

Address by Speaker Wesley Simina at 141st IPU General Assembly

Thank you, President of the Assembly; distinguished IPU officials; Fellow Presiding Officers and Parliamentarians; Ladies and Gentlemen. I bring warm greetings from the people of the Federated States of Micronesia.

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. I remember this same IPU assembly celebrating these words last year at the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I myself was born, grew up and was educated, then spent my adult life in a world that took those words for granted. This is so because we, in Micronesia, have enjoyed a strong and stable constitutional democracy since our Nation was founded 40 years ago.

Yet, our global legal order, as created under the rule of international law, is under assault and is being threatened by the revival of old political passions for populism, unilateralism, nationalism, even self-determination, to name a few of the emerging political rallying cries of today. As we look around the world these days one cannot help but feel that we are not only moving away from a world where we may not be able to live up to that ideal, but that we have begun to question that very ideal itself.

We now see a world of walls going up, of neighbors attacking neighbors, of whole ethnic groups pushed out of borders, of countries exiting from organizations to preserve their rights to control borders and for local political interests. At times like these, it is good to remember what is the bedrock of our belief.

It is international law! Without international law there would be no need for this organization. There would be no need for the UN. There would be no need for countries around the world to come together to deal with common problems of our world. It will be a world like the bad old days: when might made right, when the big and strong colonized and oppressed the small, and small countries had only the duty to remain silent.

Coming from one of the smallest of countries I am keenly aware of this. That Micronesia has a chance to even address this assembly is a tribute to the Rule of Law and as it concerns us today, International Law.

Let us be blunt: big powerful countries do not need international law – they can throw their weight around like bulls in a porcelain shop; we the small countries do. That was the way of things for millennia. Only since 1945, when the world decided it was a good idea to build a world based on law did a country like mine have the chance to be heard. And, our concerns as a small island developing state are being addressed.

That is why I am and we are passionate about international law. Like many of you, I was in the room when the Paris Agreement was adopted, and I viewed that agreement as essential to the survival of many of us small island states. Without international law and legal order, we the small states would not have the chance of advancing our common interests in forums like the IPU and the United Nations. Another exemplary result of our international legal order.

I know the sea around us, which makes up $\frac{3}{4}$ of the earth, is in danger of being overfished and asphyxiated. It is our life's resources so we will work hard to come up with a legal regime to protect it. An international regime, the UNCLOS, has already started that process lawfully, and it has given us the sovereign control over millions of square kilometers of the western Pacific Ocean, something that was unthinkable just a few decades ago.

International Law: it is not perfect but if you can find a better way for nations to deal with each other, let me know. For me, I have not found any. To me, this is the only peaceful and practical way to go, with and by international law and the global legal order.

In closing, I wish to challenge us with a pledge, one that would give our IPU some means to preserve and strengthen, and promote respect for international law and the global legal order. Micronesia is small and poor. But we see this as a political imperative. So my delegation will go back home and request our Congress to appropriate up to \$130,000 to contribute to projects or programs, as IPU sees fit, that would do just that. A small amount indeed but we feel like doing something. I hope it would be of some use to our theme. As you will note the amount also reflect the 130th Anniversary of IPU. I ask all of us, most especially our fellow small developing island nations and other small countries to join in this effort. It is for our international political relevance and equality, perhaps political survival as well.

Again, Congratulations IPU. Thank you very much.