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Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides a consolidated summary of elements from the submissions received from Member States pursuant to resolution 78/240, without prejudice to the individual positions of those States. It contains the views and proposals of Member States regarding efforts and ongoing needs related to victim assistance and environmental assessment and remediation for Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons. Views received from Member States by the communicated deadline are reflected in full in the annex to the report. The report concludes with observations of the Secretary-General.

* A/79/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 4 of its resolution 78/240 entitled “Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons”, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek the views and proposals of Member States regarding efforts and ongoing needs related to victim assistance and environmental assessment and remediation, and to submit a substantiative report, with an annex containing those views, to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session, for further discussion by Member States.

2. On 12 February 2024, the Office for Disarmament Affairs sent a note verbale to all Member States drawing their attention to paragraph 4 of the resolution and seeking their views on the matter. The present report provides a summary of the views and proposals of Member States regarding efforts and ongoing needs related to victim assistance and environmental assessment and remediation. The views represented in the report reflect only those of States that submitted views in accordance with paragraph 4 of the resolution. The views received by 31 May 2024 are reproduced in the annex to the present report. Views received after 31 May will be posted on the website of the Office in the language of submission only.

II. Background

3. Submissions received for the present report represent the views of both States that voted in favour of resolution 78/240 and those that voted against. Many States, including those that did not vote in favour of the resolution, recognized the role that the resolution plays in raising awareness and generating greater support from the international community regarding the issue of victim assistance and environmental assessment and remediation. One State outlined its rationale for opposing the resolution, which it viewed as an attempt to establish an international liability regime that ignored ongoing bilateral or national efforts.

4. Many States highlighted their commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and to the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons. Several States emphasized that the complete elimination and stigmatization of nuclear weapons was the only guarantee against their use or the threat of their use and the possibility of further victims and environmental contamination. One State stressed that nuclear weapons also posed a serious threat to the enjoyment of human rights and, accordingly, a threat to the international democratic order. One State drew attention to its national legislation that banned nuclear weapons and nuclear-propelled vessels from its waters, airspace and territory and to its role in attempting to halt nuclear testing in its region.

5. Strong support was voiced by States for initiatives that promoted victim assistance and environmental assessment and remediation; the value of international cooperation and assistance was highlighted in that regard. Several States underscored the responsibility of those Member States that used or tested nuclear weapons in addressing past harms, and one acknowledged the shared responsibility of the entire international community in addressing nuclear legacies. States affected by the testing of nuclear weapons on their territory emphasized the ongoing need for greater transparency, nuclear justice, reparations and compensation, as well as for guarantees of the non-recurrence of nuclear testing and for the memorialization of the legacies of nuclear weapons.

Catastrophic humanitarian consequences associated with the use and testing of nuclear weapons

6. Many States emphasized the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences associated with the use or testing of nuclear weapons. Some States expressed concern about the impact of past nuclear use and testing, including intergenerational physical and psychosocial health concerns, environmental harm and contamination, displacement of persons and loss of livelihoods, economic burdens and feelings of injustice. It was argued that even a single nuclear explosion would overwhelm any humanitarian response capacity and that the use of one nuclear weapon could lead to further nuclear escalation. Some States pointed to studies by international organizations that had found that no State or international body could adequately address either the immediate humanitarian emergency, or the long-term consequences of a nuclear weapon detonation in a populated area, nor provide adequate assistance to those affected.

7. Of those States that submitted views and proposals, numerous States underscored the effects of immediate and residual radiation from nuclear detonations on long-term health problems such as cancer, genetic mutations and birth defects in future generations. One medical assessment, conducted by a State affected by the testing of nuclear weapons, found that four to five decades after the testing, the average annual prevalence of the levels of most categories and classes of disease among the affected population and their descendants was significantly higher than in the control groups. Research commissioned by the same State also found that general mortality among the population exposed to radiation was significantly higher than in the control group, while another study commissioned by a State that had conducted nuclear tests found that the overall mortality rates of nuclear test veterans remained lower than that of the general population. The disproportionate impacts of ionizing radiation on different segments of the population, including on women and girls and on Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized communities, was identified by some States as an area in need of greater attention. In addition to the physical impact of nuclear weapons use and testing, the psychosocial consequences related to nuclear detonations was emphasized.

8. The environmental consequences associated with the use or testing of nuclear weapons and the need to rehabilitate the environment in regions affected by nuclear use or testing was also emphasized by many States. It was stated that the use and testing of nuclear weapons had contaminated the air, soil and water and had had long-lasting repercussions on the environment and disrupted ecosystems. The current and future impacts of climate change on the structural integrity of nuclear material storage sites were also cited as a growing area of concern.

9. Some States stressed the necessity of raising awareness about the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons. In that regard, the Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, convened in Oslo in 2013, Nayarit, Mexico, in 2014 and Vienna in 2014 and 2022, had served as platforms for presenting scientific findings on the humanitarian consequences of and risks associated with nuclear weapons.

10. Many States called for further research and acquisition of substantive knowledge on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. They pointed to the various studies they had commissioned to expand knowledge on the issue. For example, one study was cited in which existing academic research of the past 15 years had been compiled on the humanitarian consequences and risks of nuclear weapons, including the impact of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, on nuclear decision-making. In addition, studies on the effects of nuclear tests on the environment and populations had been commissioned by States that had conducted nuclear tests. Research studies and informal surveys had also been conducted by States affected by

nuclear tests. Finally, regional organizations such as the Pacific Islands Forum had conducted work to identify the existing scholarship and gaps on the legacy of nuclear weapons testing in the region.

11. It was noted by some States that transparency from those who carried out nuclear tests was a necessary precursor for accurate scientific data that would, in turn, inform research and knowledge-generation. A State affected by the testing of nuclear weapons in its territory emphasized its efforts in promoting the declassification of documents and removal of redactions in already-declassified documents by the State that had conducted nuclear tests on its territory. A State that had previously conducted nuclear tests highlighted that almost all of its archives related to its nuclear tests in one region had now been declassified.

III. Linkages to existing frameworks and related treaties

12. Of those States that submitted views and proposals, numerous States called for greater discussion of victim assistance and environmental remediation efforts in all relevant forums, as well as calling for the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in such efforts. Some States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons shared the view that victim assistance and environmental remediation should have a place within the framework of the Treaty. One State recalled its coordination of a joint statement on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and a related side event in the margins of successive Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty.

13. States parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and a State that had observed Meetings of States Parties to the Treaty emphasized the contribution of the Treaty to, and the positive obligations contained in its articles 6 and 7 with regard to, addressing past harms and providing assistance to affected communities. They noted that the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on women and girls, including as a result of ionizing radiation, and on Indigenous Peoples was explicitly recognized under the Treaty. States parties to the Treaty referred to the adoption of the Vienna Action Plan at the first Meeting of States Parties, in which specific actions for the implementation of the Treaty were set out, and to the thematic discussion on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons that had been held at the second Meeting. Numerous States parties drew attention to the ongoing intersessional work of the informal working group on articles 6 and 7, led by Kazakhstan and Kiribati. The contributions of the Scientific Advisory Group of the Treaty and the recently established consultative process on the security concerns of States under the Treaty were also acknowledged.

14. Signatories to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty also emphasized the contribution of that Treaty to establishing a global norm against nuclear testing. Those States listed in annex II to the Treaty were urged to ratify the Treaty so that it could enter into force. Several Member States that had previously tested nuclear weapons reaffirmed their commitment to voluntary moratoriums on nuclear explosive testing pending the entry into force of the Treaty.

15. It was also noted that initiatives had been pursued within the framework of the General Assembly, including through resolutions pertaining to the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of a region that had experienced nuclear testing. Side events dedicated to nuclear disarmament had also been held during sessions of the Assembly. It was observed by some States that informal discussions were currently under way regarding a new global scientific study, possibly to be commissioned by the Assembly, on the impacts and risks associated with the phenomenon of a nuclear winter.

16. Nuclear-weapon-free zones were also cited as contributions to the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Furthermore, a State that possesses nuclear weapons recalled its voluntary moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear explosive devices and called for the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations, at the Conference on Disarmament, on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

IV. Efforts and ongoing needs related to victim assistance and environmental assessment and remediation

Financial settlements and compensation

17. Of those States that submitted views and proposals, numerous States pointed to the economic burden placed on the affected regions and countries in rebuilding infrastructure, providing medical care and managing environmental remediation. Two States affected by the testing of nuclear weapons called for greater compensation, including through victim assistance. States that conducted nuclear tests outlined their respective compensation and financial settlement arrangements, including through passing relevant legislation and concluding agreements with affected States. A State that had conducted nuclear tests drew attention to its national legislation, through which it had established an administrative programme for claims related to atmospheric nuclear testing and uranium industry employment.

Efforts and ongoing needs related to victim assistance

18. States affected by nuclear use or testing had in place national legislation and various programmes that governed the provision of services such as medical services, cash compensation, allowances and other social welfare services. A State affected by the testing of nuclear weapons highlighted that it provided special provisions for women living in radiation risk territories, such as additional pregnancy and childbirth leave, and monthly disability allowances for persons with disabilities associated with radiation exposure. Several States that do not conduct nuclear tests noted they had in place national legislation and programmes that provided entitlements to military veterans who had participated in the nuclear weapons trials of other States or who might have been exposed to ionizing radiation during their deployments.

19. A State affected by the testing of nuclear weapons shared that it had established a register dedicated to maintaining long-term medical records of victims of nuclear testing and their descendants, registering radiation doses, monitoring health status and conducting research on the influence of radiation on the health and mortality of the affected population. That State also highlighted various initiatives related to the identification of victims and the assessment of the impacts of nuclear testing, including the establishment of an expert council that considered, among other things, the medical, psychological and social consequences of nuclear testing, the development of criteria for the formation of risk groups and the development and implementation of new technologies for recording, analysing and treating the medical and social consequences of irradiation.

20. Some States, however, highlighted several outstanding challenges in the provision of an effective response to victim assistance. Those included the absence of international standards for defining victimhood and limited knowledge of the immediate and long-term effects of nuclear weapons use or testing on human health, especially on female reproductive health, as well as the socioeconomic, environmental and cultural impacts of the use or testing of nuclear weapons.

21. Given the possibility of the future use or testing of nuclear weapons, one State called for the development or updating of national contingency plans to include clear measures for victim assistance. It also called for States to conduct regular capacity-building and training for emergency response personnel in order to provide for a prompt and coordinated response in case of future use or testing of nuclear weapons. Public awareness campaigns and educational programmes could serve to inform the population about the security protocols that would be carried out in the event of the use or testing of nuclear weapons and about radiation victims' rights.

Efforts and ongoing needs related to environmental assessment and remediation

22. Efforts had been undertaken, both by States that had carried out nuclear tests and by States that had experienced nuclear tests, to conduct environmental surveys in order to inform environmental remediation and waste removal activities. A State affected by the testing of nuclear weapons shared its experience of conducting comprehensive environmental surveys, including how it differentiated between territories that posed a radiation hazard to the population and required the adoption of a special legal status for conversion to a zone of nuclear safety and territories that did not pose a radiation hazard to the population and could be recommended for removal from the category of "restricted lands". The State also noted that it had developed new methods for the identification and evaluation of nuclear waste. A State that had conducted nuclear tests stated that, although the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had concluded that it was not necessary to continue monitoring the environment of certain atolls that had experienced testing, the State had decided to continue conducting periodic environmental sampling and had made the results of those analyses public.

23. A State affected by the testing of nuclear weapons drew attention to its recent adoption of a law on nuclear safety and security around a former test site. It also outlined efforts to differentiate between excessively contaminated and relatively clean lands, rehabilitate land and transfer relatively clean land back to the public domain. In addition, it had completed the destruction, dismantlement and decontamination of military infrastructure and facilities and converted a former test site into a scientific research facility.

