CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT

BY

THE HONORABLE JOHNSON TORIBIONG

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU

to the

COP 16/ CMP 6

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Cancun, Mexico

Madame President:

I stand here before you as a Head of State, but I am speaking as one of the Sons of the Pacific. Our livelihood, indeed our very existence, depends upon the oceans. The ebb and flow of the oceans are as much a part of our lives as the air we breathe. But today we stand on the frontlines of climate change. The oceans, which once sustained us, are now threatening to swallow us whole.

While Palau is safe for the time being, the oceans' warming, rise and acidification threaten everyone's existence. The world cannot continue to treat climate change as subject of negotiation. Climate change is not negotiable. It is a crisis. The world must take action immediately to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – which is the very reason we are all here.

As Palau's President, my first duty is to protect the Palauan people. I take that responsibility very seriously; it is why I am here in Cancun. But there is only so much I, or any Palauan, can do. The sad truth is that the countries least responsible for causing climate change are the ones most threatened by it.

The presence of my fellow Pacific Heads of State in this room today is a testament to the threats we and other Small Island Developing States face. Let not our voices fall on deaf ears. The world must heed our cry for collective action to save us for now, and the world in the future.

Madame President:

The stark scientific reality we face is that much damage has already been done to our planet. I have no words to describe my deep concern at the recent findings that sea level rise has taken place disproportionately in the Pacific. But I am an optimist. I believe that human creativity and ingenuity can be refocused to turn the world's economies green and reverse the adverse effects of climate change.

Palau associates itself with the Pacific SIDS and AOSIS statements and endorses the AOSIS position as the sound basis upon which to move forward.

Madame President:

Palau awaits with others a lasting and comprehensive agreement on long-term and fast track financing. I am hopeful that countries will ultimately follow through on their pledges. In the mean time, our needs in the Pacific are dire and immediate.

In Micronesia we have adopted a regional policy known as "GEM", Green Energy Micronesia. This policy reflects the fact that going green is a win/win policy. It provides for a transition from finite fossil fuel to renewable energy.

In Palau, we have begun to harness the potential of solar energy. With the help of international partners such as Japan, the European Union, Italy and Taiwan-Republic of China, we have begun to utilize the sun's power to help light several public buildings and facilities, such as the capitol building, the national hospital, education building, the international airport and our street lights. We have also worked with partners to finance favorable mortgages for green homes.

I thank all our international partners for working closely with us to promote the utilization of green energy in Palau.

Madame President:

Just as climate change is a global challenge so efforts to reverse it must likewise be global in order to be effective. Climate change respects no national borders. No one should be excluded. Taiwan-Republic of China has been one of Palau's most proactive partners in the implementation of our GEM (Green Energy Micronesia) policy. And at the same time, Taiwan, being an island, is also vulnerable to the threats of climate change. We appeal to the conscience of the world to include all important actors - like Taiwan - in these deliberations.

Madame President:

We must reach a responsible, inclusive international agreement before it is too late. Such an agreement must begin with reducing greenhouse gas emissions and must reflect the needs of the world's most vulnerable. Our collective response to climate change cannot be the result of economic and geopolitical tradeoffs. I join AOSIS and our partners to urge all world leaders to take responsible action now.

I thank you, Madame President