

Interview of First Lady Debbie Remengesau, of the Republic of Palau

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Question: To begin with, could you to give us some idea of what Palau's circumstances are like, given that when visitors come to your nation they are asked to sign the Palau Pledge?

Thank you for asking. The Palau Pledge is an initiative that started with the Palau children. We had a campaign with our children in which we asked them, How do you want our visitors to behave when they are visiting Palau? Some students sent us letters. Some drew pictures, such as one of person standing on a coral reef with a sign that said, No. Some wrote letters that said, We want them to come and be kind to our island and respect our ocean because our ocean is where we get our fish; our ocean is where we get our food. We received simple letters like that. That's how the Palau Pledge became an initiative. We thought it would help educate our visitors and would be a reminder to the people of Palau that our ocean is our father and our land is our mother.

Question: Is global warming causing serious problems in Palau?

We are very much affected by global warming, by climate change. We are working so hard, our president is working so hard. We are trying to save our island. We are doing clean-ups every month. We have

groups of local volunteers, students, who are cleaning our beaches, protecting our coastline. They dive, go snorkeling, to pick up cans and bottles, string and other trash.

Question: You and your husband were among the first significant national figures that Rev. Moon and Mrs. Moon met outside of Korea. Could you tell us how you recall your experiences with them?

We were inspired by the work that Father Moon and Mrs. Moon were doing and are still doing until now. We are inspired by the environment they've created to give us hope, to give everyone hope to live a better life in the future in peace, to love and to respect one another. That's the basic rule of life -- to respect, to love your neighbor, to love yourself, to be kind. We were inspired by that. In fact what they were doing is part of our culture. The basic rule of our culture is to be humble, to be very respectful to your elders, to your father and mother, to respect even your children.



Question: I wonder if you have some sense of what it must be like for Mrs. Moon, now in her seventies, to continuing their work on her own.

I admire her for continuing her husband's legacy and the love in her heart toward all the people of different races. I have been working behind my husband throughout the years that he has been a public servant. I can understand how Mother Moon must be feeling now with all the conflicts and challenges we are facing and her courage in trying to make a better world for everyone, living in peace and harmony. I feel she is a very powerful woman. In my country, women are powerful also, but they work behind the scenes. They are not out there, on the front line. We are behind our presidents or behind our senators and we influence them on what can be done to make a better life or a better environment for our people. I see her as a prominent woman leader. In Palau, she would be one of our matriarchs.

Question: You traveled a long distance and these conferences can be intense.

I haven't attended the conferences in a while. I'm back after many years. But if I had the time to attend every conference the federation hosts, I would, because I agree with the direction that Mother Moon is going, for everybody. I believe in her vision.

Question: I meant to say that as a first lady, you work very hard.

It's kind of you to say that, but I am proud to be a mother and grandmother rather than a first lady. That's my number one, most important role my family -- my children and my children's children. But I'm doing my best to help my country and I'm doing my best to help my husband. That is one of the biggest responsibilities that I have to fulfill.