V. Efforts and proposals related to international cooperation and assistance

24. States reflected on the numerous international cooperation and assistance activities related to victim assistance and environmental remediation that had been pursued, both between States and through international organizations. A State affected by the use of nuclear weapons had been providing assistance to countries affected by nuclear tests, including through the development of medical equipment and improvement of local medical care. The State also noted that its local medical associations, universities, hospitals, research institutes and other related organizations had been engaged in activities related to training and research on the effects of radiation exposure. A State affected by the testing of nuclear weapons expressed its willingness to share the competencies and experiences gained through its victim assistance and environmental remediation efforts with other States affected by the testing of nuclear weapons, in strict compliance with international norms. It also drew attention to initiatives undertaken with nuclear-weapon States to, among other things, destroy and decontaminate military infrastructure and facilities.

25. One State recalled that it provided support by responding to incidents at nuclear power plants through IAEA and the International Commission on Radiological Protection. One State also acknowledged the contribution of joint programmes with IAEA in implementing projects to close former nuclear test sites, rehabilitate lands and areas exposed to radioactive contamination and conduct occupational training in nuclear safety and radiation protection.

26. Many States called for further international cooperation and assistance in addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons. Suggestions included financial support for victim assistance and environmental remediation efforts, as well as knowledge-sharing and the provision of technical expertise. It was asserted that international collaboration on providing tangible support to those affected by the testing of nuclear weapons required buy-in from all relevant stakeholders. In addition, it was noted that potential needs or requests for international support should be identified on the basis of scientific analysis and should be sensitive to factors such as gender and age, in order to ensure that the provision of assistance was tailored to meet needs effectively. One State expressed its willingness to explore opportunities for practical cooperation to address the disproportionate impacts of nuclear explosive testing or use on women and girls and on Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized communities.

27. Several States drew attention to the possibility of establishing an international trust fund dedicated to victim assistance and environmental remediation. It was noted that States parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons were making progress on their consideration of the establishment of an international trust fund, in accordance with the Vienna Action Plan and as reaffirmed at the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty. One State expressed the view that, in establishing such a fund, it would be essential to recognize the primary responsibility of those States that possessed nuclear weapons.

28. Finally, it was proposed that the international community should convene a symposium on victim assistance and environmental remediation. The symposium could serve as a forum where survivors and affected States could share their testimonies on the humanitarian and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons and request support from the international community. The symposium would also involve the scientific community and related United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation.

VI. Observations and conclusions of the Secretary-General

29. The catastrophic humanitarian consequences associated with the use or testing of nuclear weapons is a global concern. The 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty expressed its deep concern about the continued risk for humanity represented by the possibility that nuclear weapons could be used and the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from the use of nuclear weapons. It is stated in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons cannot be adequately addressed, that they transcend national borders and that they pose grave implications for human survival, the environment, socioeconomic development, the global economy, food security and the health of current and future generations.

30. Many States that submitted views and proposals referred to the recent studies undertaken by various States and organizations on the humanitarian and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons. In that regard, it should be noted that the most recent update of the comprehensive study on nuclear weapons, including the effects of nuclear weapons and consequences of nuclear war (A/45/373), carried out under a mandate from the General Assembly, had been produced in 1990. States should

consider, in the light of recent developments and given the strong interest in the subject, the potential benefits of a further update to the comprehensive study.

31. Efforts are under way to establish mechanisms for the provision of international cooperation and support in relation to victim assistance and environmental assessment and remediation, notably by States parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In that regard, the establishment of a voluntary international trust fund for victim assistance and environmental remediation could strengthen ongoing efforts to provide financial and technical support to States and populations in need of assistance. The establishment of a trust fund could also provide a framework to systematize requests related to existing needs and available financial and technical support. Such a fund would be consistent with practice in other fields, such as those related to human rights and the environment.

32. The United Nations and its forums should remain central to the discussions on victim assistance and environmental remediation, including on the establishment of future mechanisms for international cooperation and assistance. Relevant entities and organizations of the United Nations system should, where appropriate, support efforts to deepen understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and facilitate the provision of international cooperation and assistance where appropriate.

33. **It is recommended that Member States study the ideas and proposals contained in the present report and continue discussions on the issue, including on proposals related to international cooperation and assistance, at the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly.**

Annex

Replies received from Governments

Austria

[Original: English]
[31 May 2024]

Austria welcomes the opportunity to submit its views for consideration by the Secretary-General, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 78/240 entitled "Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons".

Nuclear disarmament, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and urgently achieving a world free of weapons of mass destruction are a priority of Austria's foreign and security policy. Austria takes the position that only the complete elimination and stigmatization of such weapons can put a halt to their proliferation and the inherent risks, as well as catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences. In support of the international efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, Austria, like many other States, stresses the need to put these factors and the fact that the risks and consequences concern all States at the centre of all deliberations.

Austria is proud to be a leading advocate of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, especially in providing aid to affected communities and States. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force on 22 January 2021. Austria held the presidency of the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty, which took place in Vienna from 21 to 23 June 2022. The States parties adopted a declaration and an action plan during this meeting, furthering the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Austria remains committed to the effective and comprehensive implementation of the Vienna Action Plan and at the second Meeting of States Parties in 2023 was entrusted with the role of coordinator for the informal intersessional process on the development of common security perspectives of the Treaty States. Austria also organized a side event entitled "Tracking progress towards a world without nuclear weapons", which took place on 11 October 2023 on the sidelines of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly.

In June 2022, Austria organized the fourth international Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Vienna, which presented new scientific findings on the humanitarian consequences and risks of nuclear weapons, with the participation of over 80 States. This conference followed conferences in Oslo and Nayarit (both 2013) and Vienna (2014). Austria also coordinated a statement on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which was co-sponsored by a total of 159 countries. Additionally, Austria organized a side event at the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The side event focused on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and was held on 17 August 2022.

In the framework of focusing on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and risks of nuclear weapons, the Austrian Foreign Ministry commissioned an overview of new studies in this field, which was published in July 2023. The goal was to increase the understanding of these complex consequences and risks to support diplomatic work on nuclear disarmament. The study also intends to help establish a common factual basis for international negotiations and a shift away from nuclear deterrence.

The resulting brochure by Nick Ritchie and Mikhail Kupriyanov of the University of York compiles academic research of the past 15 years on the humanitarian consequences and risks of nuclear weapons. It thus provides an overview of the additional data and knowledge generated by new research and the application of new technologies and methods. These relate in particular to the impact on the environment and the complex humanitarian consequences. The study, inter alia, includes studies on the impact of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and on nuclear decision-making. In the margins of the session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in August 2023 in Vienna, the brochure was presented for the first time. Furthermore, on 2 August 2023, Austria held a side event during the Preparatory Committee session in New York and presented the study's findings.

Austria provides significant financial support to the Scientific Advisory Group of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Scientific Advisory Group works on workshops at the 2024 session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and events related to Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Austria emphasizes the importance of involving agencies such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations Development Programme, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the World Health Organization in environmental assessment, remediation and victim assistance efforts in collaboration with affected States.

Austria underscores the necessity for States to discuss victim assistance and environmental remediation in regional and international forums, including Preparatory Committees for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty, the First Committee of the General Assembly and the third Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Austria is committed to working closely, bilaterally or through relevant organizations, to facilitate affected States to provide initial assessments of the humanitarian, health and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons, along with technical and scientific expertise. Austria considers this important in order to enable effective support in the framework of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on victim assistance and the rehabilitation of environmental damage caused by the use or testing of nuclear weapons, which has caused grave humanitarian problems in numerous States around the globe.

Additionally, Austria strongly calls for the active engagement of all relevant international organizations, United Nations agencies, the scientific community, representatives of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, affected communities and other relevant actors to improve understanding of the humanitarian and environmental impact of nuclear use, testing and related activities.

Burkina Faso

[Original: French]
[28 May 2024]

As a State Member of the United Nations, Burkina Faso supports the implementation of General Assembly resolution 78/240, entitled "Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons".

This resolution could be an important step towards ensuring recognition of the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear tests and the use of nuclear weapons.

By supporting this resolution, Burkina Faso expresses its solidarity with the victims of nuclear tests and the use of nuclear weapons, and recognizes the importance of providing them with appropriate assistance.

The importance of remediating the environment in areas affected by nuclear tests or the use of nuclear weapons is affirmed in this resolution. In that regard, Burkina Faso will support efforts to mitigate long-term environmental effects and restore damaged ecosystems.

Committed to disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, Burkina Faso sees this resolution as a means of raising awareness of the disastrous consequences of these weapons.

Lastly, this resolution on victims and the environment in States affected by nuclear weapons contributes to the promotion of international peace and security by reducing human suffering and fostering stability in the affected areas.

Canada

[Original: English]
[31 May 2024]

This submission provides a summary of Canada's views on General Assembly resolution 78/240 entitled "Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons". This submission responds to a note verbale from the Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA/2024/00018/LONW), pursuant to operative paragraph 4 of the above-mentioned resolution, requesting the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States.

The importance of victim assistance and environmental remediation

Canada appreciates the efforts of Kazakhstan and Kiribati to generate greater attention to, and need for action on, the provision of victim assistance and environmental remediation to States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons. Redressing past harms is not only a moral imperative but can also help to advance disarmament by raising awareness of the effects of nuclear weapons use and testing.

Canada supports increased dialogue and action on victim assistance and environmental remediation, including through the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty's near-universality offers an opportunity for collaboration and information exchange.

The Canadian context

As a non-nuclear-weapon State in full compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and a ratifying State of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Canada has neither tested nor used nuclear weapons. The physiological health of civilians in Canada has not been significantly affected by legacy fallout from nuclear explosive testing.

In 2008, Canada's Department of National Defence established the Atomic Veterans Recognition Program to recognize, on an ex gratia basis, Canadian military veterans and science and technology workers who participated in nuclear explosive testing outside Canada or decontamination efforts at Canada's Chalk River

Laboratories. Approximately 700 former Canadian military personnel participated in up to 29 nuclear weapons trials by the United Kingdom and United States between 1946 and 1963.

Canada's nuclear regulator, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, has not been engaged in environmental remediation efforts from nuclear explosive testing or nuclear use. It has, however, responded to incidents at nuclear power plants in Chernobyl, Ukraine (1986), and Fukushima, Japan (2011), through the International Atomic Energy Agency and International Commission on Radiological Protection. Currently, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission regulates the remediation of soils containing historic low-level radioactive waste and industrial waste in the municipality of Port Hope, Ontario.

Moving forward

Canada recognizes that important challenges stand in the way of an effective international response on this matter, including the absence of international standards for defining victimhood and a lack of international recognition of the immediate and long-term effects of nuclear weapons use or testing on human health (especially female reproductive health), infrastructure and the environment. Further research, including into the gendered impacts of ionizing radiation on women and girls, and information exchanges will be critical in this regard.

Canada is open to exploring opportunities for practical cooperation on victim assistance and environmental remediation, with a view to addressing the disproportionate impacts of nuclear explosive testing or use on women and girls, Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized communities. As a member of the Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Canada will also continue to champion the Treaty's entry into force as the ultimate guarantee against nuclear explosive testing.

France

[Original: French]
[31 May 2024]

France thanks the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the opportunity to submit its views for his consideration in accordance with resolution 78/240 entitled "Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons", adopted by the General Assembly on 22 December 2023.

France supports the discussions on victim assistance and remediation measures related to the use of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, France wishes to recall that it was unable to support resolution 78/240. According to that resolution, new knowledge has emerged about the consequences of tests, but no reference is made to any conclusive scientific studies. The resolution seeks to establish an international responsibility regime that does not take into account the ongoing bilateral and national efforts, to which France is committed, and also contains a call for the systematic sharing of technical and scientific information, which could have implications for international security and non-proliferation.

1. France, the first nuclear-armed State (together with the United Kingdom) to have signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, fully shoulders its responsibilities and does its utmost to compensate all nuclear test victims.

The policy of transparency adopted by the President of France following the country's last round of nuclear tests led to international studies being carried out, at

the request of the Government of France, to assess the effects of testing on the environment and people. In 1998, the International Atomic Energy Agency conducted a study of the current and future radiological situation at the atolls of Mururoa and Fangataufa after 30 years of testing. Although the Agency concluded that "no further environmental monitoring at Mururoa … is needed for purposes of radiological protection", France has since continued such monitoring through periodic environmental sampling, which has not revealed any anomalies to date. In the interests of transparency, the results of these analyses are made public.

