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Palau Statement on Clearance

AP Mine Ban Convention

10MSP

Geneva, Switzerland

29 Nov-3 Dec 2010, UN Headquarters

As the first time the Republic of Palau has taken the floor, let me also thank outgoing President- Norway and welcome incoming President- Albania.

SLIDE 2

Let me also briefly introduce the independent Pacific Nation of Palau to many of you, and orientate you as to where we are located. Palau is some 800 miles east of the Philippines and 800 miles south of Guam. Palau is an archipelago of 200 islands covering an economic zone of some 458 square km. This size is expected to increase with our claims to an extended continental shelf. Palau's population is 20K and our annual tourists number at 80K. We expect this number to increase as we develop more eco-tourism hotels and resorts.

Palau's national story is one of achievement and success. Palau was the last country to emerge in 1994 from the Trusteeship of the United Nations after being a colony of Spain, Germany, Japan, and the United States of America.

For Palau, environmental sustainability is not a recent construct. Respect for the environment and its preservation is Palau's most deeply ingrained tradition and is at the heart of our culture. Palauans have

always known that caring for the long-term health of the environment is the foundation of our progress and survival.

Palau is also proud of our role in the international community, joining international conventions and meeting our international obligations. Our people are helping to maintain peace in some of the hotspots of the world.

SLIDE 3 – Steps taken by Palau to deal with its problem

- Palau is a signatory to both the Mine Ban Convention and the Cluster Munitions Convention. (and Palau has created national legislation in line with the Mine Ban Convention)
- Palau promotes universalization of the treaties with its Pacific neighbors, both directly and through regional forum such as the PIF, and the PNA
- No clearance has ever taken place in the 65 years since WWII, but 17 months ago Palau invited British NGO- Cleared Ground to assess and address its landmine and ERW problem
- Palau was not aware of the existence of landmines until a small stockpile was found in one of the defensive cave systems utilized by Japanese Forces during WWII. This was immediately removed and destroyed, although isolated incidents of landmines continue to be found in the system of over 600 caves. (Palau has been working on historic WWII maps which suggest the presence of a mine field around former Japanese bases)

SLIDE 4 - Steps taken by Palau to address its problem (cont)

- Palau established a Mine Action Working Group, which brings together all relevant stakeholders such as the Ministry of State,

Bureau of Public Safety, Historic Preservation Office and civil society

- The Group is currently formulating Palau's National Mine Action Plan
- Non-technical Surveys have been conducted on the heavily contaminated islands of Peleliu and Angaur, and in the new year will commence on Palau's most heavily populated island of Koror with funding from Germany. *Palau may be a small nation, but to Palau its problem is large to it, with the survey showing 26% of households on Peleliu were contaminated by ERW*
- Palau logs every item of ordnance (now some 8,415 items) and its location into its IMSMA data base, *and has this week collected the updated software from its friends at GICHD. (WWII historians have been aided by this first recording of ordnance locations, as it is providing historic information of the battle such as where specific troops were or battles took place.)*
- Palau is working with its Ministry of Health to develop a data base of accidents. *Unfortunately fishing using explosives extracted from ordnance, although made illegal by Palau continues today, with its devastating affects on Palau's 2 major industries of fishing and scuba diving. Hence those injured report "other causes" due to threat of prosecution.*
- Risk Awareness has been conducted in the schools and communities of Peleliu and Angaur, and will be extended to the main island of Koror in the New Year with German funding. The sessions are conducted in Palauan by the local team, and also explain the reporting process if ordnance are discovered. This

activity reaped immediate benefits when 2 grenades were found in a school history project display.

- Palau is building a sustainable local capacity, including women and a diversity of Palau's clans. *Palau does not wish to rely on short term interventions by international militaries, but rather is building this sustainable capacity with plans to go on and assist and train other contaminated Pacific Nations.*
- Palau is Prioritizing ' high-impact' clearance , such as in communities, at tourist sites and where contamination is hindering development. Tourism represents some 60% of Palau's GDP and an accident to a tourist could have serious repercussions on Palau's economy. (4 years ago a group of Japanese tourists were injured, fortunately not seriously, when an item of ERW thought to have only been a rock exploded in a camp fire)

SLIDE 5

- I have talked a lot already, and a picture says a thousand words, so please see the following photos which show 1/ Risk Awareness session 2/ Local house where a projectile was removed from near fire pit to cook pigs 3/ Team carrying a bomb set as a land mine from an area very popular for traditional food gathering 4/ A sea mine discovered on one of the landing beaches popular with tourists

SLIDE 6

- I will now provide some more insight into what we are clearing.

- Palau was the scene of one of the Pacific's bloodiest battles in which some 13,000 Japanese and 3,000 Americans lost their lives in the States of Peleliu and Angaur. Let me point out that phosphates were mined in the State of Angaur during German and Japanese colonial periods and there are plans to restart mining operation in the near future
- US military records show that 2,800 tons of ordnance was fired, and with failure rates at 20- 30% this leaves a large problem.
- To date the small local team have cleared some 8,415 items weighing around 8 tons in the last 7 months
- Palau follows IMAS clearing standards

SLIDE 7 – Landmines & Cluster Munitions

- This slide shows the landmine store that was removed. Please note the yellow color which is leaking explosives due to the deterioration over 66 years.
- The slide also shows cluster munitions discovered. We believe that the Pacific represents the first ever use of cluster munitions. This photo shows the M41 A1 cluster and its location at Palau's main tourist attraction at Jelly Fish Lake, which in the past 6 months alone had 29,106 tourists walk within 1m of the item which has now been removed.

