Mr President

As the current chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, I have the honour to speak on behalf of Forum members with Permanent Missions in New York.

As Australia’s Foreign Minister, Stephen Smith, said in his general debate statement on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum last week, Pacific states view the issues before us from a particular perspective. We have faced, first-hand, the devastating short-term and long-term effects of nuclear testing.

While our region as a whole has been affected by nuclear testing, the experience of the Marshall Islands deserves our special attention. During the most recent meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum, held in Cairns in August 2009 in Australia, our leaders recognised the special circumstances pertaining to the continued presence of radioactive contaminants in the Republic of the Marshall Islands and reaffirmed the existence of a
special responsibility towards the people of the Marshall Islands, who have been, and continue to be, adversely affected as a direct result of nuclear weapons tests conducted under a United Nations Trusteeship mandate.

While we recognise the significant effort already undertaken to assist the Marshall Islands, Pacific Island Forum countries consider it appropriate that the outcome document of our Review Conference acknowledge the ongoing impact of contamination related to the discontinuation of nuclear operations.

Accordingly, we propose that the outcome document welcomes the increased attention to problems of safety and contamination related to the discontinuation of nuclear operations formerly associated with nuclear-weapons programs, including where appropriate, safe resettlement of any displaced human populations and the restoration of economic productivity to affected areas. The outcome document should acknowledge the existence of a special responsibility towards those people of former United Nations Trust Territories who have been adversely affected as a result of the nuclear weapons tests conducted during the period of Trusteeship.

And finally, Mr President, the outcome document should call upon all Governments and international organisations that have expertise in the field of clean-up and disposal of radioactive contaminants to consider giving appropriate assistance as may be requested for remedial purposes in these affected areas, while noting the efforts that have been made to date in this regard.

Thank you