2. France seeks to ensure transparency by facilitating access to nuclear test documents. To that end, on 5 October 2021, the Ministry of Armed Forces established a commission to open the archives on the nuclear tests in French Polynesia. This body brought together, in an interministerial setting, representatives of French Polynesia with representatives of various government departments and archives holding documents on the subject. Full transparency has almost been achieved, since most of the archives (more than 120,000 documents at this stage) have already been declassified.

3. Act No. 2010-2 of 5 January 2010 on the recognition and compensation of victims of the French nuclear tests, which became known as the Morin Act, sets out measures for the compensation of victims. This Act established a uniform system, a one-stop shop and an investigative committee, the Committee for the Compensation of Nuclear Test Victims. The Act stipulates that a claimant shall, provided that the time, place and medical condition criteria set out in article 2 have been met, benefit from a presumption of causality between the exposure to atomic radiation produced by the French nuclear tests and the onset of his or her illness. This presumption can be rebutted only if the relevant government department establishes that the cause of the claimant's condition is the exclusive result of a cause unrelated to exposure to atomic radiation produced by nuclear tests, likely because he or she had never been exposed to such radiation.

In Papeete on 27 July 2021, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, acknowledged the debt of France to French Polynesia for the nuclear tests carried out in the Pacific from 1966 to 1996, and pledged to implement a set of measures to complement the State's efforts to handle these claims (including the reconsideration of compensation claims that have been denied and the extension by three years of the deadline for nuclear test victims and their beneficiaries to file compensation claims).

Since 1 January 2022, a process has been in place for outreach on and assistance in filing compensation claims under the Morin Act with the Committee for the Compensation of Nuclear Test Victims.

See also this selection of open-source references.[1]

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

[Original: English]
[20 May 2024]

Iran strongly supports the resolution addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons by providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States

[1] Information report No. 856 produced on behalf of the senatorial committee for the monitoring of the application of laws (1) on the implementation of Act No. 2010-2 of 5 January 2010 on the recognition and compensation of victims of the French nuclear tests; *La dimension radiologique des essais nucléaires français en Polynésie: à l'épreuve des faits*, report by the Ministry of Defence (2006, ISBN-10: 2110967803); and *The radiological situation at the atolls of Mururoa and Fangataufa*, International Atomic Energy Agency *Radiological Assessment Reports Series* (STI/PUB/1028, ISBN 92-0-101198-9).

affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons. Iran believes that it is crucial to address the humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons, as these have long-lasting impacts on affected populations and the environment.

Drawing from the bitter experience of enduring chemical attacks by the Baathist regime of Iraq from 1980 to 1988, Iran staunchly advocates for the total rejection of all forms of weapons of mass destruction. Iran condemns the use, threat of use or testing of nuclear weapons, as they pose a grave threat to international peace and security. Iran calls for the full implementation of measures to provide victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States and all citizens affected by nuclear weapons and reiterates its principled position that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Iran also emphasizes the importance of cooperation among Member States in addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons, as this issue requires collective efforts to ensure that victims receive adequate support and that affected environments are restored. Iran emphasizes the responsibility of accomplices for the testing, use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction, and asserts that they must be held accountable. Iran stands ready to work with other Member States to address this important issue and calls for continued international cooperation in this regard.

Japan

[Original: English]
[24 May 2024]

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 78/240 entitled “Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons”, we present Japan’s views and proposals on the efforts and needs related to victim assistance and environmental remediation affected by the use and testing of nuclear weapons.

Japan, as the only country to have ever suffered from atomic bombings during war, can fully support the purpose and objective of this resolution, which is to provide assistance to victims and to remediate those environments affected by the use and testing of nuclear weapons, and we believe that this resolution is significant in terms of raising awareness in, increasing the attention of and obtaining more support from the international community for assistance to victims and for environmental remediation. Based on these points, Japan supported this resolution.

The atomic bombs dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, weapons of unparalleled destruction, not only took many precious lives in an instant, but also left the hibakusha who survived with life-long scars and other after-effects, leaving them in a state of anxiety.

In order to maintain and promote the health and welfare of the hibakusha suffering from health consequences caused by radiation from the atomic bombs, Japan has been promoting comprehensive measures for the hibakusha under the law concerning relief to atomic bomb survivors, issuing the atomic bomb survivors’ certificates for them. The certificates allows them to access a number of services, including health examinations, medical benefits at public expense, various allowances and welfare services such as consultation services, as well as health, medical and welfare services.

The law concerning relief to atomic bomb survivors also allows the hibakusha living overseas, irrespective of their nationalities and origins, to apply for atomic bomb survivors’ certificates, and stipulates other relief measures for them, such as the provision of medical expenses and various allowances.

In addition, based on its experience and knowledge as the only country to have ever suffered from atomic bombings during war, Japan has been actively providing assistance to countries affected by nuclear tests through the framework of Japan's official development assistance, such as grant aid and technical cooperation. This also includes the development of medical equipment and the improvement of local medical care for the communities in Kazakhstan affected by the nuclear tests of the Soviet era.

Furthermore, local medical associations, universities, hospitals, research institutes and other related organizations such as the Radiation Effects Research Foundation, mainly based in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, have actively engaged in international cooperation, including training and research studies related to radiation exposure, based on the experience and knowledge gained through our studies on the hibakusha.

Japan will continue to communicate and cooperate with the countries concerned on this issue.

Kazakhstan

[Original: English]
[22 February 2024]

Pursuant to operative paragraph 4 of resolution 78/240 entitled "Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons", adopted by the General Assembly on 22 December 2023, Kazakhstan presents herewith its views and proposals regarding efforts and ongoing needs related to victim assistance and environmental assessment and remediation to contribute to the substantiative report.

The territory of the former Semipalatinsk test site is located at the intersection of three regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan (the Pavlodar, Karaganda and Abai regions).[1] Its total area is 18,311.4 km^2.

Over 40 years, from 1949 to 1989, about 456 nuclear tests were conducted on the territory of the Semipalatinsk test site, including 30 surface, 86 aerial and 340 underground nuclear explosions.

The test site was closed on 29 August 1991 by decree of the President of Kazakhstan. Since then, Kazakhstan has conducted comprehensive environmental surveys of the test site and has taken measures to dismantle military infrastructure located therein.

In 1992, at the initiative of the United States of America and with the support of the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan began the implementation of the international Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, also called the Nunn-Lugar Program. The Program contained a set of measures, including the destruction and decontamination of military infrastructure and facilities remaining on the territory of Kazakhstan after it gained independence in 1991, the dismantlement of strategic offensive weapons, the creation of an export control system, improvement of the management and control of nuclear materials and the conversion of the defence industry.

[1] From 1939 to 1997, the territory of the Abai region was the territory of the Semipalatinsk region. In 1997, the Semipalatinsk region was incorporated into the East Kazakhstan region. The Abai region was established in 2022 within the territorial frontiers of the former Semipalatinsk region.

By 2000, the nuclear weapons testing infrastructure at the Semipalatinsk test site had been dismantled and 181 tunnels in the Degelen mountain range, 13 unused boreholes and 12 silo launchers at the Balapan site had been closed.

In 2020, the Experimental Field site, where 116 air and ground nuclear explosions were carried out, was brought to a safe state.

Today, the territory of the Semipalatinsk test site has been completely cleared of the consequences of nuclear military activities that took place before 1991. All the tunnels and wells that were intended for underground explosions of nuclear charges have been put in a condition unsuitable for their originally intended purpose.

Environmental consequences

Kazakhstan was the first country in the world to conduct a full-scale assessment of the radiation situation on the territory of a former test site. A comprehensive environmental survey of the Semipalatinsk test site was carried out from 2008 to 2021.

A physical protection system has been created at certain facilities of the Semipalatinsk test site, providing reliable physical barriers to exclude unauthorized access.

A methodology was developed to conduct a comprehensive environmental survey of land plots where nuclear weapon tests were carried out. The Semipalatinsk test site was converted from a source of military threat to a scientific research facility. To date, 100 per cent of its territory has been surveyed, and more than 2 million field measurements and more than 100,000 laboratory tests have been carried out.

In the course of a comprehensive environmental survey, the content of technogenic radionuclides (^{137}Cs, ^{90}Sr, ^{241}Am, $^{239+240}$Pu, ^{3}H) in the main environmental objects – soil, water and air, flora and fauna – was studied, and on the basis of this data, the degree of radiation hazard of the surveyed area was determined. During the survey, areas with significant radioactive contamination were identified, and therefore they fall under the categories of low- and medium-active radioactive waste.

The survey made it possible to conclude that radioactive contamination is local in nature and is not spread throughout the entire territory of the site. The main part of the contaminated land is located within the test sites where nuclear weapon tests were conducted: Experimental Field, Balapan, Degelen, Sary-Uzen, Telkem, Aktan-Berli and sites 4 and 4A.

In other contaminated sites located outside the test sites, radioactive contamination was formed in two ways: as a result of radioactive fallout from some nuclear tests (traces of radioactive fallout), stretching for tens and hundreds of kilometres from the epicentres of explosions in the south-east and south direction, and as a result of the migration of human-made radionuclides in underground and surface waters outside the test sites.

The survey of the Semipalatinsk test site made it possible to determine the boundaries of land plots that pose a radiation hazard to the population, on which it is necessary to carry out measures to eliminate the consequences of nuclear tests, and the boundaries of land plots that do not pose a radiation hazard to the population.

Based on the results of the survey, the territory of the Semipalatinsk test site can be divided into two categories:

Category 1 – a territory that poses a radiation hazard to the population and requires the adoption of a special legal status and should be converted to the zone of nuclear safety;

Category 2 – an area that potentially does not pose a radiation hazard to the population and can be recommended for removal from the category of restricted lands.

Studies of the radiological and ecological situation on the territories adjacent to the Semipalatinsk test site have been carried out since the first explosion.

From 1953 to 1996, the Research Institute of Radiation Medicine and Ecology (formerly, Dispensary No. 4 of the Ministry of Health of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) conducted research on the radiation situation in the settlements of the former Semipalatinsk region (now the Abai region) adjacent to the site.

After the prohibition of ground and atmospheric tests in 1962, the reduction of local and global fallout and the processes of natural decontamination of soil and radioactive decay, the total volume of radionuclides in environmental objects (soil, vegetation, water) and food of the studied settlements systematically decreases.

Joint research has been carried out by specialists of the Research Institute of Radiation Medicine and Ecology and the Research Institute of Radiation Biology and Medicine (Hiroshima University, Japan) since 1995 to study the effects of radioactive fallout from nuclear weapon tests, both on the environment and on the population of the Semipalatinsk region.

The outcomes of the research on certain territories outside the Semipalatinsk test site allow to draw the following main conclusions:

– The levels of Cs-137 in soil samples outside the territory of the Semipalatinsk test site and within the Semipalatinsk region are comparable to the global level;

– The levels of Pu239, 240 at many local sites are from 10 to 100 times higher than the global level.

Thus, decades after the end of nuclear testing in the atmosphere, short-lived and medium-lived technogenic radioactive elements disintegrated and the relatively long-lived Sr-90 and Cs-137 partially disintegrated and also migrated from the surface to deeper soil horizons. The level of accumulation of Cs-137 in certain territories adjacent to the Semipalatinsk test site does not differ from the general global level. Modern research shows that Pu concentrations are high in these territories.

The radiological and ecological situation in the territories adjacent to the Semipalatinsk test site is currently being determined and will be further determined in the future by the level of accumulation of radionuclides, primarily Pu and Am. The real status of environmental pollution by these components has not yet been studied.

Health consequences for the local population

The legacy of nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk test site includes not only the residual radioactive contamination of its test sites and environmental objects but also the consequences of irradiation of the population living in areas of radioactive fallout.

Today, according to approximate estimates, there are about 1.5 million people affected by nuclear tests and their descendants.

Nuclear testing at the Semipalatinsk test site was the cause of the following challenges and problems:

– The need for a reconstruction and calculation of radiation doses received by the population;

– Determination of the quantitative and age and sex composition of radiation risk groups;

– Estimates of medical and demographic consequences and calculations of medical losses;

– Prevention of radiation-induced diseases and rehabilitation of the affected population.

