Mr. Chairman,

As this is the first time that Palau takes the floor, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your appointment as Chairman of the First Committee, and to assure you of the full support of my delegation for a successful outcome.

Palau aligns itself with the statement delivered by Fiji on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States and wishes to add the following remarks in our national capacity.

Palau is proud to have a Constitution forbidding the emplacement of nuclear weapons on our territory. We fully support all efforts aimed at achieving the total, universal prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

Like other Pacific Island states, we have a particular interest in advancing nuclear disarmament, as our region has experienced first-hand the devastating impact of more than 300 nuclear test explosions carried out over the course of five decades by the United States, France and United Kingdom.

We stand in solidarity with the Republic of the Marshall Islands – a nation heavily affected by these tests – in its legal proceedings before the International Court of Justice aimed at compelling the nuclear-armed states to fulfill their legal obligation to disarm.

Mr. Chairman,

As the recent conferences in Norway and Mexico on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons starkly demonstrated, we must redouble our efforts to prohibit and eliminate these ultimate weapons of terror and mass destruction.
We commend the Norwegian and Mexican governments for their leadership in this initiative and look forward to participating constructively at the third conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, to be held in Austria this December.

Palau firmly believes that the time has come for a new diplomatic process to negotiate a legally binding instrument that prohibits not only the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, but also their production, deployment, transfer and stockpiling.

By banning nuclear weapons, we would devalue and stigmatize them, which is a necessary first step towards their complete elimination. As the chair of the conference in Mexico remarked, the prohibition of certain weapons typically precedes their elimination.

A nuclear weapons ban treaty would put nuclear weapons on the same legal footing as chemical and biological weapons, which have been comprehensively prohibited. A nuclear weapons ban treaty would be an effective measure towards the fulfillment of Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to which Palau is a party.

Negotiations on a ban treaty should begin even if the nuclear-armed states refuse to participate. Establishing a clear legal prohibition on nuclear weapons without the nuclear-armed states involved would still have a powerful normative effect, as well as very tangible benefits, and would represent a significant step towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The treaty would compel all states to reject any role for nuclear weapons in their military doctrines. It would forbid states from stationing an ally’s nuclear weapons on their soil, as five European states currently do. It would prohibit investments in companies that manufacture nuclear weapons.

Palau supports a negotiating process that is open to all states and blockable by none. For this reason, we feel that the Conference on Disarmament is not a suitable forum for the negotiations. We call for a process similar to those which resulted in the adoption of the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Mr. Chairman,

It is of vital importance that we also work to address the root causes for the existence of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, including the need for power over others, desires to annihilate others and unwillingness to work for peace.

Let me conclude by reiterating Palau’s readiness and determination to join a diplomatic process aimed at negotiating a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons once and for all. This process should begin in time for the 70th anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which will be marked in August 2015.

Thank you for your kind attention.