Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by thanking you for your excellent summary, and the professional manner in which you and your bureau have conducted this meeting.

Let me also thank the distinguished Under Secretary General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and panelists throughout the sessions for their excellent presentations and insight into these deadly weapons.

Also allow me to thank the UNDP and donor governments of Ireland, Mexico and Switzerland for supporting the participation of small developing states in this important international forum. I believe that, together, we have made significant progress this week towards our goal of a global treaty banning nuclear weapons.

We all agree that a “legal gap” exists in the current regime governing nuclear weapons – even if some states prefer not to use the term “legal gap”.

We also all agree that nuclear weapons should be prohibited – even if we may differ on the urgency with which to pursue this objective.

Delegations made many thoughtful proposals for possible elements to be contained in the treaty banning nuclear weapons.

These include prohibitions on the development, production, modernization, testing, acquisition, stockpiling, transfer, deployment, threat of use and use of nuclear weapons, as well as prohibitions on assistance, financing, encouragement and inducement of these acts.
We also heard strong support from a number of delegations for the inclusion of victims’ assistance provisions in the new treaty. We note that no delegation objected to any of these proposed elements.

Mr. Chairman,

Palau is confident, after listening to this week’s discussions, that we now have a critical mass of support for the launch of negotiations on a ban treaty.

We warmly welcome the proposal by Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines and Zambia to convene the first negotiating conference in 2017.

I understand that some delegations believe it is too soon to prohibit nuclear weapons. I understand that some delegations worry we are moving too fast.

But time is running out.

If we fail to act now, and these horrible weapons are used again, what responsibility will we all bear? Could we have stopped it from happening?

I hope that all delegations, in deciding whether to join the negotiating process for a ban, will bear in mind the many victims of nuclear weapons around the world.

I hope that all delegations will recall the harm inflicted on the people of the Pacific as a result of more than 300 nuclear test explosions.

For decades, we have suffered from epidemics of cancers and other diseases and illnesses – passed on from one generation to the next.

Our precious island homes, and the vast Pacific Ocean on which we depend for our livelihoods, have been poisoned with radiation.

We cannot turn back time. We cannot undo the harm and damage. But we can together work to ensure that no one else ever suffers as we have.

I was shocked yesterday to hear a number of delegations speak about the importance of nuclear weapons.

I had thought that, as parties to the NPT, we were all committed to the goal of eliminating these deadly weapons of mass destruction.

But Mr. Chairman, it did not quell my optimism, because the momentum we have all contributed to toward a ban is clearly unstoppable. The only question now is: Will you stand on the right side of history?

Palau thanks you Mr. Chairman for your work.