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June 16, 2003

Workshop on Coral Reefs, Climate, and Coral Bleaching Turtle Bay Resort Honolulu, Hawaii

Dear Friends:

Aloha. I am pleased to have this opportunity to welcome you to Hawaii. I wish to express my thanks to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of the Interior for their foresight and commitment in organizing this Workshop on behalf of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. I also extend my thanks to all of you, the participants, for attending. Your insights on the development of innovative science and management partnerships, you will provide the framework to preserve our coral reef ecosystems in the face of climate change.

You have picked, in my opinion, the perfect venue for this Workshop. Hawaii and her Pacific Island neighbors sit in the heartbeat of the Earth's climate system and our lives are shaped by the intricate choreography between the Pacific Ocean and the atmosphere that we know as El Niño. Here, El Niño and its sister, La Niña, bring us shifts in tropical cyclone patterns, droughts, floods, and changes in ocean temperatures and sea level that dictate in large measure health and safety of our coastal communities and their coral reefs and fisheries.

We in Hawaii are also the stewards of one of the most significant coral reef ecosystems in the world; the coral reefs of the Northwest Hawaiian Islands represent nearly 70 percent of the coral reefs in U.S. waters, and are home to a diverse and unique assemblage of fish, invertebrates, birds, sea turtles, marine mammals, and other species found nowhere else on earth.

We are also fortunate to have a wealth of scientific and management expertise that we have slowly and painstakingly cultivated over the course of decades. Our programs, built on the foundation of local expertise supported by federal funding I was fortunate to secure through the appropriations process, have created the template for national programs on coral reef research and management. Notable

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examples of this are the Hawaii Coral Reef Initiative and the All Islands Initiative, whose work has fueled my push for a national Coral Reef Conservation Act.

Moreover, our local experts have also participated in interdisciplinary research on a national scale. The merits of such efforts have been recognized by the highest levels of government leadership, which has led to the adoption of projects I have supported in the Congress. One such effort that I am proud to have played a role in was the Tropical Ocean-Global Atmosphere program started in the 1980s. This program has had a profound impact in understanding of weather phenomena, it developed our current capacity to predict the onset of El Niño events up to a year in advance, as well as inspired the U.S. Global Change Research Program Act of 1990. Thus, it is fitting for this Workshop to be held in Hawaii, where foresighted members of our island community have been hard at work to develop scientific frameworks for understanding both patterns of weather and the effects of weather on ocean and human resources. Here, in our islands, we appreciate both the rich biodiversity of coral reef ecosystems and the commitment to research and science necessary to manage these ecosystems sustainably so that generations to come will be able to enjoy and benefit from them.

Against the backdrop of Hawaii's coral reefs, this Workshop will be the first major effort of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force in the climate change and coral bleaching arena. While Task Force efforts are focused on the U.S., we are equally committed to working with our partners throughout the Pacific and the world in implementing an international coral reef initiative. I am delighted that so many of our international colleagues are represented at this Workshop, and would like to extend a special mahalo for traveling such great distances.

You have set an ambitious agenda this week, and I wish you the best in your deliberations. Each of the sessions outlined in your agenda promises to be both informative and lively. I am particularly interested in seeing the results of your shared efforts to facilitate the development of an effective partnership between scientists and resource managers working together to preserve the world's critical coral reef ecosystems.

As you move forward, I ask that you remember how important the impacts of climate change are on all islands and low-lying coastal communities. The communities of the Pacific, Caribbean and Indian Oceans are considered among the

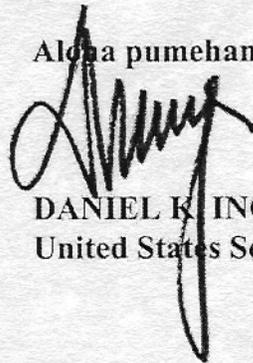
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most vulnerable because our economies are so dependent on climate-sensitive resources and industries. Building resilience in the face of climate variability and change is a matter of long-term development and security for us.

Although I cannot be with you this week, I remain committed to working with you to support the monitoring, research, assessment, management, and education programs needed to both understand the nature and consequences of climate variability and change for the U.S.

Mahalo nui loa for your work, I look forward to seeing the fruits of your labor!

Aloha pumehana,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Inouye', with a long vertical stroke extending downwards from the end of the signature.

DANIEL K. INOUYE
United States Senator