

Rede von Selina Neirok Leem am 2.Juli 2017 in Hamburg auf einer Protestveranstaltung gegen den dort stattfindenden G-20 Gipfels

lakwe Hamburg,

So, does anybody here know where the Marshall Islands is? Or have heard of it? Or seen it on the map?

Ich heiÙe Selina Neirok Leem. Ich komme aus Marshall Inseln. And that's just about the only few German I remember but we, Marshallese, along with our other Pacific sister nations are all the way down in the Pacific Ocean. The Marshall Islands is located half-way between Hawai'i and Australia. We do not have much land but we like to call ourselves a large ocean nation. Because we have lots and lots of water and that is our ocean. And unfortunately, it has become frequent to see the waves from the ocean crashing into our coconut, breadfruit, and pandanus trees, the little local plants that we have to live off. Either unearthing it from the fragile ground it lives in or killing it due to excessive salenation. We have watched our houses and seawalls, that we are constantly reconstructing crashed into and crumpled down almost hopelessly onto a shore no longer crawling with crabs but awashed by angry waves.

It is scary. It is scary when you realise you only have one road on that one single island. It is scary when you realise that the highest point on the island is a bridge, except now we think it is our huge amount of waste piling on top of each other, and that is your only means of escape. I remember that fear as a young child listening to my grandpa telling my grandma to take us to a hotel that was 'far' from the water and keep us safe. I protested. "No way was I going to leave my jimma to face the waves alone. They will take him away and if they do, then they will take me too."

That is a feeling one never forgets and it is a feeling that is replayed upon many from small island nations. It is said in 2050, my islands and other island nations will be gone under the water. However, we refuse to accept this prediction. I am here on behalf of my home and my people to say to all here in Hamburg, to the G20 leaders and nations, we stay. And you are going to make sure of that. It is unjust that we leave first. We want global justice. And that means, my home, our home stays. We are trying and doing our part. We expect you all to do your part as well. We all cohabit and share the same planet. What happens here affects those of us down there in the Pacific, places you have never even heard of or knew existed. Places where people live, actually live in. There are so many overwhelmed feelings of frustration, fear, amongst those of us in our island nations but also fierce determination that we will make it through.

Our land is sacred. It is a gift bestowed upon us from our forefathers. That is our people buried there. That is the stories of our ways of being whispered upon our ears late in the night. That is our traditional medicines. That is our coconut, breadfruit, and pandanus trees. That is the laughter of childhood, cry of growing up, and seriousness of adulthood. It is the relaxed vibration all across the islands. That is so many things of us, our richness. We are here to stay. You and me have a responsibility to keep it where it is.

We, Pacific islanders, have continued to be the loudest voice calling for resilience and resistance in the face of our most important test to date: overcoming the global effects of climate change and saving our world. 99% of our outer islands, we have solarized. We have strong, committed leaders

in our government and our youth make impacts wherever they go to make the world aware of the dire consequences of climate change. We. Are. Doing. Something. It is not just us in the islands who are at stake. It is the entire world. It is not just the rising of the seas. It is the loss of food, water, home, and threats to the security of all our nations. There are over tens of millions of people who will have to evacuate to another foreign place that, but of course, only if the host countries are willing to deal with the in-flow of climate change refugees. The Marshall Islands is not just fighting for our country. We are fighting for the rest of the world – WE ARE FIGHTING FOR YOU. Every single one of us here have a duty, a responsibility to take care of our earth and ensure we not only do the right thing, but hold our leaders accountable and ensure they also do the right thing. The G20 leaders all have duties that need to be carried out. Germany, leading this summit, must be decisive and ensure swift actions so that by 2030 at the latest, we have moved away from coal burning emissions and converted to more sustainable and environmentally friendly means of production, travel, and development.

So, let us all stand firm together in resilience and strength to ensure we move forward. We are here to stay and we will continue fighting. We will stand firm on aiming and pushing for 1.5. I, we, count on all of you!

Komool tata elap. Thank you very much!