

PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

United Nations Member States



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**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H.E. SATYENDRA PRASAD
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ON BEHALF OF THE
PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST NUCLEAR TESTS**

26 AUGUST 2020

[Check against delivery]

Mr. President,

On this very special occasion, I have the honour to speak on behalf of 12 Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), namely, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga, Vanuatu and my own country Fiji.

The PSIDS also aligns this statement with the statement that will be delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Tuvalu in hi capacity as Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum.

We extend our sincerest appreciation to you Mr. President, for hosting today's virtual event to commemorate and promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Earlier this month, the world remembered the lives lost and severely impacted after the atomic bombing of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. It was a stark reminder to us all, of the devastating, indiscriminate and long-lasting effect of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President,

We, the PSIDS have suffered the effects of nuclear testing in our region. In the Pacific, from 1946 to 1996 there were more than 300 nuclear tests carried out in the atmosphere, underground and underwater.

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Our communities living close to ‘ground zero’ were relocated from their ancestral islands, restricted from using the ocean and land resources for their livelihoods, and suffered from long-term health issues. At the end of these nuclear tests, radioactive waste and machinery were either buried or dumped into the Pacific Ocean, an issue we still have to deal with today.

We still do not know the full impact of these nuclear tests on our environment and communities.

But what we do know is that:

- Radioactive pollution from past nuclear tests will continue to be present in the ocean and the environment for years to come.
- Radioactive pollution in our land and ocean, have affected the health of our communities and their livelihoods.
- Compensation will never be enough to correct the long-lasting damage to the ocean, the environment, and the generational health problems these tests have caused on our communities.

On this day, we also pay tribute to our leaders, civil society and communities for their efforts and foresight to push for the establishment of a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, which has finally put an end to nuclear testing in parts of the Pacific Ocean.

Mr. President,

We the PSIDS, consider ourselves the custodians of the vast blue Pacific Ocean. The Pacific Ocean defines who we are; it serves as the foundation of our economies, our environment, and the well-being of our communities. We have a vision that the blue Pacific Ocean will become an ocean of peace for our people and the world. Protecting the blue Pacific Ocean, is of paramount importance to our future and in this regard, it can only become an ocean of peace - if it is nuclear free.

The 2030 SDGs are of huge importance to our communities, and as largely communal societies, the PSIDS truly do believe in ‘leaving no one behind.’ Protecting the environment and promoting prosperity are crucial pillars of the SDGs and in this connection, a Pacific Ocean threatened or contaminated by ‘mushroom clouds,’ impedes any progress towards achieving the SDGs for us.

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Mr. President,

In 2018 our leaders established the Boe Declaration on regional security, ‘recognising that climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being, of the peoples of the Pacific.’ Stopping the development and prohibiting the production of nuclear weapons will free up much needed global resources to assist our vulnerable communities, and those around the world, in fighting the effects of climate change.

A nuclear free world can only be achieved through a strengthened multilateral system, setting the conditions for; transparency, confidence building and cooperation. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) are crucial if we are to permanently reduce the production and testing of nuclear weapons.

Finally, Mr. President,

Today, the PSIDS say no to nuclear weapons, and we reiterate our commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons, and we encourage member states to ratify the CTBT and the TPNW.

Not only is it the morally right thing to do but we owe it to ourselves and our future generations to do so.

We thank you.

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