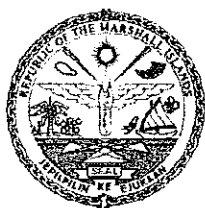


REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS



**STATEMENT BY MS. RINA TAREO, DEPUTY PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS MISSION
TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
DURING THE 9TH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES OF THE CONVENTION ON
THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND TRANSFER
OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION (9MSP)
GENEVA, NOVEMBER 2008**

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Chairs, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Republic of the Marshall Islands wishes to extend its gratitude for the invitation to address the 9th Meeting of States Parties to the AP Landmine Convention, regarding my nation's progress concerning the ratification and implementation of the Ottawa Treaty. While I am addressing you today in a national capacity, my delegation believes that many of the challenges faced by the Marshall Islands may apply to other small nations.

We would first like to refer to our statement delivered this past June during the meeting of the Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation of the Convention, and have also participated in both a Pacific regional informal meeting this past August in Palau, as well as a recent informal meeting at the United Nations with Pacific Islands Forum ambassadors and the Prince Mired al Hussein of Jordan.

We first affirm our strong support for the goals and objectives of this treaty, and we urge all nations, no matter how large or small, to take affirmative action to safeguard essential human safety in the use, stockpiling and destruction of anti-personnel mines. The Republic of the Marshall Islands is an original signatory to the Ottawa Convention – we welcomed the treaty in 1997 in our statement before the 1st Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations and we have maintained our general support for the Treaty in the General Assembly with our recent votes. Although we still have not yet ratified the treaty, we have not taken any action which is contrary to the goals, objectives and principles, we do not disavow the treaty, and we have provided an unambiguous message of support for the treaty. We hope that our fellow signatories and member states, as well as the treaty's administrative staff and civil society, will all consider carefully our ongoing affirmation of the treaty in defining lists of nations who support the treaty.

This past June, we explained to the Standing Committee several issues which have posed a barrier to our government's further action on the treaty. In summary, we affirm that the Marshall Islands government has never produced, used or stockpiled such landmines or other harmful munitions, including cluster bombs. We are a small developing nation with a serious commitment to global issues; however, we have very limited financial and technical resources, as well as the need to respond to some complex and immediate environmental situations. We told the Committee that we value closely our relationship with the United States of America as defined under the Compact of Free Association, in which the United States provides primary assistance in our defense in addition to other commitments. While ratification and implementing actions may be possible by our government, doing so may require an approach which exceeds the level of effort needed to merely adopt "one size fits all" model legislation. We have also informed the Standing Committee regarding the potential for remaining UXO from the World War II era. We appreciate avenues of technical assistance regarding our further efforts in this agreement.

The international community has repeatedly asked us why we have not moved forward with ratification and implementing activities. We ask that member states note the cumulative effect of treaty participation upon small nations; while each treaty poses an important international goal, given our limited resources, we must consider our ability to respond to treaties upon a comprehensive basis, evaluating all signed and unsigned treaties, and structuring our participation in a strategic manner. We are aware that the AP Landmine treaty offers both technical assistance and appropriate reporting procedures. Indeed, many such treaty organizations offer similar opportunities, and we truly appreciate all of them. We recognize that this treaty represents an urgent international goal deserving of our attention. However, we cannot move forward on our cumulative treaty obligations in a

piecemeal fashion - an appropriately coordinated approach to all treaties is needed, which first allows us to evaluate treaty goals and our national needs, and then allows us to pursue cost-effective participation, recognizing that priorities will have to be created. It will not be until we complete an internal review of all signed and unsigned treaties that we can provide member states with an updated timeline for our further activity.

Until the moment when we are able to take our next steps – and that moment will occur – please understand that we remain supportive of this treaty as an original signatory, and that our national policies are aligned with this treaty's overarching goals and principles.

Thank you.