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### **The Rising Nations Initiative: *Forging the Future of Pacific Atoll Island Countries***

President David Kabua joined Prime Minister Kausea Natano of Tuvalu in co-hosting the High-level launch of the Rising Nations Initiative within the margins of the 77th United Nations General Assembly. The Rising Nations Initiative (RNI) is led by three Pacific atoll island countries: Tuvalu, Marshall Islands and Kiribati in advancing efforts towards protecting, preserving and safeguarding their statehood, sovereignty, rights and heritage from climate change and sea-level rise. The RNI puts forth three pillars of action which are critical in achieving its goals and objectives: Knowledge, Partnership and Advocacy.

President Kabua explained how the three pillars are a valuable stepping stone. President Kabua further expanded on the three pillars:

“Knowledge-sharing as a pillar can help to expand important people-to-people connections in our local communities. We can’t leave climate discussions only to distant plenary halls, and need to strengthen local engagement with these very difficult issues. And as we further develop adaptation responses to reduce exposure to climate impacts, it is only natural that we are learning from our fellow atoll nations, and sharing our own experience. Finally, advocacy and coordination on climate change is vital as a shared endeavor between atoll nations.”

President Kabua shared his views on the effects of climate change and sea-level rise in the context of the Marshallese people and that of the RNI. The Marshallese people have no high lands to retreat to. Climate change and sea-level rise will be the end of “our” land and will impact the cultural and personal identity of the Marshallese people. “And for Marshallese, our land is our cultural and personal identity, in ways which the English language cannot fully express,” stated President Kabua.

The RNI brought together Heads of States and high-level representatives from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Morocco, Germany, Denmark, South Korea, and Canada, the UNFCCC, UNSG’s office as well as key donor/development partners including USAID, World Bank and UNDP.