The medical consequences for the population exposed to ionizing radiation are addressed in a number of research papers published by Kazakhstan and foreign scientists. Studies focused on the population in relevant regions of Kazakhstan who were exposed to ionizing radiation as a result of nuclear testing.

It was found that even 40 to 48 years after exposure to radiation the average annual prevalence of the levels of most categories and classes of diseases among the affected population and their descendants was significantly higher than in the control groups.

In 2018, an assessment of the health status of citizens exposed to ionizing radiation was carried out. The assessment was performed both for persons living in the affected territories and for those living in the rest of Kazakhstan.

The prevalence of cancer levels in radiation-exposed individuals and their descendants was significantly higher than in the control groups and ranged from 261.6–278.5 cases per 100,000 population, as opposed to 146.8–154.2 cases in the control groups. The relative risk is 1.73–1.78. In the structure of oncological diseases in the main group, the following diseases prevailed: lung and bronchial cancer (men and women), breast cancer in women, eye cancer, cancer of the brain and other parts of the central nervous system, as well as of the haematopoietic and lymphoid tissue. In the control groups, the share of lung and bronchial cancer and breast cancer in women was two times less than in the main group.

The prevalence of circulatory system diseases in the main group also exceeded the control indicators, amounting to 695.3–732.4 cases per 100,000, while in the control groups it amounted to 450.8–470.2 cases. These results demonstrate the established pattern of a significant excess of levels of circulatory system diseases among persons exposed to direct radiation and their second-generation descendants in comparison to the control groups, as well as the effects of premature ageing induced by radiation exposure.

The analysis of the dynamics of mortality rates makes it possible to identify the significant excess of mortality in the main group compared with the control groups, both in terms of general mortality and in terms of certain types of diseases as causes of death. The average annual level of general mortality among the population exposed to radiation at a dose of 20 centisievert (cSv) or more was significantly higher than in the control group and ranged from 1,915.6–1,938.4 cases per 100,000, while in the control group it amounted to 1,902.7–1,909.2 cases. The average annual relative risk is 1.74. It was found that the annual damage to the health of the population exposed to radiation at a dose of 20 cSv or more amounted to 361.8 additional cases to the expected cases of diseases per 100,000, including circulatory system diseases (79.6 cases), respiratory diseases (74.7 cases), digestive system diseases (48.2 cases) and malignant neoplasms (46.2 cases) per 100,000. In the same group, 309.4 more deaths per 100,000 were registered, including 187.5 cases from circulatory system diseases, 43.5 cases from malignant neoplasms and 27.3 from respiratory diseases.

According to 2021 statistical data (when the Abai region was part of the East Kazakhstan region), the East Kazakhstan region ranked first in mortality from diseases of the circulatory system (408.1 per 100,000 population), second in mortality from malignant neoplasms (94.3 per 100,000 population) and third in registered cases of malignant neoplasms and circulatory system diseases. The total mortality rate among men living in the East Kazakhstan region in 2021 was 15.14 per 1,000 (second

place nationwide). The total mortality rate among women living in the East Kazakhstan region in 2021 was 12.59 per 1,000 (fourth place). The East Kazakhstan region is ranked second in the country for the lowest life expectancy among men (64.68 years), and in terms of women's life expectancy it is ranked third.

When analysing the indicators of disability, it was taken into account that the main pathologies that have a causal relationship with radiation exposure are malignant neoplasms and diseases of the circulatory system. In more than 70 per cent of cases, the reason for referral to medical authorities to determine the cause of death related to exposure to ionizing radiation was cancer. As of 2023, the overwhelming majority of citizens who applied for assessment of both disease and cause of death were diagnosed with malignant neoplasms (69.52 per cent), as well as pathologies of the cardiovascular system (27.32 per cent).

It is also noteworthy that in addition to the established somatic diseases associated with radiation exposure, in a large percentage of cases, medical specialists register medical and psychological tensions associated with prolonged stressful exposure to radiation, which leads to the formation of radiation-related anxiety, radiophobia and an increase in social anxiety.

Practical assistance to the affected population

In order to address the consequences of nuclear testing, the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 1787-XII on the social protection of citizens who suffered from nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site was adopted on 18 December 1992.

The Law established the classification of territories exposed to nuclear tests and the rates of radiation exposure of the population living in these territories.

Depending on the value of the effective equivalent dose of exposure of the population, contaminated territories were subdivided into:

– The zone of extreme radiation risk, with a dose of exposure of the population of more than 100 cSv for the entire duration of testing;

– The zone of maximum radiation risk, with a dose of exposure of the population from 35 to 100 cSv for the entire duration of testing;

– The zone of increased radiation risk, with a dose of exposure of the population from 7 to 35 cSv for the entire duration of testing;

– The zone of minimal radiation risk, with a dose of exposure of the population from 0.1 to 7 cSv for the entire duration of testing;

– A territory with a preferential socioeconomic status, with a dose of exposure of the population below 0.1 cSv for the entire duration of testing.

The classification of territories and the rates of doses were established on the basis of:

– Information from the ministries of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics involved in the operation of the Semipalatinsk test site;

– Archives of Dispensary No. 4;

– Results of the work of the special commission of the Ministry of Health of Kazakhstan, which included specialists of the former Ministry of Defence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and specialists in radiation hygiene and radiation protection of Kazakhstan and Russia.

The classification of territories by radiation risk zones in 1992 was a relevant and objective measure.

The territorial principle was the basis for social protection measures for citizens who suffered from nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk test site.

Since 1992, new factors influencing the change in legal and social relations have emerged. They include:

– Large internal migration flows, both from and to the affected territories;

– Significant reduction in background radiation of the affected territories;

– Emergence of the second, third and fourth generations of survivors: children born of parents exposed to excessive ionizing radiation.

The rights and social guarantees of citizens affected by nuclear testing are protected and provided under several laws, including the 1992 law, legislative acts on pensions, disability-related social benefits, social protection measures for persons with disabilities, special social services and services for veterans.

According to the current legislation, citizens who have lived or are living in radiation risk zones and territories with preferential socioeconomic status are guaranteed one-time cash compensation for damage caused by nuclear tests, the amount of which is determined individually depending on the place and the period of residence in the affected territories.

To date, over 1.1 million citizens have received one-time cash compensation.

Citizens living and working in the radiation risk territories, as defined by law, are also entitled to additional remuneration and additional annual paid leave. Women living in these territories are entitled to additional pregnancy and childbirth leave.

Children of citizens who have lived, worked or served (including mandatory military service) in affected territories from 1949 to 1990 may be recognized as victims of nuclear testing and entitled to relevant social benefits, provided that they have disabilities or diseases associated with exposure to ionizing radiation and that there is a causal relationship between their health status and the fact that one of their parents has been in radiation risk zones.

Persons with disabilities associated with radiation exposure during nuclear tests and their consequences are entitled to monthly disability allowances. Recipients are divided into three groups (severe disability, less severe disability and moderate disability) and entitled to monthly payments of 113,993 tenge, 97,361 tenge and 81,540 tenge, respectively. The value of the payments is linked to minimum living wage and reviewed annually.

Family members of those who died as a result of radiation-related diseases or consequences of nuclear tests are also entitled to allowances.

In addition to cash payments, citizens are entitled to medical screening and assistance.

In 2002, the State Scientific Automated Medical Register was created. Its main tasks include: providing long-term medical records of victims of nuclear testing and their descendants; registering radiation doses; monitoring the health status and providing an objective assessment of the damage caused; conducting research on the influence of the radiation factor on health and mortality in the affected population; and developing optimal strategies to minimize health consequences.

Currently, 372,686 individuals are registered under the State Scientific Automated Medical Register. From 2002 to 2022, 104,510 patients underwent complex medical examinations. The following observations can be made from the medical examinations:

– In 1,746 cases (26 per cent), diseases of the circulatory system were registered;

– In 1,640 cases (24 per cent), vascular lesions of the central nervous system were registered;

– Thyroid diseases were registered in 1,174 cases (18 per cent), diseases of the gastrointestinal tract were registered in 1,144 cases (17 per cent) and diseases of the musculoskeletal system were registered in 979 cases (15 per cent).

During the period from 2002 to 2022, 22,775 patients received inpatient treatment and 3,795 received outpatient treatment.

The Regional Expert Council was established in 1995. The Council conducts advisory work to assess the relationship of diseases, disability and mortality with exposure to radiation. Its research activities are aimed at studying the impact of nuclear tests and other radiation factors on the health of the population and the medical, psychological and social consequences of nuclear testing and their minimization.

The following scientific programmes were implemented and funded by the Government:

1. Epidemiological studies based on archival data (1991–1994);

2. The study of the medical-demographic and radiation-hygienic consequences of the impact of nuclear weapons testing on the population and territories adjacent to the Semipalatinsk test site and the development of criteria for the formation of risk groups and medical and rehabilitation measures for victims (1995–1999);

3. Patterns and features of the formation of radiation risks among the population living in the territories adjacent to the Semipalatinsk test site and development and implementation of programmes for the medical and social minimization of post-radiation effects (2000–2002);

4. Development and implementation of new technologies for recording, analysing and treating the medical and social consequences of irradiation of the population of Kazakhstan as a result of nuclear weapon tests and the impact of volumetric technogenic sources of ionizing radiation (2003–2005);

5. Ranking and clinic-epidemiological identification of radiation and non-radiation risk factors and assessment of their impact on the formation of the health of certain segments of the population of the East Kazakhstan, Pavlodar and Karaganda regions of Kazakhstan (2006–2007);

6. Development of scientifically based programmes to improve the State Scientific Automated Medical Register of the population of Kazakhstan exposed to ionizing radiation and medical and social monitoring of long-term consequences (2007–2009);

7. Methods of complex medical and genetic indication and prevention of radiation-induced effects among the descendants of persons exposed to radiation (2010–2012);

8. The influence of environmental factors on the health of the population of urbanized territories (2010–2012);

9. Development of science-based technologies to minimize environmental risk and prevent adverse effects on public health (2012–2014);

10. Retrospective and prospective assessment of medical and radio-ecological impact on the population and territories adjacent to the Semipalatinsk test site (2014–2016);

11. Development of scientific and methodological foundations for minimizing the environmental pressure and ensuring medical care, social protection and health improvement of the population of environmentally impacted territories of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2017–2019);

12. Evaluation of the effectiveness of protective and rehabilitation measures for the population exposed to ionizing radiation as a result of the activities of the Semipalatinsk test site and development of proposals for their improvement (2017–2019).

In July 2023, the law on the establishment of the Semipalatinsk zone of nuclear safety was adopted. The law defines the zone as a limited part of territory characterized by excessive radioactive contamination as a result of nuclear weapon tests at the Semipalatinsk test site, and establishes a special legal regime. It aims to ensure nuclear and radiation safety and the maintenance of the nuclear non-proliferation regime on the territory affected, as well as to provide measures for its rehabilitation. According to the law, the following measures are to be implemented:

– Differentiation of excessively contaminated and relatively clean lands of the Semipalatinsk test site;

– Creation of conditions for the transfer of relatively clean lands into public domain;

– Restriction of access to excessively contaminated lands;

– Rehabilitation of lands;

– Continuous monitoring and radiological and ecological research.

To implement these measures, 3.596 billion tenge of government funding has been allocated until 2027.

International cooperation

Kazakhstan has been pursuing international cooperation in order to eliminate the infrastructure and consequences of nuclear weapon tests, ensure the conversion of the former military-industrial complex for peaceful purposes and promote scientific and technical cooperation in the field of safe nuclear energy and radiological ecology. The leading agency in this area – the National Nuclear Centre – cooperates with partners from the United States, Russia, Japan, France, the United Kingdom and international organizations. Activities related to the Semipalatinsk test site are an outstanding and unique contribution of Kazakhstan to nuclear non-proliferation and joint scientific, technical and development work.

Currently, the National Nuclear Centre is continuing its efforts to reduce the risk of spreading nuclear waste on the territory of the Semipalatinsk test site. New methods for the identification and evaluation of nuclear waste have been developed. Special software and hardware solutions have been put in place that allow for both conducting large-scale spectrometric studies and automating their subsequent processing. The use of the existing scientific base made it possible for the first time to develop a methodology for the identification and assessment of nuclear waste both on the soil surface and in the subsurface layer.

