



**His Excellency Johnson Toribiong
President of the Republic of Palau**

Opening Statement:

**1st Parties to the Nauru Agreement
Presidential Summit
“PNA TUNA: Planning The Way Forward”
25 February 2010 (Thursday)**



Excellencies, High Chief Reklai, High Chief Ibedul, Honorable Delegates, Senators, Governors, Ministers, Diplomatic Corp, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the government and the People of Palau, I extend to you a very warm welcome and to thank you for traveling long distances across several time zones to converge here in Koror to advance our common goal expressed in our Parties to the Nauru Agreement.

The purpose which has drawn us together for the first time in this Presidential Summit is to elevate to the highest level our joint effort to effectively conserve and maximize the benefits to ourselves through proper management and exploitation of one of our most precious God-given resources - our tuna fish resource.

Tuna resource is indeed precious but at the same, if not managed properly, it is susceptible to being exploited to extinction. We must take every effort to conserve and develop a sustainable regional management system for its conservation and exploitation for our benefit and the benefit of generations to come.

In the overall scheme of things we are stewards of our tuna resource.



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One of the problems with fish is that they swim - and in the case of tuna - they are HIGHLY MIGRATORY! Under the Rule of Capture, 'No one will own this highly migratory fish until its captured and reduced to possession'.

But we the Pacific Island States own the fishing grounds, and so we must bring under control access to these fishing grounds. None of us by itself can and on its own can effectively conserve it.

It does not take a village, not one state - it takes the whole region to effectively conserve, properly manage, and exploit our tuna resource in a sustainable manner.

There is strength in unity.

As I said during my recent statement at the United Nations Assembly last September, "we can no longer stand by while foreign vessels illicitly come to our waters to take our greatest resource, our tuna stocks, without regard to their conservation and without regard for adequate compensation to the islands states which rely on this resource". I then referred to our organization for promotional purposes as "OTEC" – Organization of Tuna Export Countries.



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Tuna fishing is part of a multi-billion dollar international industry. It all begins with the access to fishing grounds by fishing vessels, and when tuna is caught it goes through a series of transactions – from handling, packaging, processing, transshipment by air or sea until it ends up on a consumer plate somewhere ready to be enjoyed. Every step in this process is very costly, and the demand for tuna product is great. That is why it is a multi-billion international industry.

But this international industry begins in ground zero – the fishing grounds. That is why we, the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, are committed to claim our fair and equitable share from this industry.

Time has come for us to assert our right to claim our rightful, fair and equitable share from the harvesting of tuna stocks in the fishing grounds under our jurisdiction, and today this first Presidential Summit of Parties to the Nauru Agreement is a significant milestone in the pursuit of our common goal.



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We may come from small Pacific island nations. But let's not forget we are surrounded by the great and resourceful ocean; our Extended Economic Zones (EEZ's) are many times bigger than the size of our Islands.

I understand that from our region 25% to 30% of tuna stocks caught in the Pacific comes from our region. Let us, therefore, renew our commitment to cooperate and work together to the extent possible to effectively conserve and properly manage our tuna resource and to maximize benefits to ourselves.

To the all other participants in this industry, they should be assured that we shall always work with them. No participant or investor in this international industry should end up holding an empty bag. We are and should continue to be partners in this industry.

This Presidential Summit would not have succeeded without the expertise and hard work of the PNA office staff and all other support staff who have worked so hard since last weekend to make this summit a success. And in this regard, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all of them, beginning with the Director and staff from our PNA office in Majuro and my consultants, Mr. Vic Ucherbelau, whom you all know and his support staff including Ms. Nannette Dilyaur Malsol. To all of you, I thank you very much.



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Excellencies and Honorable Delegates, in closing, I thank you very much for traveling long distances to the western edge of the Pacific to deliberate and consider the proposed draft known as the “Koror Declaration” embodying certain minimum guidelines to help lead us toward the realization of our common goal.

I believe that all the efforts and resources expended for this Presidential Summit will generate more benefits to our people.

Finally, we must recognize that we have much more in common than just the subject tuna. We share similar Pacific traditional way of life, cultural values and fraternal relations, which are our legacies from our seafaring ancestors who sailed across the same ocean in search of better life. And these shared values make PNA a natural organization for us all.

I thank you all, and May God bless all of us.