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President

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Calling for a national commitment to reduce pressure on the reef, promote locally produced foods, prioritize human wellness and healthful nutrition, and support a local pelagic fishery by serving pelagic fish in all government food service systems and at government and quasi-government events and functions

WHEREAS, the coastal marine resources central to our lives, culture, wellbeing, and livelihoods are increasingly documented to be experiencing decline, primarily due to human-induced pressures; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown that tuna and tuna-like pelagic fish species are more resilient to fishing pressure due to their higher productivity and more extensive stocks compared to reef fish, that Palau's reef fish stocks have declined over the last decades, and that Palau is likely to continue to see further decline in coral reef fish as demand for reef fish from local and increasing visitor populations is projected to continually increase; and

WHEREAS, Palau is experiencing high rates of obesity (46.2%), overweight (30.8%), raised total cholesterol (25.8%), diabetes (20.4%), and other non-communicable diseases primarily due to the replacement of traditional foods such as root crops and fish with imported meats and canned foods that are cheap and nutritionally poor; and

WHEREAS, Palau has adopted the School Wellness and Nutrition Standards Act of 2017, mandating the Ministry of Education to promulgate regulations to establish nutritional standards for food in schools consistent with dietary guidelines, as established by Ministry of Health, to encourage consumption of necessary nutrients; and

WHEREAS, Palau tuna stocks are currently fished by foreign fishing fleets and exported from Palau for food security in other countries. Therefore, in an attempt to address our own food security issues and shift the benefit of our pelagic resources to our local communities, Palau adopted the Palau National Marine Sanctuary Act of 2015 to support its aspiration of developing a domestic tuna fishery that will ensure communities benefit from Palau's pelagic resources through mechanisms supporting local fisheries and addressing domestic food security; and



WHEREAS, Palau continues to work with its local, regional, and international partners to develop alternative pelagic fisheries to support fishing livelihoods and food security through the expansion of a nationwide anchored Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) Network to help improve the feasibility of small-scale pelagic fishing; and

WHEREAS, “*Choose Pelagics*” is a collaborative initiative and cross-sectoral effort aimed at creating incentives to promote the development of a sustainable domestic pelagic fishery, increase and support the number of Palauan artisanal pelagic fishers, improve food security and the availability of nutritionally beneficial protein for the local population, increase local fishing incomes and improve livelihoods, promote domestic economic growth, protect our environment and coastal marine resources, and foster the retention of traditional and cultural knowledge and practices;

NOW THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me under the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Palau, I, Tommy E. Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, hereby direct as follows:

- (1) All government food service systems, and government or quasi-government events and functions serving fish should always “*Choose Pelagics.*” Fish served in any government food service system, or at any government or quasi-government function or event, should be tuna or other pelagic fish caught by Palauan artisanal pelagic fishers. Reef fish should not be served at any government event or in any government food service system unless there are no locally-sourced pelagic fish available.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal this 1st day of May 2019 at the National Capitol in Ngerulmud, Republic of Palau.



Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr.
President of the Republic of Palau