

PALAU

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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I bring you warm greetings from the 19,000 inhabitants of the Republic of Palau. Palau is not yet a State Party to the Ottawa Convention, not because it produces or stores anti-personnel mines, but because of Palau's mutual defense treaty with a superpower.

Since the 6MSP in Zagreb, Palau has worked diligently with the GICHD to bring Palau on board. Palau is grateful to the assistance of GICHD, and especially, to the undying support of Mr. Kerry Brinkert. Palau can now sign up to the Convention.

After a thorough analysis of Palau's Compact of Free Association, a defense treaty between Palau and the United States, it is clear that accession to the Ottawa Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines would not be in contradiction with United States' responsibilities, under the Compact of Free Association, for defense and security.

The Republic of Palau is firmly committed to the ultimate goal of a world free of anti-personnel mines, and in this same sense, Palau associates itself with the 151 countries which have ratified or acceded to the Ottawa Convention. It is Palau's perspective that the devastating humanitarian, social and economic impact of these weapons far outweigh any military advantage they offer. Palau is convinced that anti-personnel mines are also major obstacles to the UN Millennium Development Goals for developing countries.

Palau may not have problems with anti-personnel mines, however, it is Palau's perspective that we all share what Palau terms "common heritage of humanity". It is in this regard that Palau has an obligation and the responsibility to do its part in making sure that the universality of this Convention is promoted.

It is Palau's perspective that the universalization of the Ottawa Convention would be a major step in reducing the harmful effects of antipersonnel mines. However, this is not enough. At root, disarmament and arms control problems are issues of human security. As long as there are conflicts throughout the world, landmines and other explosive remnants of war will continue to haunt our children and their future.

It is in the Spirit of "common heritage of humanity" that the Republic of Palau encourages the United Nations, at its dawn of a new Secretary General, to address the issue of human security.