SLIDE 9 – Unique Activities

- Cave clearance. As mentioned clearance has taken place in the defensive cave systems, as these are one of Peleliu's major tourist attractions, and with unemployment in our Southern islands high at around 82%, tourism must be encouraged
- Underwater clearance. 66 years ago ordnance was dumped at sea for strategic purposes as troops moved on, but today we have had to remove ordnance from some of the world's most famous dive sites. 66 years has also brought severe deterioration as can be seen in the photos. The yellow color is leaking explosives and no coral or fish life is seen in such an environment.

SLIDE 10 – Specific Issues - Human Security & Environmental Damage

- As Palau's ordnance is now 66 years old it is in a severe state of deterioration, with incidents of self-initiation such as this phosphorous grenade that was reported 20m behind a power station.
- The leakage on land and in the water (as shown) is creating an environmental problem, especially concerning as Palau's main industries are scuba diving and fishing.

SLIDE 11 – Specific Issues – Development

- Due to overcrowding on the island of Koror, Palau is encouraging the movement of the communities displaced by the war back to their clan lands, but with construction is constantly unearthing ERW. This 1000lb bomb was found in the city-center and 3 aircraft bombs in a banana plantation.

- Palau is ensuring its clearance priorities streamline into development. A recent project funded by the New Zealand Government was a tourist jungle trail that was created through sub-surface clearance. The 400m trail unearthed 1,826 items of ERW.

SLIDE 12 – Funding

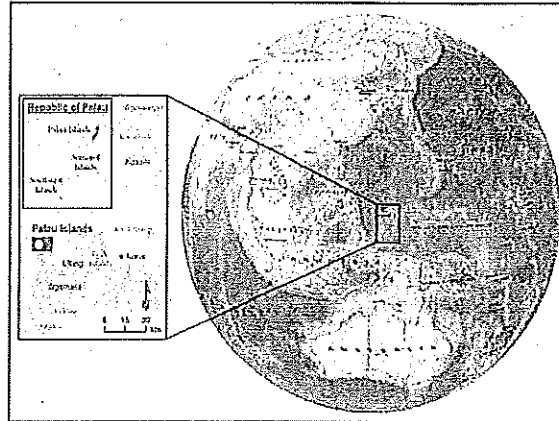
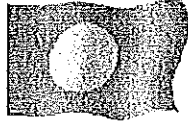
- Our problem is a forgotten conflict, and 66 years on we have had to put much effort into just making donors aware of our problem. We continue today at meetings such as this, and in September of this year the President of Palau raised our ERW problem at the UN General Assembly
- We would like to thank those donors that have helped us to date
 - The US State Department
 - The UK Embassy Manila
 - NZAid
 - Germany
 - Canada
 - Italy
- However, and there is always a however, donations have been small and none longer than 4 months, and so it will come as no surprise that Palau asks today for international financial assistance, to continue building its own sustainable clearance

capacity which can go on to help other Pacific Nations. Palau has taken the initiative and is the only Pacific Nation to be pro-actively implementing humanitarian clearance

- There is an assumption that other regional donors are funding us – but they are not for reasons not always clear, and hence although we may be a long way from your capitals we ask you to consider supporting Palau.
- The Mine Ban Treaty instigated deadlines of 10 years so that countries would not 66 years later still be living with the legacy of past conflicts. We appreciate there are countries with larger problems than ours, but we are a peace loving Nation with no conflicts and no military. Palau chooses to be proactive to its problem of EWR in order to avoid becoming a recipient of Victim Assistance.
- Please consider funding Palau too so that we can remove this problem once and for all and make Palau a marine laboratory for us and future generations to enjoy.

SLIDE 11 -THANK YOU

THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU

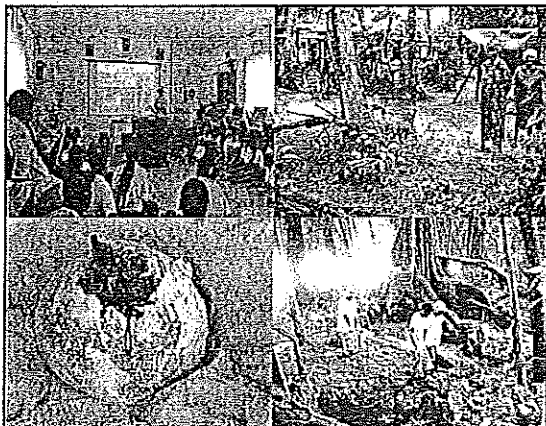


Steps Taken.....

