

Opening Statement for FSM Side Event

Bonn, Germany

June 9, 2009

Welcome everyone and thank you for coming.

The topic of climate change is very much on the minds of our leaders and our people in the Federated States of Micronesia.

This is because climate change is about our very existence as a country.

We ask ourselves, “How long will our country, and our culture, continue to exist?”

Micronesia is not alone.

We are representative of all vulnerable small island states around the world, and the many other low-lying coastal countries that face the growing threat of extinction from abrupt climate change, and the sea-level rise and other impacts that it will cause.

For us, climate change is a crisis we must confront everyday. Only six months ago, Micronesia and many other small island states in the Pacific were hit with tidal surges that were unknown to us only a generation ago. This caused extensive damage and left 10s of thousands of people homeless throughout the region.

Unfortunately, the climate system is predicted to get worse, and tidal surges like this are expected to occur more often. This is our life now.

And this is why at these negotiations we have proposed a program of fast-action climate mitigation strategies to be implemented now in both developed and developing countries. We have asked the rest of the world to support the program in order to help save Micronesia and the many other countries that face similar threats from climate change.

Acting fast is the only way to help us preserve our countries and our cultures.

That we need steep reductions in carbon dioxide emissions is well understood. Such reductions are essential.

But steep cuts in carbon dioxide are not enough.

The scientists now tell us that cutting carbon dioxide does not produce significant cooling for at least 1,000 years.

Micronesia and all other island nations will be long gone before reductions in carbon dioxide can cool the planet and return us to a safe climate system.

Preserving a safe climate system thus requires fast-action mitigation strategies that focus on the warming that is not from carbon dioxide.

I think we sometimes forget that carbon dioxide is only half of what is causing climate change. Other climate warming gases and particles are responsible for the other half of the climate problem. We need to address these substances too. The climate challenge is simply too immense to be solved by only addressing half of the problem.

The good news is that reducing these non-carbon dioxide warming agents can provide mitigation of warming much faster than reducing carbon dioxide.

Reducing emissions of the non-carbon dioxide climate warmers can produce fast cooling, within months, years, and decades.

We also need fast-action strategies to expand bio-sequestration in order to reduce greenhouse gas concentrations.

We need these strategies now, and we need them in addition to the primary objective: steep cuts in carbon dioxide emissions.

We ask the countries of the world to keep the promise that they made when they launched the current negotiations, the promise to take action to not just beyond 2012, but now and up to 2012 as well. So we encourage them to support the fast-action strategies discussed tonight through an immediate work program.

We need this as part of the outcome of these negotiations.

We need to start fast-action strategies now and we need to start funding these strategies now.

Funding fast action now will constitute a down payment on the further funding that is needed to help developing countries reduce their own climate emissions.

With the world's support for fast action strategies, including actions under the Climate Convention as well as the Montreal Protocol, we can get the immediate start we need and gain critical momentum towards stabilizing the Earth's climate.

Thank you.