It was the use of innovative methods for determining and evaluating nuclear waste that allowed for large-scale research work to be carried out in the shortest

possible time (on areas of hundreds of square kilometres) and to identify all nuclear test sites and sites for various experiments, both on the territory of technical sites and beyond. The research results became the starting point for the development of technical solutions to ensure the non-proliferation of identified nuclear waste.

The competencies obtained can potentially be made available to foreign States affected by nuclear testing, in strict compliance with international norms.

The following international scientific projects have been implemented at the Semipalatinsk test site:

1. Reconstruction and calculation of retrospective dose loads in the territories adjacent to the Semipalatinsk test site (soil, water, tree bark, bricks, electron paramagnetic resonance dosimetry of tooth enamel, etc.). Japan (Hiroshima University), Russia (Institute of Biophysics) and United States of America (National Institutes of Health) (1996–2009);

2. The study of the impact of nuclear weapons testing in the Semipalatinsk test site on the health of the population of the Semipalatinsk region. International grant jointly implemented with the Institute of Radiation Hygiene (Munich, Germany) from the European Commission within the framework of the INCO-COPERNICUS programme (1997–1999);

3. Assessment of reproductive health following radiation exposure among the population living in the immediate vicinity of the nuclear test site in Semipalatinsk. International grant from the World Health Organization jointly implemented with the Institute of Cancer Research, London (2000–2006);

4. Creation of the State Scientific Automated Medical Register of victims of the activities of the Semipalatinsk test site. International project with the Radiation Effects Research Foundation, Hiroshima, Japan (2003–2011);

5. Socio-psychological consequences for the population living in the territories subjected to nuclear weapon tests. International project with the Peace Institute (Hiroshima University) (2009–2011);

6. The study of genetic changes in descendants whose parents were exposed to radiation. Creative cooperation agreement with the Institute of Evolution at the University of Haifa, with the Ecological Imperative Scientific and Technical Association, Haifa, Israel (2011–2015);

7. The elemental composition of natural environments and human bio substrates in the area of influence of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. Contract with the State Educational Institution of Higher Education, National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University (Tomsk, Russian Federation) (2011–2013);

8. The effect of microsatellite instability on the genetic predisposition to radiation-induced carcinogenesis. Together with the Institute of Evolution at the University of Haifa, Israel, and the University of Virginia, United States of America (2012);

9. Research on the influence of “heavy” water on the quality of life and health of the population of some regions of Kazakhstan. Together with the Ecological Imperative Scientific and Technical Association and the University of Haifa, Israel (2012);

10. Prospective cohort study on the population of the territories adjacent to the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. International grant between the International Agency for Research on Cancer, France; the Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority, Norway; the Bundesamt für Strahlenschutz (Federal Office for Radiation Protection, Germany); and the National Institute of Radiological Sciences, Japan (2013–2015);

11. Low-dose research towards multidisciplinary integration (DoReMi project), a three-generation study. International grant implemented jointly with the Federal Office for Radiation Protection, Germany (2014–2015);

12. Molecular studies of biological samples of residents near the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in Kazakhstan and training in biodosimetry in Kazakhstan. International grant implemented jointly with the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre (2014–2015);

13. Assessment of the impact of radiation on the population and territories of the southern region of the Abai region. Start-up project of Semey Medical University, Non-Commercial Joint-Stock Company, together with Hiroshima University, Japan (2022–2025);

14. The risk of thyroid cancer in persons who experienced prolonged exposure to ionizing radiation as a result of living near the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. Start-up project of Semey Medical University, together with the International Agency for Research on Cancer, Lyon, France (2023–2025).

Over the past 30 years, Kazakhstan and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have jointly worked on a number of key initiatives and projects:

1. Closing the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site: Kazakhstan and IAEA successfully collaborated to close the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, one of the largest in the world. This process helped to isolate and safely manage radioactive materials at the testing site;

2. Rehabilitation of radioactively contaminated areas: Kazakhstan and IAEA have jointly developed and implemented projects for the rehabilitation of lands and areas exposed to radioactive contamination. These projects help to improve the life and safety of the local residents;

3. Training and sharing experiences: the cooperation also involves sharing experiences and occupational training in nuclear safety and radiation protection. IAEA actively supports training and advanced training of Kazakh experts;

4. Peaceful use of atomic energy: joint efforts are aimed at promoting the peaceful use of atomic energy in Kazakhstan and the region. This involves nuclear medicine projects and occupational training in nuclear power engineering;

5. Enhancing nuclear safety: Kazakhstan actively cooperates with IAEA in efforts to strengthen nuclear security and nuclear non-proliferation worldwide.

Overall, 42 national projects have been completed and are ongoing under the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme.

Notably, the objective of the IAEA KAZ9016 project is to improve informed decision-making regarding the transfer of the former Semipalatinsk test site lands for economic use. This project will have a great influence on the social and economic welfare of the population at the Semipalatinsk test site, which is expected to be transferred for economic use (crop production, animal production, mining and others) following all the health-care and safety regulations for the population. As a result of the comprehensive research on these lands, which will continue during the existing project, the territory will be divided into three zones: (a) a zone that shall not be covered by regulatory control (can be transferred for economic use); (b) a zone that shall require rehabilitation measures to be excluded from control or to be subjected to periodic control; and (c) a zone that shall remain under strict regulatory control. The expected result of the effort will be the transfer of more than 95 per cent of the lands for economic use.

Additionally, the objective of the IAEA KAZ9018 project is to establish a specialized biodosimetry laboratory or core laboratory that can use an in-house calibration curve to quantitatively evaluate an absorbed human exposure dose by means of cytogenetic biodosimetry. Filling this gap in this strategically significant domain of knowledge would help to ensure quality biological dosimetry in a variety of activities performed by the population of Kazakhstan and would allow a quality breakthrough to be made in reliably estimating the absorbed dose.

To promote further cooperation on the issue of rehabilitation of the former Semipalatinsk test site, Kazakhstan has put forward a General Assembly resolution entitled “International cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan” in the framework of the Second Committee. This resolution was initially introduced in 1997 and has been since adopted on a biennial and later on a triennial basis. It was again reconfirmed in November 2023 by consensus, with 85 Member States acting as co-sponsors.

In the resolution, the General Assembly acknowledges the fact that a number of international programmes in the Semipalatinsk region have been completed since the closure of the nuclear testing ground, including through programmes and actions of the Government of Kazakhstan and the international community, including United Nations agencies, but that serious social, economic and ecological problems continue to exist. The Assembly equally recognizes the important role of national development policies and strategies in the rehabilitation of the Semipalatinsk region, including the newly established Abai region, with the city of Semey as its administrative centre. Finally, the Assembly urges the international community to provide assistance to Kazakhstan in formulating and implementing special programmes and projects for the treatment and care of the affected population, as well as in efforts to ensure economic growth and sustainable development in the Semipalatinsk region, including increasing the effectiveness of existing programmes and providing the technical, expert and financial contributions necessary for the implementation of national development programmes for the rehabilitation and development of the Semipalatinsk region.

Kazakhstan, jointly with Kiribati, in their capacity as Co-Chairs of the informal working group on victim assistance, environmental remediation, international cooperation and assistance (articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons) are leading the effort to establish an international trust fund to fund projects on victim assistance and environmental remediation.

Kiribati

[Original: English]
[31 May 2024]

I. Introduction

The Republic of Kiribati extends its gratitude to the Secretary-General for the opportunity to provide our views and proposals on the critical issues of victim assistance and environmental remediation related to the legacy of nuclear weapons. As the co-penholder of the resolution “Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons” (General Assembly resolution 78/240), Kiribati recognizes the importance of addressing the profound humanitarian and environmental impacts resulting from nuclear weapons.

In accordance with operative paragraph 4 of resolution 78/240, Kiribati's submission reflects its commitment to affected communities through victim assistance, environmental remediation and international support.

II. Background/history of nuclear testing

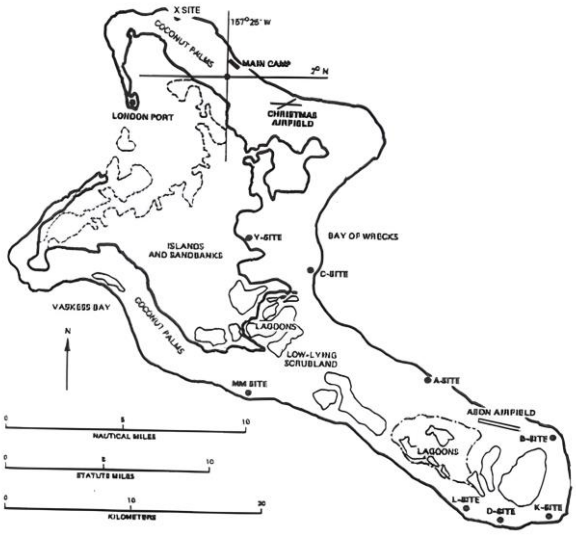
The Republic of Kiribati is a Pacific small island developing State situated in the Central Pacific Ocean on the International Date Line and near the equator. Kiribati is composed of 33 atolls and reef islands dispersed over a vast area of approximately 3.5 million square kilometres.

Kiribati is divided into three main island groups: the Gilbert Islands, the Phoenix Islands and the Line Islands. The Gilbert Islands, where most of the population resides, include Tarawa, the capital. The Phoenix Islands are an isolated group of atolls and reef islands in the Central Pacific Ocean, known for their significant biodiversity and conservation efforts. The Line Islands, including Kiritimati and Malden Islands, are historically significant as the site of the thermonuclear weapons testing programmes of the United Kingdom and the United States.

Kiribati's experience with nuclear weapons began at the height of the Cold War. At the time, the United Kingdom expressed a desire to build a hydrogen bomb to maintain its position as a world power. In searching for a test site, the United Kingdom eventually settled on a part of Kiribati, Kiritimati Island. The island was prepared for nuclear weapons testing starting in June 1956 by the construction of an airstrip, a military encampment and bunkers.[1] The British nuclear weapons test series on Kiritimati was code-named Operation Grapple.

The figure below represents a map of Kiritimati Island and situates some of the key military sites developed during the nuclear weapons testing programme. Site A was a scientific facility and sites L and D were used for nuclear weapons testing and as observation bunkers.

Figure
United States Department of Defense map of Kiritimati Island, 1983



[1] Nic Maclellan, *Grappling with the Bomb: Britain's Pacific H-bomb Tests* (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 2017).

Operation Grapple consisted of a series of atomic and hydrogen bomb tests conducted in 1957 and 1958. The tests were codenamed Grapple 1-3, Grapple X, Grapple Y and Grapple Z. In total, nine nuclear explosive devices were tested by the United Kingdom during the Grapple series. These tests aimed to develop and demonstrate Britain's capability to deploy thermonuclear weapons.

Following Operation Grapple, the United States conducted Operation Dominic I, which consisted of 24 nuclear tests conducted on Kiritimati Island in Kiribati. The primary responsibility and execution of these tests were up to the United States, but there was significant collaboration with the United Kingdom due to their Mutual Defence Agreement. The scope and scale of Operation Dominic I was extensive, involving a range of tests that included airburst and surface detonations. The motivations for each of these tests ranged from testing different weapons designs to responding to the Soviet Union's breach of the tripartite moratorium.

Throughout the testing period, many officials and personnel involved in the operations were from neighbouring Pacific regions, including Fiji. New Zealander service persons were among those who participated in the nuclear tests, often without adequate protective measures, as were the British soldiers. The involvement of both Fiji and New Zealand military forces underscores the broader regional impact of the nuclear testing and illustrates the interconnectedness of Pacific Island nations in this historical context. Their participation also highlights that the consequences of the nuclear tests extended beyond Kiritimati and Malden. It affected neighbouring Pacific States and thus created a shared legacy of environmental and health challenges. The legacy of these tests continues to be felt today, as environmental contamination and health issues persist among the affected communities.

