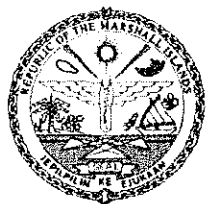


REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

**STATEMENT BY MS. RINA TAREO, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES OF THE
THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
DURING THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE GENERAL
STATUS AND OPERATION OF THE CONVENTION; CONVENTION ON THE
PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER OF
ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION
GENEVA, 2 JUNE 2008**



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Co-Chairs, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Republic of the Marshall Islands wishes to extend its gratitude for the invitation to address the Standing Committee regarding my nation's progress concerning the ratification and implementation of the Ottawa Treaty.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is an original signatory to the Ottawa Treaty; in a 1997 statement before the United Nations General Assembly's 1st Committee, we noted that "the Marshall Islands, based on our region's long-standing interest in disarmament matters, welcomes the recent international developments in the developments in the campaign to ban anti-personnel landmines. It is our hope that all nations will work towards embracing this effort to ban this weapon to prevent the killing and maiming of innocent children." Although my nation has not yet ratified the Treaty, today, we wish to reaffirm our support for global action on this important issue.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is a small, developing nation which takes seriously its commitment to global issues. However, our limited technical capacity, as well as a variety of immediate and pressing demands, including the effects of global climate change, severely constrain our ability to rapidly respond to all of our complex treaty commitments. In this regard, we are currently reviewing all of our treaty commitments, with the goal of identifying areas which need greater attention, and prioritizing our action based upon immediate national planning needs. At this time, we cannot yet respond to the Standing Committee with a timeline or detailed approach regarding ratification and implementation of the Ottawa Treaty. We hope that our participation in this meeting will help to gather additional useful information regarding the Treaty.

Co-Chairs,

The Marshall Islands wishes to express its gratitude for the treaty secretariat's regional outreach efforts in the Pacific, which recognizes the unique capacity challenges of small island developing nations. In this regard, we highlight the recent Vanuatu meeting in May of 2007. While my nation shares many of the common challenges noted in the outcome of the Vanuatu meeting, the Marshall Islands may also face more complex obstacles regarding further national action regarding the Ottawa Treaty.

We remain committed to the general principles of the treaty; as the scene of some of the fiercest fighting during World War II, we have witnessed firsthand the violence of mine-based warfare, and we hope that the world's future generations not be burdened with this dangerous practice. However, great care must be taking regarding future national action regarding the Ottawa Treaty. Such action may require a highly-complex analysis which successfully integrates our multiple international commitments. Specifically, we are also proud international partners with the United States of America, which, under the Compact of Free Association, provides assistance in our national defense and security, in addition to other mutual commitments. Our continuing Compact relationship and partnership with the United States

is very meaningful, and a critical tool without which our national progress on many issues would be greatly hindered. While we believe that it may be possible to identify a roadmap for further national action, and thus to navigate both our Compact and Ottawa Treaty commitments, doing so may require a very careful and surgical approach, as well as cautious reflection. Considerable technical assistance may be needed in this regard. While the treaty secretariat's models for common law nations are well-appreciated, these models may be insufficient for our very unique needs.

Co-Chairs,

As previously noted by the treaty secretariat, the Republic of the Marshall Islands does not, and has not, produced land mines; there are no known national stockpiles. My nation has no current or future intention of such production or stockpiling. Records indicate that we have not experienced a recorded land mine death in over 50 years. However, landmines may nonetheless present a serious issue.

As a site of intense fighting during World War II, there may be a potential for UXO remaining in my nation. Historical records indicate that a large-scale demilitarization effort was undertaken in the 1950. While this action was largely successful in removing UXO, these records indicate that areas in several of our atolls were potentially overlooked due to difficult weather conditions or heavy vegetation. Documentation for subsequent demilitarization efforts has not yet been found. These atolls are the home of some of our treasured outer island traditional communities, who are guardians of some of our most important natural resources. We are also working towards implementing sustainable tourism strategies in these areas, and recognize the need to protect both our nationals and visitors.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands lacks the necessary budget support and technical capacity for UXO surveys, removal and destruction; assistance in this area will be required. Preliminary steps (including further archival record research or delineation of areas of potential concern) may be possible on a more immediate basis, with the utilization of international support.

Co-Chairs,

We truly appreciate the opportunity to affirm our support, as well as to discuss our own challenges, regarding this important global issue.

Thank you.