

22nd Meeting of the State Parties of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty

Palau Statement

December 2025

Geneva, Switzerland

Statement Delivered by:

His Excellency Gustav N Aitaro

Minister of State

Palau

- Royalties, Excellencies, Colleagues, Civil Societies and Friends:
Alii and warm greetings from Palau. As it is the first time for Palau to address the floor, I would like to congratulate the President of the 22nd MSP, Japan, for a successful convening of the State Parties and to acknowledge and express appreciation to the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) for making participation of Small Island State possible.
- Palau acceded to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention on 18 November 2007. This year marks 18 years of Palau's commitment to a world free of anti-personnel mines with the firm belief that the devastating humanitarian effects of these weapons far outweigh their military utility and that anti-personnel mines represent major obstacles for sustainable national development.
- As one of the world smallest and peaceful nation, Palau is proud to say that it has never produced, stockpiled, used or transferred anti-personnel mines and there are no mined areas under Palau's jurisdiction or control. Palau is a nonmilitary country that relies on the United States for its defense through the Compact of Free Association and despite this arrangement, Palau managed to install a national constitution first in the world to ban from Palauan territory all nuclear, biological and chemical weapons intended to be used for warfare and now a State Party to the AP Mine Ban Convention, the CCM, the NPT and the ATT.
- While Palau may not face problems with anti-personnel mines, it saw it as its responsibility to join the global collective effort to ban anti-personnel mines, to universalize the AP Mine Ban Convention as well as to be actively engaged in the promotion of international humanitarian laws and the international system in general, in particular in its own region, the Pacific. By ensuring a mine-free Pacific, this region provides an important contribution to international security.
- The rate of acceptance of the Convention in the Pacific is very high. I was pleased to hear the two newest States Parties to this Convention are from the Pacific. Congratulations and welcome on board to the newest State Parties—the Republic of Marshall Islands and the Royal Kingdom of Tonga. Palau looks forward to working with you in the coming future. The region is now very close to fulfilling our objective of a mine-free Pacific and we encourage the Federated States of Micronesia to join the family of States Parties. I also encourage other regions to declared mine-free and to contribute towards a more peaceful world.
- While we have never owned or possessed stockpiles of anti-personnel mines, Palau is still faced with residual contamination of varieties of unexploded ordnance from WWII. After 80 plus years, the removal of these explosive remnants of war is vital to our national building because these devices are still scattered starting to corrode leaking into Palau's agricultural lands and into near shore fishing

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grounds continuing to pose harm to the communities, to public health, to the environment and hindering Palau's economic growth and sustainable development of our young nation.

- Palau have taken steps to address these dangerous items by establishing a successful national survey and clearance coordination mechanism between the Japan Mine Action Services, Norwegian People's Aid, US Military, our communities and the Palau national and state governments. The strong partnership and coordination of communities, operators and governments on the ground has led to successful support to the JMAS towards completion of the underwater survey and clearance of the Helmet Wreck. A sunken WWII merchant vessel situated on a marine slope 30 to 60ft. underwater and in close proximity to the Port of Palau that stored in its 3 holding compartments close to 300 depth charges and varieties of unexploded weapons of war that over 80+ years have been leaking harmful explosive chemicals into near shore fishing grounds frequent by local fishers. Congratulations to the Palau JMAS team for their long-standing commitment and support of freeing Palau of these harmful weapons of destruction.
- Palau continues to push for comprehensive underwater and residual contamination standards and procedures to guide mapping, survey and clearance of the plentiful WWII sunken vessels and varieties of UXOs that are in close proximity to our communities, fishing and agricultural grounds, national infrastructures, tourist attractions and populated coastal areas to allow for healthy, safe communities vital to our national building.
- During the recent 54th Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting, the Pacific leaders reaffirmed their united support to *“the ongoing WWII legacy issues relating to the UXOs in the region and reaffirmed support for continuing discussion on re-integration of the UXOs into the regional security work program, recognizing its multidimensional threat to sovereignty, human security, environment and economic development. PIF Leaders also recognized the importance of women, peace and security.”*
- Palau is preparing itself to Chair the Pacific Islands Forum in 2026 and in this capacity, Palau aims to continue promoting the UN Instruments of the AP Mine Ban, Cluster Munitions, Non-Proliferation of Nuclear and the Arm Trade Treaty throughout the region. Palau continues to appeal for a Pacific regional capacity building in one of the Pacific effected States to allow understanding of national context that we are faced with, awareness and technical knowledge of the needed national measures to meet the aims and State Party obligations of these required UN Instruments.
- Again, Palau expresses its deep appreciation to the 22nd MSP President, GICHD and the ISU for the support for Small Island States to have a voice amongst the international flora and fauna to address our nations' context and realities surrounding these UN instruments.

Kmal mesulang and Thank you, Madam President.