

Excellencies, Director-General Ryder, Ladies and Gentleman,

The Centenary of the International Labour Organization gives us reason to celebrate 100 years of the ILO's indispensable contribution, advocating for labor standards, human rights and peace. The achievement of equal opportunities of decent work is a key pillar of the UN's sustainable development goals, and social justice must be achieved. I also affirm the ILO's Declaration on the Future of Work in setting ambitious goals.

Unemployment, especially among youth, is a major challenge in economies, both developed and developing, in all regions of the world. Looking back on a century of efforts, what will it take for us to have a robust labour market with decent work for all?

Firstly, I would like to join the voices of those leaders who reaffirm their commitment to the ILO and its mandate. We need the strongest possible ILO to surmount the challenges that lie ahead.

Secondly, this occasion is a moment to reflect deeply on what has worked best, and where the ILO, the member states, and indeed all the tripartite actors as a whole could do better.

I would like to add to the many excellent proposals that have been put forward by leaders that have spoken before me, and to bring our Pacific perspective.

We feel it is vital that the ILO and the international system consider closely the unique character and challenges faced by small island developing states, including the Marshall Islands. Together, we need to strengthen such "island tailored" approaches which work within our small scale and narrow

economy. The UN's SAMOA Pathway for SIDS will be showcased at a key high level event this September, and paired with a review outcome. Despite the mandate, the international system is often "hit or miss" on designing and actioning effective SIDS assistance - and this gap can hamper efforts at achieving effective jobs strategies.

I am very pleased to announce to the ILO that the Marshall Islands has established a Permanent Mission at Geneva. We therefore hope to play a more active part in the ILO in Geneva going forward, and will be pleased to follow-up with our Pacific perspectives.

In our specific national case: More than sixty percent of youth in the Marshall Islands are unemployed, which is pushing an exodus of young talent out of our nation. ILO has assisted with the development of key policy tools, including a national action plan, which intends to boost youth employment, and through national planning, to support progress on the SDGs. We cannot achieve these goals in one cycle, and thus the achievement of decent jobs has been integrated into comprehensive national strategic planning, and is now a cross-sectoral approach.

Turning paper intentions into real employment requires political will and commitment to tackle core structural issues. It is important that the Marshall Islands works to break the chains of aid dependency, and transition into a thriving economy. Ensuring decent work will require new investment pathways to help transform our economy at scale. We also need safeguards, and we are proud to have recently ratified the C182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, as well as our earlier ratifications on maritime identity documents and maritime labor. As the world's largest tuna port, we have also joined the rest of the Pacific islands through the regional Forum Fisheries Agency in ensuring that human rights standards will now be upheld in the

international fisheries operations within our jurisdiction and region - but we also need the political will of distant fishing nations. We furthermore welcome the ILO's work at the regional level to support greater coordination between youth and entrepreneurship programs.

The Marshall Islands, and many other island nations as well as other vulnerable countries, face severe climate risks and threats. Like other cross-cutting goals, SDG 8 should be a key component of climate action, and can help to a more resilient future for our young populations. We believe that the increasingly difficult environmental conditions we face at home are already a driver of the migration and youth employment concerns we face. The chronic flooding we grapple with due to sea level rise, extreme weather and rising heat are a serious downward pressure on our economy.

We welcome the ILO's work on heat stress and other weather dangers faced by workers due to climate change, and encourage the expansion of this program. As chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, I would like to especially underscore the need for more assistance to nations grappling with these challenges. The ILO guidelines on sustainable development, decent work and green jobs are equally a welcome development.

In our national commitments on climate change we are aiming for carbon neutrality and have ambitious renewable energy targets. As we progress forward with these targets we need to ensure that jobs and families are preserved in the transition. Achieving a just transition has to therefore be a top priority for the ILO as the world advances with the urgent need to do more to fight climate change and keep those most vulnerable, including workers around the world, safe.

The Marshall Islands is, moreover, proud to join Ireland as a co-lead for the upcoming UNSG climate summit, and we will work to build a stronger bridge between political leads and the loud voices youth advocates.

It is our youngest and future generations who must be able to thrive in a resilient future. And leaders must work tirelessly until that is achieved.

Thank you and kommol tata.

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