

Statement by H.E. Mr. Masao Nakayama,
Permanent Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia
before the Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations
*The Last Push Before Copenhagen:
Defining Positions Strategies and Goals on Climate Change*
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Visiting my island this summer and seeing the extent of coastal erosions, or washing away of beautiful beaches, I asked myself this question:

What can repair and return the conditions of my island to its previous undamaged and unspoiled conditions—meaning no coastal erosions, beaches intact, no salt water intrusion to taro patches, healthy, thriving corals, no unusual tidal surges, etc.—so that life can continue on such islands for years into the future, as it has for thousands of years in the past?

Is this musing at this point? Is it wishful thinking? Can the most aggressive targets proposed in the climate talks achieve this goal, or have we decided that this kind of damage is inevitable?

The objective of the Framework Convention is to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system, but what is dangerous quickly becomes a political question.

The destruction of my islands is being written off. People say that some of the impacts of climate change are inevitable. I have been told that saving my homeland and cultural heritage is just not feasible.

So despite the Framework Convention, the real objective seems to become determining how much dangerous climate change "we" can accept and who is the "we" that gets to make this decision.

Returning from the climate talks in Barcelona last week, it is more and more clear that the voices of those already being affected by dangerous climate change are those least likely to be heard when establishing climate change policies.

Discussions in Barcelona and over the course of this year have focused largely on numbers, on the abstract:

- Can we limit warming to 1.5C? Can we limit it to 2C?
- Can we stabilize atmospheric concentrations at 350 ppm? What about 450 ppm?
- How many hundreds of billions of dollars will it cost to adapt to climate change?
- Who will be made to pay for this effort, the polluters or the victims of pollution?

What's too often missing from these discussions is the human element. Ultimately, we must remember that we are not discussing dollars, temperatures and atmospheric concentrations. We are discussing human suffering and the scale on which "we" can supposedly tolerate it.

This is why I prefer to shape climate policy around principles, not economic convenience or someone's interpretation of what's feasible.

First, there is the principle that the nations of the world have agreed to in the Framework Convention: To preventing dangerous climate change, not limiting [discussion of] its damage to the costs of dealing with it.

Second, there are the principles of science, which inform us what would be required to achieve our goals, without asking the approval of politicians and budget analysts.

Third, there are principles of justice and equity. It is unjust for some nations to take actions that lead to the destruction of other nations. It is inequitable for those nations to choose an inadequate response or under-compensate the victims of climate change.

So, again, I find myself wondering: While the ultimate objective of the Convention may be straightforward in print, what does it really mean as it applies to island peoples, mountain peoples, [and] Polar peoples, when examined from the perspectives of the over-consuming countries? And what does it mean from the perspectives of these most vulnerable peoples, all of whom have depended on Mother Earth to breastfeed them? Will they have to accept major irreversible damages so that others can continue their over-consuming ways? Justice would say no. Yet, damages are already piling up, even with warming of less than 1C. Is there theoretically a good solution, or has the die been cast that we are committed to accept irreversible island coastal erosions, and their eventual dissolution? That is what is really happening to my island: It is being submerged from its perimeters by rising seas, dissolved from below by increasingly acidic waters, and its fertility destroyed by saltwater seeping up in its bosom.

I am using my own island as an example. It is one of the biggest islands in the Northwest Region of Chuuk. (*Note: Chuuk is a group of islands that comprises one of the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia. The name "Chuuk" translates as "mountain."*) Despite the very apparent damages, this island is less vulnerable than others that are even smaller in size and lower in elevation. What about those islands? In our Federated States of Micronesia the story of my island is repeated in some 500 low islands, among which are some of the most beautiful and unique among island formations in the world. The world should not write us off as a casualty of its over-consumption. On the contrary, the world should aim to preserve these islands as Natural Wonders or World Heritage. Even more importantly, the world should consider the people who live there, who have a right to their homelands, to their heritage, to survival and well-being.

Presently, our peoples, our societies, our cultures and lives are being uprooted from their ancestral homes, and the World is negotiating away based on "what is good for me" and not what is good for all of Humanity. I cannot help but to conclude that this may be one of the most selfish eras in our world history! And we must recognize in advance that we bring about inequity and immorality on a pan-historical level, potentially even much more destructive than the injustices we have striven to overcome in the past, such as slavery and colonialism.

