

BASEL OSCE Forum

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Session 3: “Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons”

**Statement by Hon. Richard TUHEIAVA
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***Dear Colleagues members of Parliaments,
Dear Mayors,
Dear PNND Colleagues,
Distinguished representatives of the Civil Society
Organizations,
Ladies and gentlemen,***

From 1946 to 1996 – over 50 years - the Pacific region has been the stage of nuclear set of three major nuclear powers, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France. In the Pacific Region, there were in total 321 explosions of atomic and thermonuclear bombs, the equivalent of merely 11,430 Hiroshima bombs!

- Between 1946 and 1962, the United States of America detonated in the atmosphere of the Pacific 107 atomic and hydrogen bombs mainly above the atolls of Bikini, Enewetak, and Johnston

Kiritimati, in the Marshall Islands. The total power generated by the 107 American bombs on these Pacific islands is equivalent to 9800 Hiroshima bombs while the total power of 100 air explosions conducted in Nevada in the continental United States of America is equivalent to 86 bombs of Hiroshima.

- Between 1952 and 1958, the U.K. has proceeded to 21 atomic and hydrogen nuclear tests in the atmosphere of Australia and Kiritimati atoll, or the power equivalent to 700 Hiroshima bombs.

- Between 1966 and 1996, France has proceeded to 193 nuclear tests in French Polynesia, 46 in the atmosphere above the two atolls of Moruroa and Fangataufa, a total power equivalent to 720 Hiroshima bombs, and 147 explosions in the basements of the two atolls , equivalent to 210 Hiroshima bombs power.

The humanitarian consequences of these nuclear explosions are devastating to the health of Pacific people and civilians as well as military personnel who have been employed in these nuclear programs.

Leukemia, thyroid cancer and other known to be radiation-induced cancers are redundant in all territories or countries affected by these experiences. Since 2010, French Polynesia, which now hosts 275,000 inhabitants, faces 640 new cases of cancer every year.

Scientific studies on the health consequences of nuclear testing in the Pacific region are virtually lacking. In Polynesia, one comprehensive study was conducted over the period covering the decade 1985-1995, and concluded that the nuclear tests in our territory

were “safe”, but it was a Study funded by the French Ministry of Defense, which was responsible for conducting such nuclear experiments.

Among the 962 studies on cancer pathologies generated by the contaminations cited in the 2006 report of UNSCEAR, only 22 studies have been conducted on populations living near nuclear test sites in the world, with only 6 in the Pacific, including 5 studies on the development of thyroid cancer in the Marshall Islands and one on the development of cancer in French Polynesia.

These issues do not only demonstrates a lack of interest from the scientific community to study the health consequences of nuclear tests, and the lack of political will of the nuclear Powers to assess the health consequences of their nuclear testing, but also the lack of funding in favour of independent studies in the Pacific region.

The environmental consequences of the 321 nuclear explosions in the Pacific region are also catastrophic. Formerly inhabited atolls and ancestral lands are permanently or partially prohibited from any permanent human activity.

I quote a few place names that resonate painfully in the memory of the peoples of our region of the Pacific: Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap, Maralinga, Kiritimati, Moruroa, Fangataufa ...

We do not forget either that our great ocean served nuclear dump not only for discharges of contaminated military nuclear experiments, but also for contaminated waste civilian nuclear activities or the testing of uranium munitions in the Pacific Rim materials.

Throughout the Pacific region, we count 26 marine sites radioactive waste discharges and 25 land sites are stored other radioactive waste. Most marine sites where hundreds of tons of radioactive materials has been dumped, are in no way identified on nautical charts used by fishing boats and no study on the possible contamination of the biological chain of these sites have been performed.

I allowed myself to list all these threats to our health and our environment that also threaten the future of our future generations because I know they are virtually unknown, ignored or forgotten by most of the 57 Member States of the OSCE.

Yet the three nuclear states who took responsibility for these disasters in the Pacific region are members of your organization.

As an elected Parliamentarian representing Pacific community, I wanted to draw your attention to that part of our world that has suffered the ravages of nuclear weapons.

However, I do not forget the same consequences faced by all other regions and peoples of the world who had to undergo nuclear tests other nuclear powers.

To cite only other major regions devastated, here is the reminder: Semipalatinsk and Novaya Zemlya in the former USSR, Lop Nor in China, Reggane and Eker In the Algerian Sahara, Pokharan India, Pakistan Chagai, Hwaderi North Korea ...

The foundations of the OSCE based on security and cooperation are translated into measures of trust between our peoples.

Among the 10 principles of the OSCE Action, there are *"respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms"*, *"respect for the rights of minority peoples,"* *"respect for the environment"* and *"equal rights and self-determination of peoples"*.

Let's recognize that although the founders of the OSCE principles allowed, during the Cold War period, to maintain relations between the two blocks, such principles have not been implemented by the nuclear Powers in favour of peoples and territories that have been or still are under their overlooking, as is the case of the territory of French Polynesia.

By what they experienced during half a century and the consequences they still are suffering as of today, states and countries in the Pacific are convinced that world security must be permanently free from the threat of weapons nuclear, as well as nuclear Powers still have a duty of compensation in favour of the victims of all their nuclear experiments is far from being achieved.

