Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, let me reiterate my sense of gratitude to the Government of Mexico for executing a wonderful job in hosting this important conference. I also wish to associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the distinguished delegate from the Republic of Kiribati on behalf of the Pacific Islands and to further acknowledge the statement by the Ambassador from the Kingdom of Tonga.

As stated by representatives of our government during the High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, the United Nations must stop the spread of nuclear weapons, while securing peace in a world without nuclear weapons. We urgently renew our call to all states possessing nuclear weapons to intensify efforts to address their responsibilities in moving towards an effective and secure disarmament.

It has been almost 68 years since the General Assembly in its very first resolution established a mechanism for the elimination from national arsenals of nuclear weapons and other weapons adaptable to mass destruction. It has been more than 45 years since the conclusion of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Yet today, we still fear the day where we are forced to relive the horrors. We do not want other people to suffer the same consequences we did!

Mr. Chairman, the Marshall Islands is convinced that multilateral negotiations on achieving and sustaining a world free of nuclear weapons are long overdue. Indeed we believe that states possessing nuclear arsenals are failing to fulfill their legal obligations in this regard. Immediate commencement and conclusion of such negotiations is required by legal obligation of nuclear disarmament resting upon each and every state under Article VI of the Non Proliferation Treaty and customary international law. It also would achieve the objective of nuclear disarmament long and consistently set by the United Nations, and fulfill our responsibilities to present and future generations while honoring the past ones.

Mr. Chairman, let me remind this forum that it was under the UN Trusteeship that the Marshall Islands was used as a testing ground. Today we feel abandoned by the very institutions that were established to protect us. While the decision to take urgent actions towards a nuclear free world is very important, mechanisms to addressed outstanding issues from past nuclear tests are equally important. We’ve witnessed far too many human suffering.
Let me close my statement by reiterating what my fellow Marshall Islands leaders have publicly expressed over the years in similar and other settings, and it is this: “if the lessons of the end of World War II, and the lessons of all the tests conducted since then have not been learned, then we must learn them. If the experiences of laboratory exposure are not part of our learning pathway, then they must be added. If we do not take the message of nuclear survivors to heart, then we will have to soften our hearts. Nuclear weapons threaten us, they do not protect us. No matter where they are located or deployed, one push of a red button could be the end of life as we know it. That is not a chance worth taking.”

We look forward, with much anticipation, to the next conference in Austria and thank the Government and People of Austria for taking a leadership role. WE MUST TAKE THE NECESSARY NEXT STEPS IN AUSTRIA.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.