



Republic of the Marshall Islands
Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Doreen DEBRUM
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention - Intersessional meetings
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Geneva

Agenda Item 7a. Universalization

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Thank you Chair,

3 months ago, the Republic of the Marshall Islands ratified the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, becoming its most recent State Party. Our decision to ratify is born from our enduring commitment to the humanitarian principles at the core of international law. We hope to send a strong message - both within the Pacific and beyond- that our region and the World must remain firmly committed to a mine-free world.

Our decision to ratify this convention reflects both our moral obligation and our practical concern for the well-being of civilians - particularly children - who are the primary victims of anti-personnel mines. These weapons continue to kill and maim thousands each year, often long after the fighting has stopped. They are indiscriminate in nature, posing a persistent threat to civilians in both times of war and peace. In today's climate of rising geopolitical tensions, we must remain unequivocal in defending the humanitarian progress made over decades. The Ottawa Convention remains the cornerstone of global efforts to eliminate the suffering caused by these weapons, and we must not allow these norms to be weakened.

At a time where some are reconsidering their commitment, we hope that our ratification serves as a reminder of why they saw fit to join this treaty in the first place and how they have led others to the realization that we must protect civilians, present and future generations, from these indiscriminate and cruel weapons. As the newest member of the Mine Ban Treaty, we invite you to reconsider and stand by the principles that made you join the treaty, be firm in your resolve and to reaffirm that even in times of fear and

doubt, your commitment to humanitarian values is unwavering. To leave the Convention could potentially undermine the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law that speaks to its relevance. Anti-personnel landmines should not be an option, they must not be an option.

As a Small Island Developing State, we understand deeply the link between peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development. Landmines obstruct all three. They not only endanger lives, but render land uninhabitable and uncultivable. Their environmental consequences are severe - causing soil degradation, deforestation, water contamination with heavy metals, and biodiversity loss. These impacts violate among others the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and jeopardize the livelihoods of future generations.

The Marshall Islands has never produced, used, or stockpiled anti-personnel landmines. Yet, as the scene of some of the fiercest battles during World War II, we know all too well the devastating impact of mine-based warfare and their long-lasting impacts. The remnants of war, including unexploded ordnances, continue to pose a risk across parts of our territory - particularly in our neighboring islands and atolls. While large-scale demilitarization efforts were undertaken in the 1950s, heavy vegetation and difficult weather conditions likely left some areas overlooked. These atolls are home to traditional communities who are custodians of vital ecosystems and cultural heritage. Their safety is not just a national priority - it is a regional and global imperative.

As a nation still enduring the painful legacy of nuclear weapons testing, we also know what it means to live with a past we did not choose. Nuclear contamination still lingers in our soil and water - poisoning our environment and our history. We understand the anguish that indiscriminate weapons bring and our experiences with these weapons reaffirms that they must be confined to history.

The humanitarian and environmental tolls of anti-personnel mines are incompatible with the values of our people and the aspirations of the international community. The Marshall Islands believes in multilateralism, in disarmament and in the promotion of human rights and environmental stewardship. Our ratification of the Ottawa Convention is a concrete expression of that belief.

To our Pacific neighbors: let us join hands in realizing a shared vision of a region free of landmines. Pacific peoples have always stood tall in the face of global crises. We can do so again and unite against the scourge of indiscriminate weapons.

In joining this treaty, we stand in solidarity with all nations and communities affected by these weapons. For those that are reconsidering their commitment, our commitment to humanitarian values must be unwavering even in times of fear and doubt. You must stay the course and be true to the principles that define you as a nation. The Marshall Islands is proud to add its voice to the collective effort to eliminate landmines once and for all - and to ensure that no community, now or in the future, bears their legacy.

Kommol tata and I thank you