

Statement by Hon. Mr. Phillip Muller
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Republic of the Marshall Islands

UN High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament
26 September 2013

Chair.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands has a unique and compelling reason to urge greater global progress on nuclear disarmament.

The Marshall Islands, during its time as a UN Trust Territory, experienced 67 large-scale tests of nuclear weapons. At the time of testing, and at every possible occasion in the intervening years, the Marshall Islands has informed UN members of the devastating impacts of these tests – of the deliberate use of our people as unwilling scientific experiments, of ongoing health impacts inherited through generations, of our displaced populations who still live in exile or who were resettled under unsafe circumstances, and then had to be removed. Even today, science remains a moving target and our exiled local communities are still struggling with resettlement.

Chair.

These tests were conducted with the explicit authorization of UN members in Trusteeship Resolutions 1082 – adopted in 1954 – and 1493 – adopted in 1956. At that time, the UN did not honor petitions by Marshallese leaders to halt testing. As we – the United Nations – map a global future of nuclear disarmament, the past legacy of nuclear activities can no longer be ignored, and the fiduciary responsibility to address these impacts – by both the UN and our former administrator, the United States – should be acknowledged. No people, and no nation, should have to bear the burden of the Marshallese.

But this meeting today is not about the Marshall Islands. Perhaps we have one of the most important stories to tell regarding the need to avert the use of nuclear weapons, and a compelling story to spur greater efforts for nuclear disarmament. It should be our collective goal as the United Nations to not only stop the spread of nuclear weapons, but also to pursue the peace and security of a world without them. Further, the Republic of the Marshall Islands has recently ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and urges other member states to work towards bringing this important agreement into force.

Chair.

Further, the Marshall Islands urges all NPT members to achieve the treaty's obligations, and we remain concerned over possible efforts by members in testing or assembling weapons. We seek resolution of these issues through a means which ensures a more safe and secure world, and ensures compliance with the agreement. This is not an issue of bloc politics, it is an issue of collective security.

The Marshall Islands is not the only nation in the Pacific to be touched by the devastation of nuclear weapon testing. The support of the Republic of the Marshall Islands for a nuclear-free Pacific has long been clouded by other treaty obligations, and we are encouraged that the United States has given a new

perspective on the Rarotonga treaty. We express again our eventual aspirations to join with our Pacific neighbors in supporting a Pacific free of nuclear weapons in a manner consistent with international security.

Chair.

Disarmament comes with political will – and we affirm and welcome bilateral progress in this regard, including between the United States and Russia. We urge all nuclear weapons states to intensify efforts to address their responsibilities in moving towards an effective and secure disarmament.

The Marshallese people should be the very first group to alert the United Nations to our deeper purpose – that no nation and people should ever have to bear witness to the burden of exposure to the devastating impacts of nuclear weapons. The UN cannot – and must not – repeat such mistakes; we must rise to take on the challenge of international courage.