



REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

**AGRICULTURE - STATEMENT BY
THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS MISSION
TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
DURING THE 16th MEETING OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT NEW YORK, 6 MAY 2008**

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Chair,

My nation, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, wishes to align itself with the statement of Grenada on behalf of AOSIS, and Tonga on behalf of the Pacific SIDS.

My nation's primary national agricultural export product, copra oil from our coconuts, has for many years served as the economic foundation of our rural communities. However, due to external market factors and high transport costs, this crop requires a substantial – and draining – economic subsidy from our already limited national budget.

We are particularly pleased regarding positive technical development, research, and pilot projects regarding the use of this crop as an alternative energy biofuel. Copra biofuel, for localized use, has the potential to greatly influence the economic development of our outer island communities. Increasing the uses of – and localized demand for - copra oil has the potential to reinvigorate our rural outer island communities. Utilization of copra oil for affordable, renewable energy also addresses additional needs for our outer island communities, many of which lack access to energy. We strongly welcome donor partnership and the sharing of technical expertise in this exciting initiative.

Chair,

Regarding access to international markets and agricultural trade, we must note the importance of commercial fisheries to many small island developing states. With very limited land resources, fisheries represent the greatest opportunity for participation in the global food market. In the Pacific region, SIDS only realize perhaps as little as 5% of a regional tuna market estimated at \$5 billion – almost all of this comes from fees from foreign fishing licenses. This large-scale market, on our very doorstep, is almost closed to our meaningful participation. We strongly call upon member states, in their policymaking, to recognize the technical and financial barriers which prevent my nation's market access – international partnerships and joint ventures with distant fishing or market nations are possible, including strengthening training for our nationals as workers on foreign vessels, as well as investment and assistance for national marine industries and fleets.

As land is often a scarce resource, rural and traditional communities in many SIDS depend closely upon subsistence fishing for basic food security. The Republic of the Marshall Islands to highlight the negative development impacts of certain commercial fishing practices, which produce large amounts of by-catch and discarded fish. These discarded fish often contain species used by our subsistence communities. We urge member states to more fully recognize the development and food security barriers created by by-catch, and to adopt more sensitive commercial fishing practices.

Thank you.