- Ottawa Treaty - Anti personnel Mine Ban
- Oslo Treaty – Cluster Munitions Ban
- Promotes universalization of Treaties in region
- First Pacific Island Nation to implement humanitarian clearance with its NGO partner Cleared Ground Demining
- Commenced clearance operations in Sep 2009

Steps Taken.....

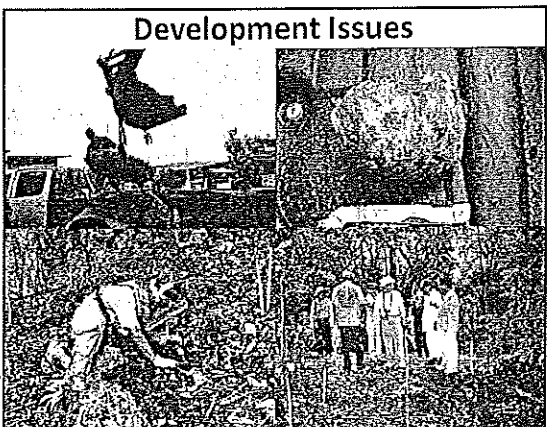
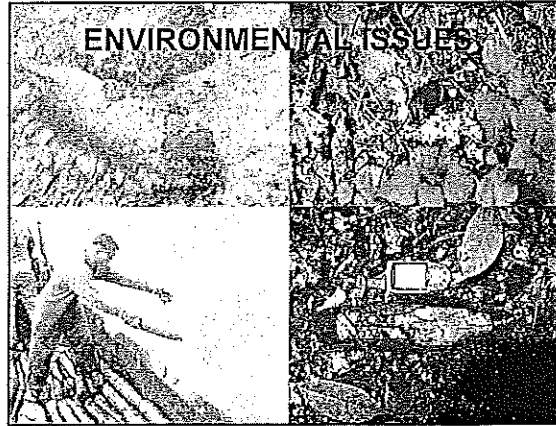
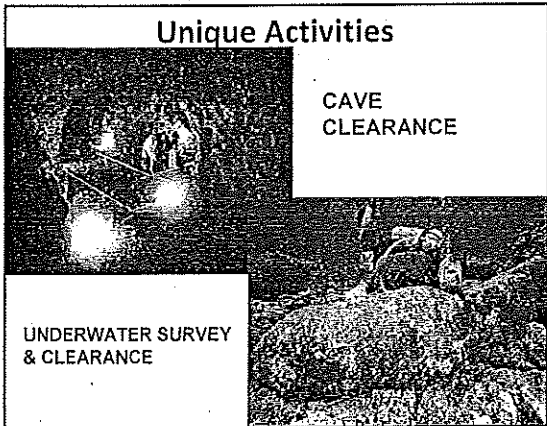
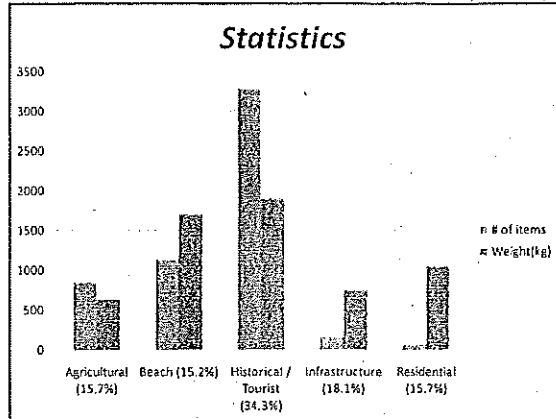
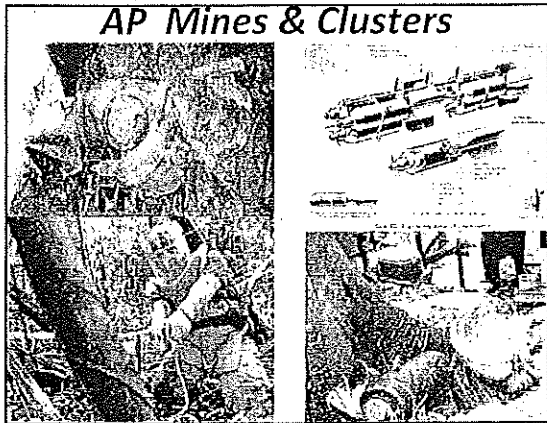
- Established National Mine Action Working Group
- Formulating Palau's National Mine Action Plan
- Non Technical Survey – Peleliu and Angaur States
- IMSMA Data base – 8,415 items of ERW removed
- Ministry of Health developing accident database
- Risk Awareness in Peleliu & Angaur and in Jan 2011 focus on Koror
- Building sustainable local capacity
- Prioritising High Impact areas



Palau's ERW Legacy

- 1944 – Battle of Peleliu and Angaur
- One of the Pacific Campaigns bloodiest battles
- 13,000 Japanese and Americans died
- 2,800 tonnes of ordnance fired by US Forces

- Removed to date 8,415 items of ERW weighing 8 tonnes



Funding

- 66 Years of waiting
- To date clearance funded in Palau by:
 - USA
 - UK Embassy, Manila
 - NZ Aid
 - Germany
 - Canada

PLEASE HELP US TO HELP OURSELVES TO BE FREE OF ERW!!