



REPUBLIC OF PALAU

General Debate

Statement to the Ninth Review Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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**Delivered by H.E. Dr. Caleb Otto,
Permanent Representative of Palau to the United Nations**

Good morning Excellences and Colleagues.

Good morning to you, President, and thank you for giving me the floor.

My delegation wishes to join others in expressing our deepest sympathy and condolences to the government and people of Nepal for the great suffering they are experiencing due to the tragic loss of lives from the devastating earthquake.

Palau wishes to congratulate H.E. Ambassador Farouke for her election as the President of the Ninth Review Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on the NPT. May we also extend our congratulations to all members of the Bureau. We wish you success and pledge to all of you the support and cooperation of my delegation.

Mr. President,

In this 70th anniversary year of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, let us all redouble our efforts to outlaw and eliminate these worst weapons of terror.

Palau is proud to be the first nation in the world to have adopted a constitution banning nuclear weapons. As a Pacific Island nation, we have a particular interest in realizing a nuclear-weapon-free world, as our region has experienced the catastrophic and ongoing

humanitarian consequences of more than 300 nuclear test explosions conducted over the course of five decades.

We stand in solidarity with the Republic of the Marshall Islands in its legal proceedings before the International Court of Justice aimed at compelling the nuclear-armed states to fulfill, at long last, their legal obligation to disarm. Forty-five years after the entry into force of the NPT, it is unacceptable that more than 15,000 nuclear weapons remain in the world, threatening human survival and the fragile ecosystems of our precious planet. Even today, Palau, is within a striking distance of nuclear warheads from an unfriendly nation.

Mr. President,

It is clear that the NPT faces major challenges. Whilst it has been largely successful in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to new states, very little has been achieved with respect to the treaty's disarmament obligations. It is of deep concern that all five NPT nuclear-weapon states continue to invest heavily in programs to upgrade and modernize their nuclear arsenals.

Against this backdrop, three major conferences have been convened to examine the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and build global support for a treaty banning them completely. We commend the Norwegian, Mexican and Austrian governments for hosting these important conferences, which have successfully reframed the discourse on nuclear weapons to focus on their harmful effects on human beings.

Palau fully endorses the Pledge delivered at the Vienna conference in December last year to launch a diplomatic process to negotiate and adopt a nuclear weapon ban treaty. This would fill the gaps in existing international law and help advance nuclear disarmament. Negotiations should begin in time for the 70th anniversaries of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. We urge all states to endorse this important Pledge.

Nuclear weapons are the deadliest of all weapons of mass destruction, yet they are the only ones not yet outlawed. Palau supports the proposal by the New Agenda Coalition to devote substantial time at this Review Conference, in Main Committee 1, to discussing options for effective measures to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. We cannot afford to delay any longer the task of launching treaty negotiations; 2015 must be a year of action.

A nuclear weapon ban treaty would complement the NPT and other related treaties, including the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the various regional nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, including the South Pacific nuclear-free-zone Treaty of Rarotonga. The negotiations should proceed even if the nuclear-armed states and some of their nuclear-dependent allies refuse to participate. It is important to establish a clear legal norm against the use and possession of these weapons.

Palau supports a negotiating process that is open to all states and blockable by none. We believe that a process similar to the ones that led to the successful adoption of the Mine

Ban Treaty and Convention on Cluster Munitions would be the most likely to achieve our desired result. We stand ready to join such negotiations this year. We are determined to ensure that no one else ever suffers from the horrendous effects of these weapons.

Mr. President,

Palau considers the banning of nuclear weapons to be an essential aspect of our broader struggle to end violence; to promote harmony and friendship among the peoples of the world; to achieve justice and respect for human rights; and to ensure a safe, clean and healthy environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

Thank you for your kind attention.