III. Victim assistance needs

The nuclear tests conducted on Kiritimati Island have left a lasting legacy of severe health issues among the island's inhabitants. The 500 citizens of Kiribati living in Kiritimati at the time of the tests received little protection and inadequate warning. Not being aware of the dangers of such tests, most of them lifted the tarpaulin cover provided for them to catch a glimpse of the spectacular display of the intensely hot cloud of fire above them. Many members of this community experienced a multitude of illnesses and health complications. There were numerous cases of cancer, congenital disabilities and newborn abnormalities. Such health issues persisted for descendants of those on the island when the tests were carried out.

A. Engagement with the citizens of Kiritimati: survey

To highlight and document the extensive humanitarian and medical consequences, the Kiribati Office of Tourism for the Phoenix, Line and Gilbert Islands and Kiribati youth, in collaboration with civil society groups and support from the Mission of Kiribati to the United Nations, conducted an informal survey among 20 citizens of Kiritimati to learn more about this legacy.

Interviewees reported a range of health problems affecting multiple generations. These include skin diseases, cancers, birth defects, blindness and chronic pain. The majority of interviewees highlighted the importance of compensation.[2]

One particularly powerful statement comes from Aana Tabwi (50 years old), who vividly encapsulates the personal and familial struggles faced by the survivors and their descendants:

[2] Compensation means victim assistance.

> I have a daughter [who] has skin rashes from her birth, and one of my brothers also has this same skin disease. One of my father's sisters was abnormal; her brain is not functioning. I, Nei Aana Tabwi, also have a breast disease, where mucus discharges from my breast when breastfeeding my child. My first-born child experienced this disease of mine when breastfeeding him at a very young age.

Similarly, a second-generation survivor shared that her mother gave birth to a deformed child immediately after the tests, and many women revealed that they experienced miscarriages during that time. These testimonies highlight the pervasive and hereditary nature of the health impacts, illustrating the long-term consequences of the nuclear tests. They underscore the direct, intergenerational and persistent nature of the suffering endured by the Island's inhabitants. There is an urgent need for international intervention, support and compensation to address these profound humanitarian issues and achieve justice for the affected communities.

B. Testimonies

Oemwa Johnson is a fourth-generation survivor who attended the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in New York in November 2023. She provided the following testimony:

> As a fourth-generation survivor of these nuclear tests and having experienced first-hand the impact on my family's health, I firmly believe that ongoing support is necessary to ensure the well-being and recovery of all affected families. The long-lasting health effects and displacement endured by the communities on Christmas (Kiritimati) Island cannot be understated. Governments and international bodies must prioritize the provision of sufficient resources and assistance to address the societal impacts of these nuclear tests and provide affected communities with the necessary support to rebuild their lives. Only by doing so can we begin to mitigate the long-term consequences of the nuclear weapons tests and ensure a brighter future for those who have endured the repercussions.
>
> Like countless others, my family carries the heavy legacy of these tests. This is my family's experience during the nuclear testing days.
>
> My great-grandfather, a fisherman, slowly withered away from lung cancer that doctors said was "unexplained" – a phrase that still echoes in our family gatherings, I say, my voice raw with sadness inherited through generations. My grandfather, once vibrant and full of laughter, now suffers from hearing loss and other health issues in his mid-70s, a chilling reminder of the radioactive dance the wind forced them to endure.
>
> He remembers the day the soldiers came, their loud boots echoing on the coral sand. He was 14 years old, watching in fear as they were all gathered in a tennis court on London Christmas Island before the nuclear tests took place. They were only given a blanket to cover themselves to shield from the spark and to cover their ears to prevent damage. The air was thick with a strange metallic tang. They were promised a temporary relocation – "a few weeks, maybe" – but years melted into decades. Some were sent on a ship to the nearest islands, such as Canton and Fanning Islands, as there was not enough space in the tennis court for everyone.
>
> When they finally returned, the island was different. The fish tasted strange; the coconut palms bore fewer fruits. Then whispers started of cancers, of children born with deformities. The fear became another heirloom passed down with our stories and songs.

> My grandparents had nine children a few years after the testing. Two of their eldest children were born premature and died. The fourth oldest, before my dad, suffered from severe migraines in high school and died at the age of 15. My dad and I are also diagnosed with the same condition. This is uncommon, and it is not just my family that has experienced this; countless others have faced the same. The fight for compensation and recognition of our suffering is not just a personal crusade; it is a fight for the soul of a community poisoned by the Cold War's shadow.

IV. International support and assistance

A. Request to the user States

A common theme across all interviews is the absence of adequate assistance or compensation from the States responsible for the nuclear tests. Despite the profound health impacts and environmental degradation, none of the interviewees reported receiving any form of international support from these States. This lack of assistance exacerbates their suffering and leaves them struggling to manage the severe health issues caused by the nuclear fallout.

B. Request to the international community

The interviewees expressed a strong need for international support, particularly from the countries responsible for the nuclear tests. There is a call for compensation for the suffering endured by the Island's inhabitants and practical assistance in cleaning up the contaminated sites. For example, a second-generation survivor emphasized the importance of the United States and United Kingdom coming back to clean up the mess they created and compensate the affected families. This sentiment is echoed by other interviewees, who seek justice and reparations for the health issues and environmental damage caused by the tests.

The health and environmental impacts suffered by citizens of Kiritimati Island motivates Kiribati to advocate ardently for international nuclear justice at all United Nations forums, including the First Committee of the General Assembly, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

C. Request for memorial spaces

The severe impacts of the nuclear tests motivate the community on Kiritimati Island to memorialize their remarkable suffering. Interviewees have expressed a strong desire for communal spaces, such as *mwaneabas* (traditional meeting houses), for remembrance and gathering. These spaces would serve as places to honour the experiences of the affected families and ensure ongoing awareness and support. This emphasis on communal remembrance underscores the importance of collective healing, nuclear justice and solidarity in addressing the long-term consequences of the nuclear tests.

In alignment with these sentiments, the citizens of Kiritimati Island have proposed several projects aimed at commemorating and beautifying historic sites related to Operations Grapple and Dominic. These include the restoration and beautification of significant historic sites, the creation of a nuclear test photo gallery featuring donated photos from the families of veterans and the establishment of the Kiritimati anti-nuclear park. Additionally, the citizens of Kiritimati Island have proposed a Kiritimati memorial, akin to the Honolulu Memorial in Honolulu and the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., dedicated to those who were on Kiritimati Island during these operations. These initiatives collectively aim to foster remembrance, honour the affected communities and promote awareness of the island's historical significance.

V. Environmental assessment and remediation

The nuclear tests have caused significant environmental contamination of Kiritimati Island, posing ongoing health risks to its inhabitants. Interviewees pointed out specific areas that are particularly contaminated and in need of urgent clean-up. These include the outskirts near Banana village and Tabon te Korota (between Poland and Cook villages), where remnants of nuclear contaminants and other hazardous materials are still present. For example, the common food source for many of the Island's inhabitants, fish, continues to be contaminated. Persistent contamination does not only affect the current inhabitants, but also poses a threat to future generations.

VI. Kiribati and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

As a State affected by nuclear testing, Kiribati recognizes its important role in helping its citizens request assistance from the international community and the need for the international community to help all affected countries. This drive prompted Kiribati to take on a leadership role in promoting and shaping the implementation of the positive obligations of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Since 2021, Kiribati has been serving as a co-facilitator, along with Kazakhstan, on the humanitarian and positive obligations (articles related to victim assistance, environmental remediation, international cooperation and assistance) of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. As a co-facilitator, Kiribati has taken on the responsibility of representing the voices of Pacific States. It has strongly advocated for the establishment of an international trust fund to help victims of nuclear testing. Kiribati is proud of its leadership in this arena.

VII. Request for an international symposium on victim assistance and environmental remediation

Due to the legacy of nuclear tests, Kiribati is recommending the international community to convene a symposium on victim assistance and environmental remediation to take place in New York. This symposium could provide a forum, where survivors and affected States can share their testimonies on the humanitarian and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons and their requests for the international community to provide critical support.

In addition to providing a space for survivors to express themselves, this forum could also include perspectives from both the scientific community and the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation on relevant scientific and factual information about radioactive contamination.

At the end of the symposium, the conference participants could prepare a list of requests related to victim assistance and environmental remediation for the international community to consider at relevant forums on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

Marshall Islands

[Original: English]
[31 May 2024]

Background

The Marshall Islands gained independence following the end of its United Nations trusteeship under the administration of the United States of America. On 21 October 1986, the Marshall Islands and the United States entered into a Compact of Free Association, which paved the way for the Marshall Islands' independence and

established the terms of its free association with the United States. The Compact also sought to address legacy issues from the period of nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands.

From 1946 to 1958, the United States used the Marshall Islands as a nuclear test site, with 67 known nuclear weapons tests conducted during this period. The most infamous of these tests was the 1 March 1954 Castle Bravo detonation on Bikini Atoll, which is the most powerful nuclear weapons test ever conducted by the United States.

The inhabitants of four atolls were relocated so that these atolls could be used for the nuclear weapons tests. Persons from Bikini Atoll were relocated to Rongerik Atoll and subsequently to Kili Island where they remain displaced due to the contamination embedded in the flora and fauna on Bikini Atoll. Kili Island has been experiencing serious inundation due to rising sea levels induced by climate change. The sea level rise is observed on the coastlines of the island and can also be seen to be rising from within the island centre. The situation on Kili Island renders the possibility of secondary displacement due to climate change highly likely for those already displaced from Bikini Atoll as a direct result of the nuclear legacy.

On Enewetak Atoll, another of the atolls used as a nuclear weapons test site, there is a concrete dome left on the island of Runit. This concrete dome contains the remnants of the nuclear tests conducted, including nuclear materials, radiated and toxic wastes and dismantled equipment. In the early 1990s, through documents declassified by the United States Department of State, it was discovered that 150 tons of contaminated soil was transported by the United States Government from their nuclear testing site in Nevada to Runit and then concealed under the dome. To compound matters, the Compact purports to transfer responsibility for the "Runit Dome", as it has come to be known, from the United States to the Marshall Islands without full disclosure of what it contains. Over the years, the integrity of the Runit Dome has been compromised and over the years, with climate change induced sea level rise, the dome is now partly submerged by the sea at high tides. This has caused great concern to the Marshall Islands and its Pacific neighbours.

The issue of displacement and the Runit Dome are matters of great discontent when considered within the context of whether there was a just transition from being administered by the United States under a United Nations trusteeship to gaining independence and establishing its democracy. The provision in the Compact regarding the transfer of responsibility for the Runit Dome to the Marshall Islands and also the provision placing a compensation limit on all claims from the nuclear testing period at a maximum of $150,000,000 are subjects of ongoing dissatisfaction. In 2003, when the Compact was renegotiated for the first time, these issues could not be resolved and the status quo remained. From 2022 to 2023, the Compact underwent its second review and again these provisions were not open to negotiation and the status quo remains.

The dilemma faced by the Marshall Islands is that the full extent of the damage caused by the nuclear legacy remains shrouded in secrecy and was not known prior to the settlement reached in 1986 under the Compact. This much was made evident following the declassification of documents by the United States Department of State in the early 1990s, which revealed some information that led to even more questions. Since then, there has been no further declassification of documents relating to the nuclear testing period in the Marshall Islands. In September 2000, the Marshall Islands also petitioned the United States Congress to recognize the changed circumstances arising out of the new discoveries; however, to date, there has been no decision rendered on this petition after over 24 years.

The most recent amendment to the Compact has provisions that aspire for the greater sharing of information, which the Republic of the Marshall Islands

Government hopes will lead to the declassification of more documents and the removal of redactions in those already declassified in the early 1990s. However, only time will tell whether this will transpire. The recent amendment also provides for the establishment of a museum on the nuclear legacy of the Marshall Islands; however, the negotiations did not allow for any meaningful dialogue towards constructively dealing with the human rights implications of the nuclear legacy.

