



Fiji Statement at the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.

31 March 2017, UNHQ

Mr. President

We wish to congratulate you as President of the Conference and commend you for the excellent stewardship of this week's proceedings. As we are taking the floor for the first time at this session, allow me to share our views on the earlier topics addressed this week before coming to the issues of institutional arrangements.

Topic 1 – principle objectives

Mr. President, on the topic - principle objectives, Fiji once again stress that the objective to negotiate a legally binding instrument is to prohibit any use or threat of nuclear weapons, based on international humanitarian law and human rights.

Fiji speaks with first-hand experience of the destruction and long lasting effects that nuclear weapons have had on our people without victim assistance, reparation and environmental degradation of the eco-system. As a Pacific Island state, the region has faced the environmental and human consequences of more than 300 forced nuclear tests conducted over half a century. Even until today it remains unsafe for habitation, agricultural production and fishing which has drastically and permanently displaced islanders from their homes and disconnected the indigenous way of life for many Fijians of untold pain.

The drive for this Treaty has been based around the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons especially the case for the population of Pacific Island nations in regard to nuclear weapons testing which led to the suffering of our people's health, our environments and displacement of people. Fiji endorses: firstly, the recognition of the rights of victims of the use and testing of nuclear weapons and a commitment to provide assistance to victims

and environmental redress for Pacific islanders who have lost much as a result of nuclear testing.

Secondly, the issue of visitation, transit, overflight, stationing and deployment. The Pacific Ocean's geographical position and composition makes the region particularly susceptible to these abuses. The Pacific region is not a nuclear weapons trial zone, it is not a laboratory for nuclear development and proliferation and it surely must not be a launching pad for nuclear attacks. Therefore, Fiji supports the strengthening of nuclear weapon free zones; transparency measures for the establishment of a reporting mechanism that works within the framework of the UN as a positive step to enhance accountability, promote transparency and in turn, facilitate nuclear disarmament; and legally binding treaty banning nuclear weapons that would fill the legal gap to end violence and promote harmony in the world to achieve justice and respect for human rights. Nuclear weapons have immediate, mid-term and long-term effects across many generations, disproportionately affecting women and female children.

We need to ban nuclear weapons to reduce the risk of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional use of nuclear weapons so the treaty should emphasize the need to establish a clear legal standard to prohibit nuclear weapons to reject any role for nuclear weapons in security doctrines or arrangements and must recognize the goal of complete disarmament. All States are responsible to maintain international peace, security and justice.

Topic 2 – core prohibitions; legal measures

Madam Chair, on the topic core prohibitions and legal measures, Fiji asks for a legally binding international instrument to explicitly prohibit nuclear weapons which will stigmatize their possession and facilitate nuclear disarmament by prohibiting activities such as development, production, testing, acquisition, stockpiling, transfer, deployment and use of threat of nuclear weapons and also prohibit assisting, financing, encouraging and inducing prohibited acts.

The treaty should provide an obligation for a complete elimination of nuclear weapons and a framework to achieve it that would build on and reinforce other legal instruments, and should reaffirm the rights of people who have suffered from nuclear weapons in relation to rights of redress especially to compensation from harm as a result of the use of nuclear weapons.

There should be positive obligations; to ensure rights of victims and survivors, to address affected environments and provide international cooperation and assistance to meet obligations.

Topic 3 – institutional arrangements

Coming than to institutional arrangements, our view is that the treaty should be compatible with, build upon and strengthen other key instruments including the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) treaties. Fiji does not possess nuclear weapons. Fiji is a signatory to the South Pacific nuclear-weapon-free-zone (NWFZ) Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga). The Treaty of Rarotonga has established the South Pacific as an internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zone. Nuclear weapon-free zones have been essential tools for establishing strong regional norms against the use, testing and possession of nuclear weapons for a new legally binding instrument that would transform these regional norms into global norms.

Some specific elements that Fiji consider important for the Treaty include the following:

- (i) The treaty should include a simple entry-into-force provision stipulating that it will become binding in international law once a number of states have ratified it. Entry into force must NOT be contingent upon the ratification of any particular state or group of states.
- (ii) States should NOT be allowed to make reservations to any of the articles of this treaty (consistent to other weapons-related international agreements such as prohibitions of biological and chemical weapons, landmines and cluster munitions as well as NWFZ).
- (iii) The treaty should provide for international cooperation and assistance to meet obligations of the instrument.
- (iv) There should be regular meetings of states and review conferences in order to consider and take decisions with regard to the application or implementation of the treaty, such as concerning the operation and status of the treaty, matters arising from reports submitted to the treaty, international cooperation and assistance regarding the treaty, stockpile destruction and related verification measures, and other issues.
- (v) Civil societies, relevant organizations or institutions should be allowed to participate in these meetings as observers.

Finding a text of the treaty should be made ready as soon as possible to allow States to negotiate its terms.

Thank you.