



## **Johnson Toribiong, President of the Republic of Palau to Receive the Prestigious Ocean Heritage Award**

New York, NY September 24, 2010 --([PR.com](http://PR.com))-- On September 25, 2010, in New York City, Johnson Toribiong, President of the Republic of Palau, will be presented with the prestigious Ocean Heritage Award by the [Shark Research Institute](http://SharkResearchInstitute.com) for creating the entire EEZ of Palau – 237,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean – as the world’s first shark sanctuary.

In his historic speech at the United Nations General Assembly a year earlier on September 25, 2009, President Toribiong called for an end to the pillage of the seas. He urged the General Assembly to listen to the voice of science, and urged an ocean conservation ethic for a healthy planet.

Shark populations around the world are crashing; some species such as scalloped hammerhead sharks have declined up to 98% according to fisheries surveys. Approximately 73 million sharks are slaughtered each year for the shark fin trade, primarily as an ingredient in shark fin soup.

Sharks are being killed faster than they can reproduce. All shark species grow slowly (some species take 25 to 50 years to reach maturity) and produce few young, which makes them extremely slow to recover from over-exploitation. Shark populations generally consist of 10 percent sexually mature adults, 90 percent juveniles. The larger fins of the adults have more value in the sharkfin trade; thus the breeding populations are most at risk.

At the United Nations, President Toribiong called for a global ban on shark-finning. “The need to protect sharks outweighs the need to enjoy a bowl of soup,” he said. “These creatures are being slaughtered and are at the brink of extinction unless we take positive action to protect them.” When asked what he wanted other world leaders to do, President Toribiong said, “Simply follow suit.”

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reports that of more than 590 shark species assessed, 21 percent are threatened with extinction, while another 18 percent are near-threatened. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that more than half of highly migratory sharks are depleted or over-exploited.

Sharks as top predators in the sea are critical to maintaining the health of the ocean ecosystem, – the life support system of our planet. “If we take away the top of the ocean food chain – the sharks - the whole system will break down,” said Dr. Sylvia Earle, Honorary President of the Shark Research Institute.

The Republic of Palau is a small island nation, but it chose a wise and visionary giant as its president. The Shark Research Institute honors President Toribiong for his leadership as a steward of the world ocean.

The previous recipient of the Shark Research Institute’s Ocean Heritage Award was Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, president of the Philippines, in recognition of her decades of efforts to protect sharks and the ocean ecosystem as the foundation for a stable, productive and sustainable society. She made unprecedented strides to protect marine resources throughout South Asia’s Coral Triangle, creating and



expanding marine parks, personally funding marine conservation projects, and hosting marine conservation symposiums in the Asia Pacific region.

###



**Contact Information:**

Shark Research Institute

Marie Levine

609.921.3522

[Contact via Email](#)

sharks.org

**Online Version of Press Release:**

<https://www.pr.com/press-release/264693>