Nuclear justice, through the pillars of transitional justice

In 2022, the Marshall Islands with a group of Pacific island developing States, namely Fiji, Nauru, Samoa and Vanuatu, had presented a resolution to the Human Rights Council seeking technical assistance in addressing the human rights implications of the nuclear legacy. Human Rights Council resolution 51/35, entitled "Technical assistance and capacity-building to address the human rights implications of the nuclear legacy in the Marshall Islands", was adopted without a vote on 7 October 2022. It is a resolution that recognizes the need to address the human rights implications of nuclear legacies through a transitional justice lens. For the Marshall Islands, there is a need to "deal with the past" through the pillars of truth, justice, reparations, guarantees of non-recurrence and memorialization in order to guarantee a future grounded in democracy where civic trust is restored between the people, their Government and the United States as its former trust administrator, given the continuing free association arrangement.

For any just transition from colonization/trusteeship to independence and democracy, particularly in the context of transitional justice, truth is a fundamental pillar. For the Marshall Islands, ascertaining the truth about the nuclear testing period during the trusteeship is essential to assess what would be just in terms of accountability (justice) and what should be done to ensure holistic remediation (reparation). These will also have an impact on ensuring guarantees of non-recurrence and memorialization. Having these matters unresolved for so long, the Marshall Islands is now faced with having to address the adversities caused by the nuclear legacy while now facing the aggravating circumstances of accelerated rising sea levels induced by climate change.

In this regard, there is greater urgency for the "veil of silence" over the nuclear testing period to be pierced and the "smoke screens" concealing the truth must be set aside. In order to reconcile and to move forward together, the truth must be revealed, justice must be done, reparations must be made in full, guarantees must be implemented to ensure non-recurrence, and we must memorialize the painful legacies left by nuclear weapons. To quote the former Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Marshall Islands, the late Tony DeBrum, who dedicated his life to the pursuit of truth and accountability for the Marshall Islands' nuclear legacy, "there will be no closure, without full disclosure".

Nuclear justice and the international democratic order

On the question of democracy, it is also important to recognize the threat that nuclear weapons pose to the international democratic order. Nuclear weapons by their nature are indiscriminate, with adverse impacts enduring through the generations. The Marshall Islands is testament to the generational impacts of nuclear weapons on human rights and the environment, their indiscriminate nature affecting women, children and even unborn babies, and the catastrophic consequences of their testing and use. Nuclear weapons by their nature are serious threats to the enjoyment of human rights and, accordingly, a threat to democracy. The very existence of nuclear weapons and a State's ability to wield them has a coercive influence, which could lead to an imbalance in the international democratic order, where nuclear powers gain hegemony. International governance would be more balanced and democratic without

the threat posed by nuclear weapons, hence the importance of continuing to work towards complete nuclear disarmament.

Recommendation

The guidance note of the Secretary-General on transitional justice as a strategic tool for people, prevention and peace,[1] adopted in June 2023, and its approach to transitional justice through normative, strategic, inclusive, gender-responsive and transformative key features must equally be applied to addressing nuclear legacies in post-colonial or post-administration contexts.

In anticipation of the Secretary-General's report to be presented at the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly pursuant to resolution 78/240 entitled "Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons", the Republic of the Marshall Islands considers that an important link that should be reported on is situations where nuclear legacies must be addressed through transitional justice. This would be applicable to the Marshall Islands' own pursuit of nuclear justice and to other States where the legacy question is linked to their colonization or administration by other States, where their human rights were grossly violated while in a position of vulnerability.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[29 May 2024]

Mexico welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 78/240 entitled "Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons".

Mexico hereby submits its first contribution to the report pursuant to this resolution, which is a milestone in the discussion on the positive obligations under the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was spearheaded by Mexico. Those obligations are aimed at addressing the environmental damage resulting from the use and testing of nuclear weapons.

Mexico is a firm supporter of initiatives recognizing the interrelated nature of the immediate, medium- and long-term repercussions that the accidental or deliberate detonation of a nuclear weapon would have on the environment, food security, climate and development, which would be systemic and potentially irreversible for humanity as a whole.

A more substantive understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons has been fostered since 2010. In particular, the conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons held in Oslo (2015), in Nayarit, Mexico (2014), and in Vienna (2014 and 2022) made it possible to understand various aspects of those catastrophic consequences, enabling the focus to be placed on their prevention through the effective and irreversible elimination of this type of indiscriminate weapon.

Only two nuclear weapons have been used in times of war, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Compared with the weapons in today's arsenals, both would be classified as "small nuclear weapons", having less than one tenth of current average explosive

[1] See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/transitionaljustice/sg-guidance-note/2023_07_guidance_note_transitional_justice_en.pdf.

power. Even so, they had far-reaching and catastrophic consequences – a reminder that even a single nuclear explosion has devastating effects.

For decades, many nuclear tests were carried out with no regard for the effects on the local population and environment, and without any real studies on their impact. There is now a better understanding of the terrible harm caused and the lack of genuine measures to deal with the consequences taken by those countries that carried out the tests.

The consequences identified during the conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons include the following:

– Destruction: a nuclear explosion causes a blast wave and emits thermal ionizing radiation, affecting people and the surrounding environment. The use of nuclear weapons would result in immediate devastation, including loss of life, destruction of infrastructure and environmental damage.

– Radiation effects: both initial and residual radiation from nuclear detonations create long-term health problems, such as cancer, genetic mutations and birth defects, for generations. Of particular note is the impact of ionizing radiation, especially on girls and women, who experience disproportionate harm compared with men. Young girls are especially vulnerable, being particularly likely to develop radiation-induced cancers during their lifetime.

– Humanitarian crisis and inability to provide care: nuclear detonations cause acute humanitarian crises owing to the number of victims, the types of injuries, displacement and the long-term health effects of radiation exposure. Studies by the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as by United Nations agencies, have shown that no State or international body could adequately address the immediate humanitarian emergency or the long-term consequences of the detonation of a nuclear weapon in a populated area, nor could they provide adequate assistance to those affected.

– Economic burden: rebuilding infrastructure, providing medical care and managing environmental remediation place significant economic burdens on affected regions and countries.

– Environmental damage: the testing and use of nuclear weapons release radioactive materials into the environment, leading to the contamination of air, soil and water, with long-lasting ecological consequences. A nuclear war would cause climate shocks that would significantly affect the Earth's climate (which could range from a "little" ice age such as that of 1340–1850 and ozone layer depletion, to a severe nuclear winter that would make agriculture impossible). In any event, there would be a significant reduction in food production, which would likely have the greatest impact on the global South.

– Political impacts: the use of nuclear weapons often leads to international condemnation, escalation of conflicts and possibly retaliation, increasing geopolitical tensions. Politically, the use of a nuclear weapon carries the risk of being only the first step of nuclear escalation. Other States could decide to retaliate, which could lead to further explosions and, potentially, all-out nuclear war.

Although the knowledge gained thus far provides an understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear detonations, the full extent of the effects of nuclear weapons is still largely unknown. Further research and capacity-building is required to enable effective victim assistance and environmental remediation measures to be taken.

In this light, and pursuant to the request for views and proposals regarding efforts and ongoing needs related to victim assistance and environmental assessment and remediation, the Government of Mexico notes the following:

– It is imperative that the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons remain at the core of nuclear-related discussions in all relevant forums.

– On the understanding that those catastrophic humanitarian consequences cannot be mitigated, it must be clear that, faced with a possibility that we cannot be prepared for or effectively respond to, the only alternative is to prevent it.

– States must take urgent steps to reduce the risk of a return to the use of nuclear weapons, sparing no effort to achieve their complete and irreversible elimination. For example, tangible progress is required in the area of disarmament, in compliance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as well as with other commitments and agreements related to the Treaty. There is also a need for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to enter into force and to ensure the universality of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

– Further research is needed to better understand the short- and long-term impacts of nuclear weapons, with the participation of affected communities.

– It is important to highlight the importance of transparency on the part of those who conducted nuclear tests, with a view to obtaining accurate scientific data on, inter alia, types of explosions, areas used, measurements obtained, and studies on the impacts on populations and the environment.

Mexico is in favour of agreeing on significant and achievable measures that will be beneficial in the implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – the only instrument that explicitly prohibits developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, transferring, possessing, stockpiling, using or threatening to use nuclear weapons and allowing any stationing of such weapons within the territories of the States parties, and that is humanitarian in nature.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons also establishes the obligation to take environmental remediation measures to address the effects of nuclear testing or use of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosives (article 6) and the obligation to cooperate with affected States or to provide assistance in support of environmental remediation efforts (article 7).

In this context, during the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Vienna Action Plan, which sets out specific actions for complying with the above-mentioned articles of the Treaty, was adopted. Mexico considers that these positive obligations are fundamental to the humanitarian objectives of the Treaty and welcomes the fact that they are reflected in actions 19 to 32.

The humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons was the central topic of the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was chaired by Mexico and held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 27 November to 1 December 2023. In particular, the importance of articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty – designed to address the human and environmental effects of nuclear weapons – and the need to provide affected States parties with technical, material and financial support to promote the implementation of the treaty were highlighted.

The participating States adopted a political declaration entitled “Our commitment to upholding the prohibition of nuclear weapons and averting their catastrophic consequences”, which contains a strong message on the prohibition of

nuclear weapons and reaffirms their support for addressing the harm caused by the use and testing of nuclear weapons.

Mexico will continue to participate in the informal working group on victim assistance, environmental remediation, international cooperation and assistance, co-chaired by Kazakhstan and Kiribati, within the framework of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Mexico considers it important to continue making progress in needs assessment, national plans and cooperation, as well as international assistance, with a view to fulfilling the obligations set out in articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Affected States should continue to develop and begin to implement their national plans related to victim assistance and environmental remediation. In addition, States or organizations in a position to do so should provide international cooperation and assistance for these efforts.

Victim assistance and environmental remediation should also be encouraged within the framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In particular, there is a need to continue promoting national measures in affected States, as well as international cooperation to address the past and current effects of nuclear tests. Funds could be established to address those effects, which will require the recognition of the primary responsibility of the nuclear powers.

Comprehensive assistance should be provided to affected communities. Doing so would involve updating national laws, providing socioeconomic development assistance and fostering national and international cooperation.

New Zealand

[Original: English]
[29 May 2024]

This responds to note verbale ODA-2024-00018/LONW, which seeks views and proposals on assistance to survivors and environmental assessment and remediation for nuclear weapons use or testing. New Zealand was pleased to co-sponsor General Assembly resolution 78/240 that prompted this request.

The legacy of nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific

New Zealand's views on assistance and remediation with respect to nuclear weapons use or testing are inextricably linked to past testing in the Pacific. From the late 1940s to 1996, nuclear tests were conducted in the Pacific region by three nuclear-armed States. The impacts of testing continue to be felt today, including but not limited to intergenerational, physical and psychosocial health concerns, environmental harm including contamination, displacement and disconnection to land, loss of livelihoods and feelings of injustice. The effects of climate change, such as sea level rise, on the structural integrity of nuclear material storage sites, present new concerns.

Borne out of this lived experience, States of the region, including New Zealand, adopted the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (known as the Treaty of Rarotonga) to establish the region as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Entering into force in 1986, the Treaty represented the world's second nuclear-weapon-free zone.

New Zealand's opposition to nuclear weapons and their testing was codified domestically in 1987 through Parliament's adoption of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament and Arms Control Act. This legislation bans nuclear weapons (and nuclear-propelled vessels) from New Zealand waters, airspace and territory.

Internationally, New Zealand, along with other States, took action to the International Court of Justice to try halt nuclear testing in the region.

Three groups of New Zealand veterans have served in deployments that may have exposed them to ionizing radiation: in Japan after World War II (Jayforce 1946–1949); and in the Pacific in 1957–1958 (Operation Grapple) and in July 1973 (Mururoa). New Zealand provides entitlements and support to the veterans and some entitlements are also available to their children. These are covered by domestic legislation (the Veterans' Support Act 2014 and the Veterans' Support Regulations 2014) and Cabinet decisions. In 2022–2023, an independent ministerial advisory board conducted a literature review of the most up-to-date information available on the impact of exposure to nuclear radiation. It recommended that no new conditions needed to be added to the list already in place in the regulations of conclusively presumed conditions that apply to those exposed to nuclear radiation and which may be automatically attributable to service. The Cabinet agreed to review the situation every 7 to 10 years to ensure awareness of the most up-to-date information on the impact of exposure to nuclear radiation.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons provides a mechanism to address harm

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons comprehensively prohibits nuclear weapons. It also contains positive obligations for States parties on victim assistance, environmental remediation and international assistance and cooperation.[1] These provisions are the first of their kind in a nuclear disarmament treaty. The Treaty makes clear that these do not replace any existing obligations to, or agreements between, affected States parties and States that carried out testing in their territory.

