

**Statement by H.E. Tom D. Kijiner
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Embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tokyo
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Co-Presidents of the Fukushima Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety
Distinguished Ministers and delegates,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, please allow me, on behalf of my delegation and the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, in joining other distinguished delegates in congratulating and thanking the Government of Japan and the International Atomic Energy Agency for convening this important Conference here in Fukushima.

I avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate the condolence and solidarity of the Marshallese people with the government and people of Japan in this time of great challenge as they continue the recovery and healing process in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake, Tsunami and the Fukushima Daiichi accident that devastated the nation in March 2011. We join the international community in commending Japan's ability to emerge from this catastrophic disaster to restore itself within a short span of time.

Mr. Co-Presidents, my people understands too well the pain, the suffering, the devastation and the challenges and issues currently faced by the people of Fukushima as a result of the Daiichi accident last year. For background purposes, between 1946 and 1958, during our time as a UN Trust Territory, our islands were used by the United States Government as nuclear testing grounds, especially for weapons considered too big to test in the continental United States. For over twelve years, a total of 67 bombs were detonated in the Marshall Islands. In 1952, the U.S. conducted the world's first thermonuclear detonation, the Mike Shot on

Enewetak Atoll. The most famous test, the Bravo shot, detonated at Bikini Atoll on March 1, 1954, which was the largest nuclear weapon ever tested by the United States on the face of the earth, was a 15-megaton hydrogen bomb more than 1,000 times as powerful as the atomic bomb dropped on both Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

These tests forced the relocation of all the inhabitants of the Bikini and Enewetak atolls and spread plumes of radioactivity over a hundred miles across the entire cluster of 33 atolls, contaminating a number of populated islands in nearby atoll formations, as well as a Japanese fishing boat (Daigo Fukuryū Maru), carrying 23 Japanese fishermen onboard. The impact of the nuclear testing left the islands in severe condition that even to this day, more than half a century later, the people of Enewetak and Bikini are still displaced and scattered all over the Marshall Islands. *(Today, I am pleased to say that we have with us our Mayor from the island of Bikini Atoll as a member of my Government's delegation. Like myself, he has joined this meeting in the hope that he would gain a better understanding of how the world deals with the nuclear issues, how is Japan and other countries with similar fate coping with nuclear radiation and what measures should be taken to protect people and the environment from ionizing radiation, among many other reasons.)*

Since the Marshall Islands became independent in 1986, we have undertaken efforts to better understand the impact of the nuclear testing that was done in our islands. Our people have long been aware of the damages to person and property that can be caused by exposure to ionizing radiation. Some of the earliest lessons about those damages were learned from the detonation of the world's fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth atomic bombs, in 1946 and 1948 at Bikini and Enewetak atolls. Even more knowledge was gained and lessons learned when numerous immensely powerful thermonuclear devices were tested at those atolls in the 1950s.

Earlier this year, a United Nations Special Rapporteur visited our Republic in order to assess the impact on human rights of the nuclear testing program conducted in

the Marshall Islands. His final report , presented to the UN Human Rights Council during its 21st session in Geneva in September 2012, found that:

The nuclear testing resulted in both immediate and continuing effects on the human rights of the Marshallese. Radiation from the testing resulted in fatalities and in acute and long-term health complications. Moreover, many people continue to experience indefinite displacement.

The Special Rapporteur made several recommendations for action by the various parties, including the international community, and it is very likely that my government will be approaching some of you in the near future to seek your expert assistance in those areas.

In the meantime, the Republic of the Marshall Islands wishes to congratulate the organizers of this international ministerial conference and to applaud its objective to strengthen nuclear safety worldwide and to enhance transparency. My delegation may not have the technical expertise to contribute to these sessions but we do hope to leave here with greater knowledge and understanding.

For example, we are very interested to learn about the most modern techniques and technologies for locating and remediating radiation "hot spots" that may escape detection by grid surveys or random sampling for many years. Such hot spots may well exist on some or even many of our islands to this day, more than 50 years since the final nuclear weapons test in the Marshall Islands.

We also hope to develop a better understanding of what is required in terms of monitoring nuclear waste storage sites to ensure safety. Such a site has existed for many years at Runit Island in Enewetak Atoll and although it is supposed to be off limits, there are no guards or even security fencing to keep people out. It was created by dumping radioactive materials collected from around the atoll into a crater that had been created by one of the weapons tests and then covering the

resulting mass with a large concrete dome. Earlier this year, we learned that there has never been a proper characterization study of the island and its environs, something which we understand will require high resolution sampling on a monthly basis over an 18-month period. Neither the national government nor the Enewetak local government have the resources to conduct such a study.

And we seek knowledge about what types of ground preparations and containment facilities can provide the greatest level of safety in the event that new nuclear waste storage sites are to be established in our nation. There are many islands which remain far too contaminated for human residence and for which there is no current plan or funding for the remediation necessary to make them fit for habitation. The livelihoods of the people who hold the rights to those islands have been adversely affected for many years by their inability to use them because of the contamination. The possibility that one or more of those islands could produce some income from storage of spent fuel rods or other types of nuclear waste is increasingly attractive and cannot be dismissed out of hand.

In closing, the Marshall Islands joins the IAEA and other world leaders in calling for an improved progress in achieving the goal to stop the spread of nuclear weapons and to pursue the peace and security of a world without them. The Marshall Islands reiterates its firm commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Treaty's objectives of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, fostering the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and furthering the goal of achieving general and complete disarmament.

Ladies and gentlemen, our people have paid a disproportionate sacrifice for helping the world understand the power of the nuclear bomb as well as nuclear energy. We have paid with our own lives, our health, and the well-being of our land and waters that are so sacred to us.

I wish to leave you with a quote from the Preamble of our Constitution that explains our aspiration and desire for world peace, in my own view; a world without nuclear weapon and the peaceful use of nuclear energy:

“This society has survived, and has withstood the test of time, the impact of other cultures, the devastation of war, and the high price paid for the purposes of international peace and security. ...With this Constitution, we affirm our desire and right to live in peace and harmony, subscribing to the principles of democracy, sharing the aspirations of all other peoples for a free and peaceful world, and striving to do all we can to assist in achieving this goal.”

I again want to express my sincere thanks to the organizers of this conference and to all of the participants who are taking part in this noble endeavor. Thank you!