

# Welcome Message



My Dear Fellow Palauans and Distinguished Guests,

Welcome to the installation of our young Republic's 11<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Government. We are honored by your presence to witness this historic event for our nation.

We thank the Almighty for continuing to bless Palau, permitting us to gather today, when so many of our friends and families around the world are on lockdown. We know they are with us in spirit and we made it possible for them to join us virtually through the live broadcast of today's ceremony. We look forward to being together in person again soon.

Today, I humbly accept the great honor and privilege to serve as your President, and together, we begin the next chapter in the long story of our nation. One that is focused on people; advocating for policies that, first and foremost, benefit the Palauan people - *A Kot a Rechad er Belau*.

Although today is a day to celebrate, it is hard to ignore the urgent challenges we face, particularly those caused by the ongoing pandemic. While those challenges may be daunting, we should see them as opportunities: *opportunities* to improve the quality of life for all Palauans; *opportunities* to ensure that all Palauans are motivated to pursue their happiness; and *opportunities* to empower the Palauan people to be the driving force behind the continued development and progress of our country.

So, at this commencement of our new government, it is with great excitement that I will also be sharing with you a road map towards our vision that takes advantage of these opportunities to put the best welfare of the Palauan people first:

- Advancing robust health and social services to ensure that our people, no matter how young or how old, are productive and active members of our society;
- Dedicating focus on the development, promotion, and protection of our human resource to attain a capable and productive Palauan labor force;
- Creating new and equitable economic opportunities for Palauans so they can improve their standard of living;
- Laying a strong foundation for tomorrow's Palau by investing in our children's education, ensuring that our nation will continue to thrive for generations to come;
- Strengthening our national identity by honoring Palau's traditional heritage and respect for peace, freedom, and justice;
- Protecting our natural environment and continuing to be a world leader in the fight against climate change to ensure that our livelihoods and homes are safeguarded; and
- Standing in unity with our democratic friends to seek a Free and Open Indo-Pacific Region to ensure a more secure and safe Palau.

This inaugural occasion is about more than just the installation of our new government. It's about you, our fellow Palauans. Thank you for commemorating today with us; your presence makes all the difference. We hope you will be encouraged by today's inauguration ceremony to join us in affirmation, IT'S TIME! Together, with confidence in ourselves, pride in our heritage, and hope for our future, it's time we take the first steps toward the realization of *A Kot a Rechad er Belau*.

God Bless Us All and our Republic of Palau.

Surangel S. Whipps, Jr.