveness. We are concerned that limited progress has been made under key elements of the MSI – especially the mainstreaming of SIDS issues and concerns through multilateral finance sources.

In this light – the lack of formal UN recognition of a SIDS category leads to inaccurate, “one size fits all” approaches which lead to inaccurate conclusions about our status and development, and which do not reflect the very obvious differences – and similarities – between SIDS. We have been told specifically by experts in UNCTAD that current indicators are inaccurate.

We hope that the UN SIDS interagency working group, and the Secretary General, will consider these views as it reports on the effectiveness of a UN response.

We were particularly disappointed, and puzzled, that some political partners objected to the notion of targets to measure our success, especially when they have proved as important tools in the MDG process. We cannot keep putting a new coat of paint on a development strategy which has served us well, but ultimately dates back to the early 1990s or late 1980s. More focused effort – especially within the CSD and General Assembly – is needed in the follow-up analysis of MSI.