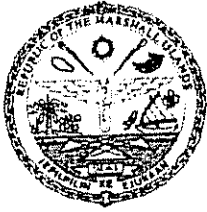


REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS



STATEMENT BY HON. MR JOHN SILK,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS,
CONFERENCE ON FACILITATING THE ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE
NUCLEAR TEST BAN TREATY
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK 24 SEPTEMBER 2009

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Mr Executive Secretary, Excellencies, Colleagues,

The Republic of the Marshall Islands, as a signatory to the CTBT, has an important and critical message to send regarding the cessation of nuclear weapons testing.

I am pleased to announce that yesterday the Cabinet members of the Republic of the Marshall Islands approved ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty that was signed by the Republic of the Marshall Islands on August 24, 1996, and, furthermore, the Cabinet has approved the introduction of a resolution during the current session of our national parliament, seeking approval for final ratification. I anticipate the deposit of an instrument of final ratification in the immediate future.

For the Marshallese people, nuclear weapons testing is not an abstract issue or theoretical global threat. It is a personal experience.

Our meeting today – and the goals of the CTBT, embody the very essence of the international commitment upon which the United Nations was founded. I must remind you of this. The Republic of the Marshall Islands, under the mandate of the UN as a Trust Territory, and under the actions of our Administrator, bore witness to 67 large-scale atmospheric nuclear weapons tests following World War II. These tests were specifically conducted with the affirmation of the United Nations, expressed in UN Trusteeship Resolution 1082, adopted by the UN in 1954, and also in UN Trusteeship Resolution 1493, adopted in 1956. These UN resolutions promised that urgent steps would be taken to provide adequate compensation for any losses, and that the Marshallese would be able to return to their homeland in one year.

While we acknowledge the important steps taken since, the use and testing of nuclear weapons has created a burden and legacy of impacts which have lasted generations, legacies on our land and our health handed down mother to daughter, and father to son. The assurance that our people would be fully compensated for these impacts to our land and our health has, decades later, still not yet been finally addressed. As we informed the International Court of Justice in 1995, our land is our security. Yet our communities are still in exile. No other nation carries so heavy a burden.

This is not a meeting on the Marshall Islands. But it is a meeting on the urgent and critical global importance of avoiding the testing of nuclear weapons. For over fifty years, Marshallese leaders have traveled to the halls of the United Nations to urge this. And we still lack of full commitment of all necessary partners in Annex 2 to give rise to the CTBT's entry into force. We do not doubt the political complexity of multilateral and bilateral security risks around the world. But we also seek that you must acknowledge the heavy burden which we continue to bear: no nation and no people should ever have to bear witness to the impacts of nuclear testing.