

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is a momentous year for our country as we celebrate, on October 1, the tenth anniversary of our independence and of our membership in this august institution. Palau was the last country to emerge from the Trusteeship System, having been administered by the United States under the supervision of the UN for longer than any country in the world. It was the UN that provided Palau with a willing forum in which to express and ultimately achieve our right to sovereignty, and for this we are ever thankful. I am also happy to observe, on this tenth anniversary, that this year we have established, for the first time, a Permanent Mission in New York, so that we can enhance our ability to meet our international responsibilities.

It was the United States, through its administration and its willing cooperation in our peaceful emergence into independence, that assured us the liberty and the values that guide us today. For this extraordinary legacy, we today express our deep gratitude to the United States of America.

images of swaying palm trees and white-sand beaches prevail in the world's imagination, they are only one part of the story. In truth and in fact, the remoteness and isolation of Palau make it a very difficult place to develop a self-reliant economy, provide medical care and education to its people, and deter aggression and terrorism. Fuel and transportation prices are among the highest in the world; after four successive colonial administrations our infrastructure is quite incomplete; and our most promising hope for the development of a sustainable economy, our pristine environment, is threatened by factors beyond our control, such as the failure of all industrialized countries to come to an agreement to implement the Kyoto Protocol. We have created a democratic society, assured human rights to our people, but without international focus, we will not be able to provide hope and opportunity to our children, and we will continue to watch as they leave their homeland to seek an education and a career elsewhere. For no matter what statistics may be advanced, what references to Gross National Product may be debated, until we can provide our children with the incentive to stay and help build our country, we will have lost. The Mauritius Process is thus a critical one for Palau, and we trust that the developed countries of the world will embrace it.

Similarly, we trust that the agencies of the UN will sharpen their focus on the Small Island Developing States and correct what we view as a current imbalance in support for the fragile small states of the world. We applaud the recent efforts of

agencies and programs of the UN, thereby aiding the rest of the world in pursuing our mutual agenda.

Second, and also in pursuit of the most effective means to strengthen the UN's credibility, Palau urges the UN to reform the Security Council to reflect the reality of the international community in the 21st Century so that countries that play a major role in the maintenance of international peace and security always participate in the decision-making process of the Security Council. Palau believes that the Security Council should be expanded to include developing and developed countries as new members, and that Japan's stellar record of contribution is a solid basis for Japan's assumption of permanent membership on the Security Council.

Japan has been a leader in international initiatives for many years, and it is

Coalition forces in Iraq paid the ultimate price, marking the first death of a Palauan in the struggle with global terrorism. Like Corporal Ngirmidol, our forces are small in number but large in loyalty, commitment, and idealism. No one should make any mistake about this.

Palau is grateful to the United States for allowing us to achieve our independence and thus to join the international community's quest for world peace. Nonetheless, a balanced international agenda, which includes a determined focus on sustainable development, is required if Palau is to achieve some measure of economic self-reliance, and if the world as we know it is to survive.

Thank you.