



# PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

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## PANEL DISCUSSION PAPER

### Deputy Speaker- Hon. Ruveni Nadalo

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“In order to carry a positive action we must develop here a positive vision.”- DALAI LAMA

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### Panel Session 1

Topic: A nuclear test ban and the role of the UN in achieving nuclear disarmament.

The Chair, Distinguished members of the Panel, Ladies and Gentleman.

1) At the outset I wish to state here and as everyone knows history has a way of repeating itself. Countries have experienced repeated wars and internal strife, because people who have the responsibility to make decisions have not learned of the harsh lessons of destruction that warfare wreaks on people's lives and property.

- 2) In the last days of the Second World War in the Pacific warfare turned nuclear with the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- 3) Its effects were horrific. It caused unprecedented physical destruction and horrific human injuries. In Hiroshima alone documented evidence showed that about 70 per cent of all buildings were destroyed and there was an estimated 140,000 deaths by the end of 1945 from the Uranium bomb. In Nagasaki, the plutonium bomb levelled 6.7km of the city and killed 74,000 people by the end of 1945.
- 4) Despite the evidence of wide scale destruction and its long wide reaching effects, several countries after 1945, developed nuclear weapons in the belief that possessing them was a right to their national security.
- 5) Nuclear-armed states who now have nuclear weapons in their possession further argue that the weapons are a deterrence.
- 6) But Chair the fact remains that the existence of nuclear weapons is a threat to human kind.
- 7) And the evidence now shows that the whole world cannot survive any nuclear weapons explosion, not even the nuclear states.

8) Chair, we in the Pacific had suffered from the effects of nuclear testing of weapons. The Pacific Islands as colonies and "Trust Territories" were used without any form of consultation done.

9) The Pacific Islands, after 1945, were heavily used for nuclear weapons testing. Pacific islanders' had no control over or understanding of the use of their home islands for nuclear weapons developments.

10) The Marshall Islands was used from 1946-1968 for atmospheric tests, although part of a UN Trust Territory. Bikini and Enewetak atolls' inhabitants were forced to relocate and could never return to their contaminated homelands. In 1954, the infamous "Bravo" test resulted in direct radioactive fallout on Marshallese.

11) Nuclear testing was conducted on Mururoa and Fangataufa atolls in Tahiti from 1966-1996, for 30 years doing atmospheric and underground nuclear tests that affected the whole region, despite Pacific-wide protests. Kiritimati Island was also used for tests.

12) Chair, because of this reality Fiji like the other Pacific nations are resolute in our support for the banning of nuclear weapons as evidenced when we became signatories of the

Treaty of Rarotonga which is the common name for the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, which formalizes a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the South Pacific. The treaty bans the use, testing, and possession of nuclear weapons within the borders of the zone.

13) It was signed by the South Pacific nations of Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa on the island of Rarotonga (where the capital of the Cook Islands is located) on 6 August 1985, came into force with the 8th ratification, and has since been ratified by all of those states.

14) As for the United Nations, it certainly has important roles to play for nuclear disarmament.

15. The end of the Cold War has greatly reduced some global threats to security but there are ethnic rivalries enduring and there are regional tensions and potential flashpoints which have created pressures on nations to continue to develop or expand their arsenals of weapons of mass destruction.

16. It is amidst this environment that the United Nations Organisation has tried to work on its basic purpose of working towards world peace and security.

17. Traditionally, the United Nations has been engaged in arms control and disarmament through developing norms, negotiating treaties, and monitoring compliance.

18. However today's new challenges, where questions arise on the commitment of nations in the international community in taking full advantage of the United Nations push for disarmament, makes the work of the UNO more difficult.

19. So the challenge now for the UNO is how it can play its role effectively in achieving nuclear disarmament.

20. Chair, achieving global nuclear disarmament is one of the oldest goals of the United Nations since 1946 and it has been on the General Assembly's agenda along with general and complete disarmament ever since 1959.

21. It has been a prominent theme of review conferences held at the UN since 1975 of States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

22. It was identified a priority goal of the General Assembly's first Special Session on disarmament in 1978, which attached a special priority to nuclear disarmament.

23. And it should continue to maintain its importance as an agenda at all UNO GA Sessions.

24. UNO has set aside 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

25. This Day provides an occasion for the world community to reaffirm its commitment to global nuclear disarmament as a high priority.

26. It provides an opportunity to educate the public—and their leaders—about the real benefits of eliminating such weapons, and the social and economic costs of perpetuating them.

27. Commemorating this Day at the United Nations is especially important, given its universal membership and its long experience in grappling with nuclear disarmament issues.

28. It is the right place to address one of humanity's greatest challenges, achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.

29. Chair, given the difficulties of getting the nuclear armed states to commit fully to disarmament though there have been many treaties done, it is important for the United Nations to promote, continue to promote and facilitate the importance of disarmament and non-proliferation education.

30. Education and training in the field of disarmament for world leaders, civil societies, religious leaders, diplomats and

parliamentarians at every opportunity is vital to the success of future disarmament initiatives and the topic of disarmament should always be the main topic in future meetings.

31. And this, the UNO can do well given its recognition as the most representative inter-governmental organization of the world today, and whose role in world affairs is irreplaceable by any other international or regional organization.

32. Chair, to conclude, it is through the people who make the decisions that change in mindset must occur so that the mistakes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki does not get repeated.

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