The Treaty text also explicitly recognizes the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on women and girls, including as a result of ionizing radiation, and on Indigenous Peoples.[2] In the Vienna Action Plan, adopted at the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty in June 2022, parties agreed that assistance should be age- and gender-sensitive and in line with the principles of accessibility, inclusivity, non-discrimination and transparency and in coordination with affected communities.[3]

Treaty members are advancing their consideration of an international trust fund, as agreed in the Vienna Action Plan and reaffirmed at the second Meeting of States Parties. This will be an important addition to international capacity to assist States affected by the impacts of nuclear weapons, including testing.

Situating and supporting this work

Assistance to survivors and environmental remediation should be situated within the broader agenda of promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Until nuclear weapons are eliminated, there is the possibility of future victims and environmental contamination. The impact of nuclear weapons use in conflict would be catastrophic and would overwhelm any humanitarian response capacity. New Zealand therefore calls for:

- Universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty so that it can enter into force
- Universalization of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons: joining is the clearest possible message a country can send of its commitment to the

[1] Articles 6 and 7.
[2] See the preambular paragraphs of the Treaty.
[3] Action 25.

total elimination of nuclear weapons, as well as to the prevention of harm from testing or use

- Implementation by nuclear-weapon States of their disarmament obligation under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and related commitments
- Nuclear-armed States outside the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to renounce their weapons and join the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States
- Adherence by all nuclear-weapon States to protocols of nuclear-weapon-free zones; such zones contribute to the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime

There is a benefit to increasing the international community's understanding of the effects of nuclear weapons testing, as well as any use. In the Pacific Islands Forum context, work is under way to better understand existing scholarship and gaps with respect to the legacy of nuclear weapons testing in the region.[4] New Zealand also takes note of discussions that are under way for a new global scientific study to be commissioned by the General Assembly on the impacts and risks associated with nuclear winter.

Portugal

[Original: English]
[28 May 2024]

More than 2,000 test detonations of nuclear explosive devices have occurred since 1945, most recently in 2017 in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. These tests were conducted underwater, in the atmosphere and underground, spreading radiation and generating large quantities of nuclear fallout. Ultimately, nuclear testing has an impact on the environment and on public health, such as cancers, genetic disorders or in utero effects on human development.

As the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, it is of the utmost importance to highlight the three pillars of the Treaty – disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy – and to preserve the impartial, independent and objective work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

On this matter, Portugal, along with European Union partners and North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies, is committed to working with civil society, non-governmental organizations and think tanks in order to provide victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons, promoting coordination among stakeholders.

In the context of the commitments undertaken by Portugal as part of the nuclear forums, it is crucial to strengthen both the support towards the victims of the use or testing of nuclear weapons as well as the environmental decontamination mechanisms.

Therefore, the following actions are considered relevant for an improved implementation of General Assembly resolution 78/240:

(a) Development of contingency plans: elaborate and update the current contingency plans specifically designed for handling the use or testing of nuclear

[4] New Zealand is a member of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific Taskforce on Nuclear Legacy Issues.

weapons, including clear measures for victim assistance, namely evacuation, medical triage, treatment of the wounded and decontamination;

(b) Capacity-building and training: conduct regular simulations and training drills for emergency response personnel, including medical teams, firefighters, police officers and volunteers, in order to provide for a prompt and coordinated response in the case of use or testing of nuclear weapons;

(c) Specialized medical services: guarantee that the victims of the testing or use of nuclear weapons receive immediate access to specialized medical services, including acute radiation, intensive care and mental health support for post-traumatic stress disorders and other forms of trauma;

(d) Nuclear health reference centres: establish nuclear health reference centres equipped with cutting-edge technology and specialized teams to provide for advanced diagnosis and treatment for radiation victims;

(e) International cooperation: strengthen international cooperation and the exchange of best practices between the signatory parties of the nuclear conventions, facilitating resource-, knowledge- and experience-sharing in the victim assistance field;

(f) Public awareness and education: launch public awareness campaigns and educational programmes to inform the population about the security protocols carried out in the event of the use or testing of nuclear weapons and radiation victims' rights;

(g) Environmental decontamination: recognize the indispensable role of the IAEA "Radiation Safety and Monitoring Section" in the primary areas of radiation monitoring, environmental remediation and waste management.

Portugal fully supports the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and urges every State listed in annex II to ratify it, so that this international instrument can enter into force, upholding and complementing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons regime, besides unlocking the on-site inspections and reinforcing confidence-building measures.

Switzerland

[Original: English]
[28 May 2024]

Switzerland voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 78/240 entitled "Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons" and welcomes that the effects of nuclear weapons on people and the environment have recently received greater attention by the international community.

Switzerland notes that knowledge of medical, social, economic and cultural impacts of the use or testing of nuclear weapons on local populations, including available and additional support needed, is still relatively limited. The understanding of the current status of radioactive contamination (and decontamination) and the scope for remediation measures is in need of updating.

Similarly, potential needs or requests for international support should be identified based on sound scientific analysis, ensuring sensitivity to age and gender disparities, as nuclear weapons disproportionately impact women and children, particularly girls. In this regard, Switzerland welcomes greater transparency and information exchange in this area to ensure that the provision of assistance is tailored to meet needs effectively.

Switzerland supports that States are to provide victim assistance and environmental remediation to individuals and areas under their jurisdiction or control affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons, which is a legal obligation for States parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and as an observer at the Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty, Switzerland is following the relevant international discussions. In this context, Switzerland underlines also that resolution 78/240 recognizes that the responsibility to address the harms resulting from a detonation of using or testing a nuclear weapon or any other nuclear explosive device lies, respectively, with the Member States that have done so. It further acknowledges a shared responsibility by the entire international community in addressing nuclear legacies.

Switzerland sees multiple ways to take this issue forward, in view of fostering international cooperation, offering the opportunity for the international community to provide tangible support to those suffering from the consequences of nuclear weapons use and testing. To be successful, such international collaboration requires buy-in from the relevant stakeholders. Therefore, Switzerland deems it crucial to advance the issue in a manner that garners as much political, technical and material support as possible for effective and sustainable implementation of victim assistance and environmental remediation.

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

[Original: English]
[31 May 2024]

The United Kingdom voted against resolution 78/240 on addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons at the General Assembly in 2023. We made an explanation of vote to set out the reasons for that decision.

Nonetheless, following the request from the Secretary-General for information to support his preparation of the report requested by the resolution, the United Kingdom submits its position on the legacy of nuclear testing and subsequent remediation efforts.

The United Kingdom conducted 12 nuclear weapon tests and a few hundred smaller-scale tests in Australia between 1952 and 1963. Nine nuclear explosions were also carried out between 1957 and 1958 at Malden Island and Christmas Island (Kiritimati – now part of the Republic of Kiribati) in the Pacific Ocean.

We pay tribute to the veterans and civilians from the Pacific region involved in the tests. The United Kingdom supports the call to all States and international organizations that have expertise in the field of clean-up and disposal of radioactive contaminants to consider giving appropriate assistance (technical or financial), as may be requested, for remedial purposes in affected areas.

In 1993, following a report by the Australian Royal Commission on the conduct of British nuclear tests in Australia, the United Kingdom Government worked with the Australian Government to agree an ex gratia payment of £20 million. This payment was part of a full and final settlement to the Australian Government to support the rehabilitation of former nuclear test sites. The United Kingdom considers its remediation efforts in regard to testing conducted in Australia to be complete.

In regard to Kiritimati, the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence arranged and took part in a specialist reconnaissance survey on Kiritimati during September 1998 to identify the types and quantities of waste materials, including an assessment of environmental risks, arising from the island's use as a base for the United Kingdom's nuclear test programme in the late 1950s and early 1960s. A further visit was made to

Kiritimati in August 2000 by the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence and independent specialists to gather further detailed information for the proposed clean-up project. Removal of waste was undertaken between 2005 and 2008, including radioactive and non-radioactive materials. The United Kingdom considers its remediation efforts on Kiritimati to have been completed.

Independent studies commissioned by the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence and carried out by the United Kingdom National Radiological Protection Board and Imperial Cancer Research have found that overall mortality of the test veterans and military controls remain lower than the general population of men of the same age during the period of 1952–2017.

For further information, extensive reports on scientific information concerning historic atmospheric nuclear weapon tests, including activity undertaken on remediation, can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-atmospheric-nuclear-weapons-tests-factsheets.

Finally, the United Kingdom is committed to the twin goals of a world without explosive nuclear testing and without nuclear weapons, in line with our obligations under the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty when it was first opened for signature in 1996, and we continue to call for its entry into force as soon as possible. In the interim, the United Kingdom continues to maintain its voluntary moratorium on explosive nuclear testing. We also maintain a voluntary moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear explosive devices, and continue to press for the immediate commencement and early conclusions of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament.

United States of America

[Original: English]
[31 May 2024]

> Requests the Secretary-General to seek the views and proposals of Member States regarding efforts and ongoing needs related to victim assistance and environmental assessment and remediation, and to submit a substantiative report, with an annex containing those views, to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session, for further discussion by Member States.

The United States has long recognized the effects of its nuclear testing programme and continues to provide significant technical assistance, resources and financial assistance to affected people and communities. The significant scale of these past and present efforts reflects the seriousness with which we take the issue. We note the intent of resolution 78/240, entitled “Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons”, to bring the topic of such victim assistance to the forefront.

We remember the history of nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands and honour the contribution the Marshallese have made and acknowledge the hardships the Marshallese have endured. Since the nuclear testing programme, the United States has provided more than $600 million to affected communities; adjusted for inflation, the United States has provided more than $1 billion to affected communities. This support included direct financial settlement of nuclear claims, resettlement funds and rehabilitation of affected atolls, as well as ongoing radiological monitoring, technical assistance and radiation-related health-care costs.

Prior to the 1986 Compact of Free Association and its related agreements, the United States provided financial and technical assistance to address the nuclear legacy during the trusteeship period. This included approximately $250 million for direct clean-up, environmental rehabilitation, resettlement and compensation for nuclear claims, as well as environmental monitoring and medical support of affected communities.

The United States has accepted and acted on its responsibility to the citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands through the long-standing, full and final settlement that the United States and the Marshall Islands reached in 1986 under the Compact of Free Association and a related subsidiary agreement. The 1986 Compact and the subsidiary agreement referred to in section 177 of the Compact constitute a full settlement of all claims, past, present and future, in any way related to the United States testing programme. Separate from the assistance provided to the Republic of the Marshall Islands related to the nuclear testing programme, the United States continues to also provide the Republic of the Marshall Islands with substantial assistance aimed at promoting long-term economic self-sufficiency across key sectors of the environment, health, education, private sector development and infrastructure, as well as support for basic public service delivery, including postal service.

The United States also has passed legislation to address nuclear weapons legacy issues within the United States. The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, enacted in 1990, established an administrative programme for claims relating to atmospheric nuclear testing and uranium industry employment. It provided a one-time benefit payment to persons who may have developed cancer or other specified diseases after being exposed to radiation from atomic weapons testing or uranium mining, milling or transporting. To date, the United States Department of Justice has awarded over $2.6 billion in benefits to more than 41,000 claimants. Although the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act programme is currently set to sunset in June 2024, there are proposals under consideration to extend or expand it.

In addition to technical assistance and financial resources, the United States fully supports the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and is committed to work to achieve its entry into force. Consistent with the goals of the Treaty, since 1992 the United States has observed a moratorium on nuclear explosive testing and calls on all States possessing nuclear weapons to declare or maintain such a moratorium.

The United States believes the Secretary-General’s report could provide insight into some assistance and remediation issues that have already been settled or addressed. In order to achieve that aim, the report should be balanced and inclusive of the views of all Member States.