



**International Bar Association Commemoration Event for 80th Anniversary of the First
Nuclear Test in the Marshall Islands**

“Human Rights and Nuclear Legacy in the Marshall Islands”

Statement for President Heine

Webinar, 1 July 2026

Esteemed legal practitioners,

It is indeed my honor to deliver this address, in solemn commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the first nuclear weapon test ever conducted in the Marshall Islands. This commemoration is a poignant moment of reflection. A sacred space for remembrance – a space where we pause to reflect upon the nuclear testing years from 1946 to 1958, and a space to rekindle our memory of those who had endured and suffered the consequences of twelve turbulent years that have left an indelible mark on our history.

We remember a time when our islands - once a place of peace, abundance, and ancestral belonging - became the testing ground for weapons of unimaginable destruction. Many lives were irreversibly shattered by decisions that were made far beyond our shores, and even further beyond our control, imposed upon us by global political forces and the drive to test the destructive power of nuclear weapons.

This commemoration marks eighty years since the beginning of this global story, and although the detonations have fallen silent, the echo of anguish, grief, and frustration continues to resonate, fueled by the remnants that remain on our lands, water and within our bloodlines. In sharing the stories of the Marshallese people, I share our knowledge and experiences with you. I share our pain and pursuit of justice. I recognize that you, as gate keepers of the law, can indeed share in the responsibility of carrying forward the stories of our elders into the very spaces they once dreamt their voices would reach. Their testimonies must be heard in national chambers, international forums, academic institutions, and policy

discussions around the world. In doing so, we honor their struggles not only with remembrance, but with action. Transforming their lived experiences into informed advocacy, principled leadership, and engagement for justice and healing.

These conversations have already begun in our children's classrooms, with Marshallese teachers strengthening their knowledge through dedicated training at our college. We are committed to equipping the next generation to carry this truth and responsibility forward with understanding and confidence, so that one day meaningful and lasting redress is realized. As part of our commitment to preserving this history, the Government is seeking to establish a nuclear museum, one that will preserve the truth of this legacy and ensure that future generations carry forward this history with knowledge, dignity, and purpose. Beyond our national efforts, the Marshall Islands engages with the United Nations and the international community more broadly seeking allies in our efforts towards meaningful redress and remediation. We welcome the International Bar Association's interest in our experiences with the testing of nuclear weapons and invite practitioners to learn more about the nuclear legacy of the Marshall Islands, share this history, and support us in our efforts.

The Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands remains steadfast in its commitment to pursuing all appropriate avenues for justice and meaningful redress for our people. The use of our atolls and islands to test nuclear weapons while under a United Nations Trusteeship was a monumental failure of international governance with lasting human rights consequences. Between 1946 and 1958, throughout a span of 12 years, a total of 67 nuclear bombs were tested at Bikini and Enewetak Atolls. Throughout the first eight years of testing, the Marshallese people were mostly silent and kept to themselves as they went about adjusting and adapting to a new and powerful colonial master. However, the 1954 Castle Bravo shot was the calamitous event that triggered the Marshallese people to finally find their voice, and we told the world "STOP!"

In their first petition in 1954, our leaders asked the UN Trusteeship Council to stop the testing and also reminded the Council of its "pledge to safeguard the life, liberty and the general well-being of the Marshallese people." In 1956, our Marshallese leaders again petitioned the UN Trusteeship Council to halt nuclear testing. Despite these petitions, the UN

Trusteeship Council by Resolutions 1082 and 1493, in 1954 and 1956 respectively, authorized further testing. Today, we are reminded of the petitions which were submitted to the UN Trusteeship Council. The Marshallese leaders that signed the petitions have not only etched their names in our memory, but more importantly, have left a legacy for our generation – and the world - to follow. We honor their courage, fortitude and resilience. We must continue to speak up for those who have gone before us, the struggles that they endured, and this must forever reside in our collective memories until they have justice.

Over the years, our resolve has deepened, we are unrelenting, and we will not forget. We cannot and will not allow our history and lived experiences to be overshadowed by silence or be forgotten by the passage of time. Though it has been eighty years since the first test was conducted in 1946, genuine reconciliation has yet to be achieved. We remain hopeful that, through principled engagement with the United Nations and the United States of America, a path forward can be realized - one grounded in acknowledgement, accountability, and a shared commitment to justice. We thank the International Bar Association for joining us in this commemoration and we are honored to count you as an ally in sharing our story and pursuing nuclear justice for the Marshallese people.

Kommol tata and I thank you.