These considerations and principles have shaped and informed the Federated States of Micronesia's climate policy and strategy, which can be quite simply summarized: Do everything possible, as fast as possible.

Federated States of Micronesia is calling for the most aggressive targets in the Kyoto Protocol negotiations: Over 45% percent reductions in the near-term and more than 95% reductions by 2050 for Annex I countries.

We insist that these commitments must be made legally binding at Copenhagen next month. We have been negotiating for four years already, and it is unacceptable that some of the countries most responsible for climate change have now suggested that a non-binding deal would be possible. As the problem gets worse and worse, and as the impacts of climate change increase, it is unthinkable that the proposed global policy solution could get weaker.

Federated States of Micronesia is also highlighting that in addition to taking more aggressive action on carbon dioxide, we need to take action on other climate change-causing agents as well. We sometimes forget that carbon dioxide is only half of the climate problem. Well, we cannot deal with a problem this immense by only addressing half of its cause.

We must therefore address warming agents like black carbon, methane, tropospheric ozone and HFCs (hydrofluorocarbons). Again, we must do everything possible, as fast as possible.

The good news is that by addressing some of these other agents along with carbon dioxide, we may see some of the fast results we're looking for. Because these non-CO2 agents are short-lived in the atmosphere, reducing emissions of them and their precursors can reduce warming quickly. This contrasts with carbon dioxide, half of which lasts over 100 years and 20% of which remains in the atmosphere, continuing to cause warming, for over 1000 years.

For example, by reducing black carbon, which remains in the atmosphere for only a few days or weeks, we can gain almost immediate climate benefits. So Federated States of Micronesia has proposed a special Work Program for Rapid Climate Mitigation to address these short-lived forces, along with carbon dioxide. The Rapid Mitigation Program would also strive to implement potential carbon-negative strategies that could

actually reduce the carbon dioxide that has already been emitted and is lingering in the atmosphere.

Doing everything possible also involves thinking creatively about where solutions can be found. For example, just last week, as the climate talks were taking place in Barcelona, the parties of the world's ozone treaty, the Montreal Protocol, were meeting in Egypt and considering a proposal by Federated States of Micronesia to use that treaty to phase down production and consumption of HFCs. Because HFCs are largely a substitute for gases that have been phased out under the Montreal Protocol, that treaty's mechanisms can provide a special expertise to reduce HFCs as well, getting the job done on the ground faster than it would have been done by only reducing emissions under the Kyoto Protocol. Last week over 40 countries signed a resolution calling for addressing HFCs under the Montreal Protocol.

In conclusion, I would like to summarize:

First, from my own observations and from the science coming in from around the world, the impacts of climate change right now are already severe and are still expected only to get worse.

Second, from my own observations and from the news coming in from around the world, the policy proposals to deal with climate change are getting weaker and the increasing delay in implementing solutions will only increase the costs.

Third, to address this problem, we must take action that is comprehensive, rapid, and legally binding.

Comprehensive action means addressing all the causes of climate change and using all the treaties, mechanisms and technologies available.

Rapid action means we need aggressive short-term carbon-dioxide reductions targets as well as long-term targets. It also means we need to achieve rapid climate mitigation by addressing short-lived but potent warming agents. This will reduce warming quickly, forestall potentially imminent tipping points for irreversible and catastrophic climate change and perhaps buy some time for longer-term efforts to succeed.

And I think we all know what legally binding means. It means that failure is not an option. It means that we must do what is in the interest of the human community, not just what looks easiest or least costly from our home country's perspective. It means that we should be bound to each other and to the commitments we recognize are necessary to solve the problem we all face together. We must be allies in the war against climate change, not rivals in drafting the war plan.

The science tells us we need to do more than what is on the table in the negotiations. But a negotiating format is set up for each party to try to achieve its maximum by doing its minimum. To actually solve the climate problem, we must put ourselves in a situation

where we desire to do more than we are doing. We at this table and the other nations of the world must want to do more. We must all want to do more. After all, we are worth it.

Thank you.