



REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Statement by H.E. Mr. Alfred Capelle, Permanent Representative

**At the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties
to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**

5 May 2005

Thank you, Mr. President.

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. We associate ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum group earlier this week. As a region of the world where three global powers have tested nuclear weapons, I believe our island nations have a unique and credible voice on the importance and urgency of non-proliferation.

Mr. President,

At the outset, my delegation would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the 2005 Review Conference. We are hopeful that with your dedication and skills, this Conference will have a successful outcome. Our small delegation stands ready to participate and contribute towards a successful and substantive outcome.

The Marshall Islands has actively participated in the last two Review Conferences. Both Conferences concluded on an optimistic note and renewed hopes for more productive efforts in implementing the provisions of the NPT.

Mr. President,

My delegation shares the views expressed by the Director-General of the IAEA, Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, that the core of the NPT can be summed up in two words: "security and development". Security for all by reducing and ultimately eliminating the nuclear threat, and development for all through advanced technology. My delegation acknowledges both the development priorities and security concerns of States parties. I would like to expand on this notion somewhat, however, by emphasizing issues of human rights. For most people in the world, security means healthy land, resources and body – not the presence of weapons. Global leaders do not have the right to take the security of others away so they can feel more secure themselves.

More than any other nation in the world, the Marshall Islands understands what nuclear war means. We experienced nuclear war in our country sixty-seven times – more radiation was released in the Marshall Islands than any other location on this planet. Needless to say, we are still suffering from the adverse consequences of nuclear weapons testing in the name of global security.

Non-proliferation of weapons in the world is a critical goal of our nation because the non-proliferation of weapons also means the non-proliferation of the illness, forced relocation, environmental degradation, and profound disturbances of social, cultural, economic, and political systems. Unfortunately, we know this in the Marshall Islands because of our first-hand experiences with the effects of nuclear weapons. The nuclear era has affected us so profoundly in the Marshall Islands that it has even affected our language: our people had to develop new words after the atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons because we did not have words in our language to describe the gross abnormalities in our environment, our animals, and our bodies that began to appear after our exposure to radiation. Mr. President, the Marshall Islands would not wish this same fate on any other nations or peoples, this is why as a nation we have devoted ourselves to nuclear non-proliferation.

Mr. President,

My delegation calls on the United Nations to address the damage in its Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) from when the U.N. administrator detonated nuclear weapons. The termination of the trust territory relationship that my country once had with this austere body was based on the former administrator's reports that the damages and injuries from the testing program were minor, and limited in scope. We now know from declassified documents that this is not the case, and we urge this Conference to recommend to our former administrator that it fully address all damages and injuries resulting from the sixty-seven atmospheric atomic and thermonuclear weapons detonated on our islands. My delegation will push strongly for the inclusion of such language in the final report of this Conference.

The Marshall Islands welcomes the call by the Pacific Islands Forum leaders in 2004 for the United States to live up to its full obligations to provide fair and adequate compensation, including the full and final restoration of affected areas to economic productivity, and to ensure the safe resettlement of displaced populations. In addition, we also urge the nations that tested nuclear weapons in French Polynesia and Kiribati to take full responsibility for the impacts of their activities on the local people and our region's environment.

Mr. President,

While the Marshall Islands still suffers from the lingering consequences of radiation exposure, we are pleased to note areas where progress has been made. Today, there are fewer nuclear weapons and fewer States that possess them than there were thirty years ago. This success could not have been achieved without long-term cooperation among many States, including between the United States and the Russian Federation. Since 1970, the NPT has been improved, updated and extended.

I am also pleased to announce that my country has recently signed a Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol with the IAEA. The Marshall Islands also recognizes the importance of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI); the provisions of Security

Council Resolution 1540 (2004); and the Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI) jointly coordinated by the United States and Russia.

Mr. President,

The Heads of State from the Pacific Islands have maintained their strong communal interest in the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, and keeping the Pacific region free of environmental pollution. The Marshall Islands applauds the efforts of the Pacific Islands Forum to work with nuclear shipping States on the key issues of prevention, response, liability and compensation. The Marshall Islands remains concerned that the present international arrangements for liability and compensation do not adequately address the risks posed by the shipment of radioactive materials. We continue to seek assurances from the shipping States that in the event of an incident involving these shipments, the region will not be left to carry the resulting loss unsupported.

The 2000 NPT Review Conference took note of the concerns of Small Island Developing States and other coastal States with regard to the transportation of radioactive materials by sea. The 2005 Mauritius Strategy for the sustainable development of SIDS emphasized the need for the "further development and strengthening of international regulatory regimes" for such transport. My delegation welcomes opportunities to make progress on this issue, in cooperation with other SIDS.

Mr. President,

We recognize the right of NPT States parties to the development, research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. However, we are concerned about the use of this provision of the NPT (Article IV) as a justification for developing uranium enrichment and reprocessing capabilities which could be utilized for nuclear weapons production and proliferation. We join others in favoring restraints on the use of modern technologies for purposes that may be in contravention of non-proliferation commitments under the Treaty.

Mr. President,

The Marshall Islands shares the view that global security and proliferation challenges are as politically and technically complex now as they were during the Cold War. We have seen new and deadly forms of terrorism, black markets for nuclear materials, and instances in which States cheat on and even announce their withdrawal from the NPT. These are but some of the challenges we are facing in this month's Conference that pose a serious threat to the integrity of the NPT. We hope that States parties will unite and take this opportunity to take concrete steps to ensure that the Treaty truly serves its purpose.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to raise the issue of education. As the former President of the College of the Marshall Islands, I established a Nuclear Institute program

to help Marshallese students and citizens understand more about our nation's collision with the Cold War. I believe that we have an obligation to improve citizens' understanding about nuclear weapons and their effects – particularly in areas where citizens have been adversely impacted by these weapons. I look forward to working with any other parties that might be interested in exploring issues related to education.

Thank you, Mr. President.