

We welcome the collaborative spirit in which the national VNR report was prepared.

We also thank the government of Palau for including civil society in the government delegation, which shall serve as a good example for others.

The High Level Political Forum, including the VNRs are not the end of dialogue, but rather the beginning. We hope that the issues addressed highlighted here will be taken up at the national level and discussed further in the spirit of partnership and collaboration.

Civil society of Palau stands ready to work with the government of Palau to achieve and realize the SDGs for all, including marginalized communities. But we can't do this alone. Government has an important role in supporting us to fulfil our role. We are calling on the Government to commit to supporting the CSO umbrella (Belau Association of NGOs) around the implementation of SDGs. In particular, we would like to see a coordinated mechanism for funding CSO engagement in the national SDG framework, to streamline consultation and provide funding and other support. Civil society should be consulted throughout the design and establishment of this mechanism, through Belau. Implementation of the SDGs in Palau should be financed not only by donors, but also through domestic resource mobilization.

Our question to you today is what your plans are to ensure civil society is effectively engaged once we return home? Will civil society be engaged from the planning to design, implementation and monitoring?

Statement #2

While we welcome Palau's existing policy for mainstreaming youth and children with disabilities in education, the policy is not adequately funded. We note that more resourcing is needed to ensure the inclusiveness of aspects of the education system such as the curriculum, teacher training, school infrastructure and support services like sign language interpretation.

Access to education for children with disabilities also depends on access to appropriate, quality assistive products. Currently, in Palau, children with disabilities must either buy their own devices or rely on private donations. We call on the Palau government to fund the provision of adequate, quality assistive products for all children and youth with disabilities.

Will the Palau government commit to addressing these funding gaps for children and youth with disabilities in the near future?