



**PERMANENT MISSION OF FIJI TO THE UN
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HIGH-LEVEL MEETING TO
COMMEMORATE AND
PROMOTE THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY
AGAINST NUCLEAR TESTS

HIGHLIGHTS

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. SATYENDRA PRASAD,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI TO THE
UNITED NATIONS AT THE
HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
TO COMMEMORATE AND PROMOTE THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST NUCLEAR TESTS**

UNHQ, CR 3, NEW YORK 6 SEPTEMBER 2018

KEY MESSAGES

Mr. President,

Thank you for convening this important meeting. Fiji is grateful for the opportunity to participate in this meeting as we have witnessed the terrifying and tragic effects of nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific region.

Mr. President,

The issue of the total elimination of nuclear weapons has been on the international agenda since 24 January 1946, when this Assembly adopted its first resolution (Resolution 1(I)), calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons and all other weapons. 72 years later, we are



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still at it. We must stay at it with renewed urgency in these troubled times until the job is done.

Fiji actively joins the call of this Assembly because we know firsthand what it means to be at the frontlines of nuclear testing. Between 1957 and 1958, while Fiji was still a colony, several hundred Fijian soldiers participated in a nuclear testing activity known as Operation Grapple which was held in the Pacific. Fijian soldiers participated in gathering and dumping dead, injured and blinded birds after the tests. Almost all have passed away, -most, in tragic health circumstances denied support and recognition from colonial authorities. By the time, our Government took action, only a few were still alive. But we are not alone in this. Across the Pacific, communities were deliberately or indirectly exposed to nuclear testing – on land, on seas and in the air.

Across the region, we know firsthand what human suffering this causes. The tragedy that it causes lives with us today. This morning, I remember and pay tribute to all those who lost their lives, suffered and who were denied the support they so needed.

The human and environmental impact of nuclear testing within the Pacific is not confined to the past. It remains a threat to the pursuit of sustainable development by the Pacific

States. Most notably, to the sustainable development goals relating to; health and well-being; gender equality and; the environment on land and in the oceans.



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Around 300 nuclear tests took place in French Polynesia between 1966 and 1974. We thank and are ever grateful to this house, and our predecessors who occupied these benches, for bringing the attention of the world to this tragedy in the Pacific – in its waters and on its lands.

Fiji's radiation monitoring stations detected stratospheric fallout from atmospheric nuclear tests throughout the period. None of the countries had the means to monitor the nuclear leakages from the sub-sea tests that followed. The health problems Fiji and many Pacific countries face as a result, the impact on marine life, and the impact of fragile sub-sea structures remain largely unknown and poorly researched. Yet there is evidence of harsh impacts and suffering all around these communities.

Fiji is extremely concerned about venting and leaching of radiation from test sites. This poses a significant threat to the maritime environment of the South Pacific.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to all survivors of nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific and around the world.

Pacific peoples and our leaders fought hard for an end to nuclear testing and for a nuclear-free world. It is only through regional and international cooperation that we can address the ongoing effects of nuclear weapons testing. Fiji is party to the Treaty of Rarotonga (South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty) which formalizes a Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone in the South Pacific which came into force in 1986. This treaty bans the use, testing



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and possession of nuclear weapons within the borders of the zone.

Fiji is also a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Fiji is honored to have been amongst the first states to ratify the CTBT in 1996. Fiji is also proud to be a signatory of the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and its “positive obligations” on victim assistance, environmental remediation and international cooperation and assistance.

The TPNW frames nuclear weapons as an affront to humanity and thus the humanitarian, human rights and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons use and testing is the responsibility of humanity as a whole. Articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty offer a crucial new international framework for addressing the devastating legacy of nuclear testing in the Pacific. The TPNW obligates all states parties to respond to the needs of people and environments harmed by nuclear weapons. Article 7 also calls for help from the UN system.

Fiji thus calls for the universalization and rigorous implementation of the TPNW. Fiji urges the international community and the UN system to use the opportunities created by the TPNW to: conduct a new comprehensive assessment of the ongoing humanitarian, human rights and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific and develop action plans to address these problems.



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Mr. President,

Before I conclude, it will be remiss of me if I do not commend and extend my appreciation to our guests this morning. Mr. Lassina Zerbo and Mr. Karipbek Kuyukov, Fiji is appreciative and joins others in commending you for the excellent leadership and words of wisdom you have shared with us this morning.

I thank you, Mr. President

END.



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