



REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS

**Statement to the Opening Plenary,
72nd Marine Environment Protection Committee
International Maritime Organisation
9 April 2018, London**

**The Honorable David Paul
Minister-in-Assistance to the President & Environment Minister**

Ministers, Ambassadors, Colleagues - *Iakwe*, and greetings. I am here to deliver this message from the President of the Republic of Marshall Islands.

In the next days in IMO will determine whether Marshallese children born today will have the chance of a secure and prosperous life or will have to leave the land of their ancestors and set sail across the oceans to an uncertain future.

This is scientific fact. If the shipping sector were a country, it would already be the world's sixth largest climate polluter. By the estimates of this body, shipping emissions are set to grow by as much as 250% when, instead, global emissions must peak by 2020 and rapidly decline if we are to have any hope of staying within the Paris Agreement temperature limits.

To fellow developing countries who are worried about what impact climate action will have on shipping I say this: I doubt that there are many – if any – countries in this room which have a greater economic interest in the outcome of this MEPC than the Marshall Islands, if you consider the importance of the shipping sector as a percentage of our GDP and our almost total reliance on shipping for trade.

So, I speak with considerable credibility when I say that the argument being presented by some that climate action means a negative impact on shipping and trade is completely and utterly false.

The technologies exist now to allow shipping to transition to clean and sustainable growth. Industry has clearly stated it wants to act. And so do shipping customers. It needs a clear policy signal from this body to do so. This is an opportunity to be grasped. One way or another the shipping sector – like all other global sectors – will have to decarbonize. The question is whether to embrace the opportunities or be forced to decarbonize at a later date, more rapidly and in a more expensive and disruptive way.

The text of the draft Initial Strategy on reducing greenhouse gas emissions presented to the MEPC already represents significant compromises on our part. And compromises on the part of all countries in this room. Like others, there are very many things in it we do not like. And things missing from it that we could not even discuss last week.

At the same time, we must all recognize that unless we work with the current text as a package, we risk having no outcome at all. We have all travelled far together. We need to take the final steps. It is time for all those countries who label themselves elsewhere as climate leaders to step up and do what is right.

Economic gains from protecting one sector – or even one industry – in any national economy will be far outweighed by the costs of failing to achieve the Paris Agreement temperature goals. There will be nothing more devastating to global trade than the cost of having to try to adapt to a world that is on average two, three or four degrees warmer. The costs will dwarf any perceived savings. We do not even know if we can adapt to any scenarios over two degrees. No country will be immune.

I say again – any assumption of a trade-off between climate action and sustainable economic growth of shipping is false. And the draft Initial Strategy before us clearly states that disproportionate negative impacts must be identified and addressed before implementing measures are adopted. There is simply no credible reason to hesitate any longer.

We are willing to work with all countries in this room to improve the text. At the same I have to be clear that the the Marshall Islands, home to the second largest flag registry in the world, will very publicly dissociate from an outcome from the MEPC that does not contain an explicit quantified level of ambition consistent with a possibility of achieving the Paris Agreement temperature goals. I will not go home to my children, and my country's children, endorsing an outcome from the IMO that fails to face up to the greatest threat of the century.

Excellencies, colleagues. You in the IMO have previously argued that you should regulate your own greenhouse gas emissions. You must now live up to that responsibility. The moment of truth has come for the IMO. The issue cannot be deferred. Let's take this chance before us to embrace the greatest economic opportunity of the century. Let's work to get this deal done.

Kommol tata, and thank you very much.