

## Palau 9MSP Universalization Statement

26 November 2008, Geneva

In August of this year, Palau co-hosted the North Pacific Workshop on AP Landmine Convention together with the GICHD and Australia. The aim of the Workshop was to expose and familiarize the AP Landmine Convention to the three Micronesian countries of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau. Members of the three government congresses and senior level policy makers took part of this Workshop.

Given that Climate Change and Sea-level Rise dominate the national agendas of these Micronesian countries, and since most of the Pacific Small Island Developing States operate small government ministries and departments, island leaders normally push aside issues that are not deemed of clear and present danger, such as disarmament and humanitarian conventions. It is Palau's perspective that it would be more effective for the purpose of fast-tracking the Universalization of the AP Mine Ban Convention in our region, to involve lawmakers and policymakers in the process and not just diplomats.

During the Workshop, discussions focused on ways to make our national legislations more effective in combating the illicit trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons which includes Landmines and Cluster Munitions. Given that the combined maritime boundaries of all three Micronesian countries cover an area the size of the continental United States, spanning from the edges of the Marshall Islands in the East to the western edges of Palau which borders Indonesia and the Philippines, an idea came up to eventually make the entire north-central Pacific "landmine-free zone".

In May of next year, Palau together with Austria, will be conducting a Regional Meeting on the Universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) amongst the 10 remaining Members of the Pacific Islands Forum which are still outside of this Convention.

Palau plans to utilize this Meeting to conduct a follow-up meeting to this year's AP Landmine Convention Workshop on the status of their accession and national legislations, as well as hold a side meeting to encourage the three other remaining Pacific Island countries which are not yet members of the Ottawa Convention to join as soon as possible.