Our Pacific peoples are seeking Justice from the misuse/abuse of their lands and resources by the nuclear Powers. I would remind you that for decades, our Peoples stood up relentlessly against the violations of their rights to life and health:

- In 1954, the Marshall Islands, under the supervision of the United States, filed a petition with the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations to oppose nuclear testing in the United States in their islands,

- In 1967, in Suva, capital of Fiji, the Christian Association of girls and the Christian Students Movement organized a meeting on nuclear testing proceeded in Moruroa, French Polynesia; that rose the awareness, throughout the Pacific region, of the harmfulness effects of nuclear weapons,

- In 1973, Australian, New Zealand and Fijian governments filed a lawsuit before the I.C.J. (International Court of Justice) to require the ceasing of atmospheric nuclear tests in France, which was obtained the following year;

- In 1980, supported by the Pacific churches, Pacific NGOs created a Movement "for an Independent Pacific free of nuclear weapons" (NFIP)

- In 1984, after 30 years of silence, the Australian government launched legal proceedings in London against the British government for the latter to clean-up Aboriginal lands contaminated by nuclear testing in the 1950s,

- In 1985, members of the Pacific Forum initiated the Treaty of Rarotonga creating a zone free of nuclear weapons in the South Pacific,

- In 1995, French Polynesia local population exasperated, supported by Pacific States and civil society around the world, protested

violently against the resumption of nuclear testing by France decided. The weight of this global protest against nuclear testing has contributed to the conclusion of treaty ban on French nuclear tests in 1996.

- In 2005, the Assembly of French Polynesia decided to conduct its own investigation, which updated the devastating human and environmental consequences of nuclear testing by France in Moruroa and Fangataufa, which forced the government of France to monitor some minimum environmental rehabilitation measures.

Since the first nuclear bomb exploded over Bikini Atoll June 30, 1946 until today, Pacific peoples have thus shown a constant and almost visceral opposition against the threat of nuclear weapons.

For several decades, including undergoing the consequences of these bombs in their health and environment, Pacific peoples are mobilizing to defend their rights vis-à-vis nuclear powers.

In April 2012, the Republic of the Marshall Islands has appealed to the Special Rapporteur of the Committee of Human Rights of the United Nations in its mission report recommended that the United States contribute to "mitigate and eliminate the harmful effects of nuclear tests "mainly health and environmental Marshall Islands.

This mobilization of Pacific peoples, including the people who live in French Polynesia, joined the common belief of some 146 states of the world expressed at the conferences in Oslo in 2013 and Nayarit in Mexico in February 2014 to initiate a process of prohibition of nuclear weapons because of their humanitarian impacts.

In this perspective, the Republic of the Marshall Islands filed April 24, 2014 before the International Court of Justice a lawsuit instituting proceedings against 9 nuclear powers accused of "*not fulfilling their obligations relating to cessation the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament*" in accordance with Article 6 of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and customary International Law.

The battle of the Pacific peoples and the world against nuclear weapons and for their rights to proper compensation are yet facing reluctance, intransigence, and unwillingness from the nuclear Powers.

As a matter of fact, the Ma'ohi people, crushed by a colonial system that has been imposed for nearly two centuries, does not intend to waver in its resistance to nuclear weapons and keeps calling upon the peoples around the world for support.

On 17 May 2013, the territory of French Polynesia territory, still under the administration of France from a U.N. Charter perspective, has been relisted on the United Nations list of Non-Self Governing territories, as New Caledonia was back in 1987.

This re-inscription is absolutely not disconnected to the ongoing efforts made by the International Community towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

Indeed, the Special Committee on Decolonization of the United Nations was aware of "*significant health and environmental benefits of*

nuclear tests carried out in the territory by the administering Power for thirty years”.

In addition, the Special Committee on Decolonization requested *"the Secretary-General (of the UN) to compile a report on the environmental impact, environmental, health and others fallouts generated by the thirty-years period of Nuclear tests"* in French Polynesia. This was endorsed as one of the operational paragraphs of a second resolution adopted on 11 December 2013 by the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

Thus, the highest authorities of the United Nations seem very concerned with the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons experiments.

Such expected report from the U.N. Secretary General, to be soon compiled on the French nuclear tests in French Polynesia, might be a new argument in the context of a world free of the burden of nuclear weapons.

In closing my remarks, I would like to thank the organizers and Host of this OSCE Forum and the Basel Peace Office for giving me the opportunity to remind, within the “heart” of Europe (here in Switzerland), the relentless and brave opposition of the peoples of the distant Pacific Region to the nuclear tests and weapons, as well as that of all the people who have suffered and still suffer human and environmental consequences of the tests of nuclear Powers.

On behalf of our Pacific elders and leaders that contributed to an "*independent and Pacific free of nuclear weapons*", we still act today with all diplomatic means and medias that are available to us to contribute to the outstanding efforts of the vast majority of states around the planet, the OSCE, the International Committee of the Red Cross, to build, as soon as possible, a world ultimately freed from nuclear weapons.

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