Republic of Palau

Panel VI: Exchange of Views

Statement on Open-ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament

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Panel VI – Reviewing the role of nuclear weapons in the security and other contexts of the twenty-first century

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for permitting me to take the floor. Also allow me to thank the distinguished panelists from this morning for their excellent presentations and insight into these deadly weapons.

Palau strongly believes that, as long as nuclear weapons exist, genuine international peace will remain an elusive goal.

A nuclear-armed world will always be a world on the brink of catastrophe.

A treaty banning nuclear weapons – will place us firmly on the path to elimination – would greatly enhance the security of this fragile and pristine planet.

It would serve the security interests of all, not least those that currently possess nuclear weapons or otherwise claim protection from them.

We recognize the legitimate security concerns of all states. But security cannot – and must not – be predicated on the use of illegitimate weapons.

Nuclear deterrence theory is, in essence, a threat to inflict “massive nuclear violence”, as yesterday’s panelist so aptly put it.

“Massive nuclear violence” is what we in the Pacific experienced for over five decades, with more than 300 nuclear weapons contaminating our region.
Human being’s health and the earth’s environmental health must be at the center of all debates about security, as we all live in this land borrowed from our future generations.

We note that Working Paper 9 on the step-by-step approach distinguishes between “humanitarian concerns” and “security concerns”.

But these concerns are one in the same. Humanitarian concerns are, first and foremost, concerns about the safety and security of civilian populations.

Working Paper 9 also implies that the present “security environment” is not conducive to progress towards nuclear disarmament.

The increased tensions among nuclear-armed states in recent years must stimulate urgent action, not serve as an excuse for continued inaction.

We heard today the term “responsible nuclear weapon state”. But is it not fundamentally irresponsible to possess illegal weapons of mass destruction?

No responsible state – comprehending the risks and humanitarian consequences of these weapons – would oppose to nuclear weapon abolition.

As the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has remarked: “There are no right hands for wrong weapons.”

Mr. Chairman,

Every state in this room is a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. As such, we have all agreed to eliminate nuclear weapons.

It is somewhat perplexing, therefore, that we are debating whether nuclear weapons provide security. We all have agreed that they do not.

Let us continue to focus on the important task of preparing the ground for a treaty banning these ultimate harmful and deadly weapons of mass destruction.

They are immoral. They are inhumane. And, soon, they will be made illegal. Let’s do this.

Thank you Chairman for the floor.