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REMARKS BY H. E. ALIK L. ALIK
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Before the

Sixteenth Conference of the Parties
To the
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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President, distinguished participants in this High-level Segment, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the Government and people of the Federated States of Micronesia, I wish to express our gratitude to the Government and people of Mexico for the excellent accommodation and arrangements for these meetings, and for the warm hospitality we have enjoyed at every turn.

In the twenty years of my country's participation in these negotiations, global climate change has not abated – it has quickened. The introduction by mankind of climate-forcing greenhouse gases has not diminished – it increases every year. It becomes ever more difficult to prepare remarks for occasions like this because the same pleas for help, the same calls for action have been uttered over and over and over. And yet, a year after Copenhagen here we stand, well short of the goal we have sought.

The great irony is that as the intergovernmental negotiations threaten to decline into disarray the cause of the concern, human-induced climate change, becomes a blossoming reality as we now experience its destructive consequences. Make no mistake about it: every year my islands are experiencing more and more of the adverse consequences of climate change that we first predicted only twenty years ago.

Twenty years ago it was still possible to question the human contribution to global warming and even to doubt climate change itself. This is probably largely responsible for the economic priority in the debate that was established then and continues to this day. Now, however, there is no longer any doubt and if we in governments continue to deal with climate change merely as a challenge instead of a crisis we are certain to dance around this crisis until it is too late to overcome it.

My country endorses what we call the Fast Action agenda. The Federated States of Micronesia has seen global warming as a crisis – a threat to our very existence - from the moment we entered the debate. As the years dragged on and we began seeing real consequences in our islands and in other parts of the world we took note of the fact that even the most immediate and far-reaching actions to control carbon dioxide alone would not produce results promptly enough to save us. Once carbon dioxide goes into the atmosphere it stays there for hundreds, even thousands of years. Yes, the long-term goal must remain to roll back and limit CO2 emissions, but this effort will span generations before real climate benefits can be realized.

We, guided by some of the world's leading climate scientists, turned to focus on the "other" greenhouse gases and climate-forcing agents – methane, HFCs and black carbon, or "soot," to name a few. All of these are far more powerful climate forcing agents than CO2, but their lifetime in the earth's atmosphere is very short. Their emissions are not currently controlled at all, and if they could be, scientists estimate that as much as half of the climate forcing problem could be controlled and buy the world up to 30 years of time in delaying global warming while we determine how to make deep cuts in fossil fuel emissions and find a path to sustainable growth and development.

We have sought the establishment of a long-term work program within the UNFCCC to move toward bringing under control the "other greenhouse gases" listed in the annex to the Kyoto Protocol.

Also under the work program ways and means of combating "black carbon," or soot should be found. Black carbon, produced largely by smokestack emissions of coal-fired power plants and diesel fuel exhausts, remains in the atmosphere only for days, but brings about warming on the ocean surface and probably influences ocean acidification. Even worse, it is hastening the melting of glaciers and Arctic and Antarctic icepacks by lowering their reflective capacities known as albedo, and by warming their surfaces.

As we anticipated the work programme, we also realized that under the Montreal Protocol the successful efforts to regulate the production and consumption of certain refrigerant gases, aimed at closing the ozone hole, had, as a byproduct, delayed global warming by as much as ten years. We started working to identify similar potential benefits and attention fell on HFCs, a potent greenhouse gas that has been produced as a substitute for some of the gases phased out under the Montreal protocol. As a consequence FSM now has a proposed amendment pending before the Montreal Protocol that would, over time, phase out the production and consumption of HFCs. It is to be hoped that our proposal, which so far has enlisted the support of more than 90 developed and developing countries, can be adopted at the upcoming Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, in June of next year.

Concurrently, we seek the collaborative support of the parties to the UNFCCC to work with the Montreal Protocol in this effort.

President, colleagues,

The Federated States of Micronesia stands firmly in support of the work being done by our AOSIS colleagues and other like-minded delegations at these meetings. We look toward positive and specific outcomes that will lead us to the goal line in South Africa.

The world badly needs the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol and a second period of legally binding commitments by all countries effectively pursuing the goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming and 350 parts per million of CO2 concentration in the atmosphere. The developing world also sorely needs a substantial Adaptation Fund, equitably administered. But on any realistic schedule, before the goal of controlling CO2 can be reached the world will have likely passed one or more tipping points where natural feedbacks begin to make reductions in concentration levels difficult if not impossible. We are already at or close to such points in the case of melting glaciers and Arctic sea ice, and possibly with methane in the Arctic tundra.

That is why the Federated States of Micronesia is focusing on the Fast Action agenda, seeking concentrated and coordinated action under both the UNFCCC and the Montreal Protocol to reduce concentrations of ALL greenhouse gases, especially those with high Global Warming Potential, in the near term.

In closing, President, may I say that we dare to hope for constructive outcomes of this meeting. The future of our islands and our people depends on it.

Thank you.