



World Council of Churches

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Commission of the Churches on International Affairs

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Hon. Sen. Maynard Alfred
Chairperson, Nitijeļā Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs & Trade
Republic of the Marshall Islands

3 July 2018

Your Excellency,

Greetings from the secretariat of the World Council of Churches (WCC), a global fellowship of almost 350 member churches in over 110 countries, representing a global constituency of approximately 560 million people.

On behalf of WCC, I write to share our perspective on a matter of international importance currently before the Parliament of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. We understand that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs & Trade which you chair is considering a certain Resolution 46 on the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). We are convinced that it would be right and proper for the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) to sign and ratify the TPNW. The significance of such an action by RMI would be recognized around the world.

WCC's worldwide membership includes churches in the Marshall Islands and other places affected by nuclear weapons tests. During the negotiation of the TPNW, WCC and its member churches advocated for the new treaty to address the impact of these weapons on human beings and the environment. We thank God that these concerns are reflected in the TPNW. It has provisions on victim assistance, radiation exposure and environmental remediation. It calls attention to the particular effect on women and girls, and on indigenous peoples.

It was a young indigenous woman from the Marshall Islands, Darlene Keju, who raised the consciousness of churches around the world with her testimony at the 1984 WCC Assembly in Vancouver, Canada. Her witness there, her life of service to the youth of your nation, and the untimely death she shared with so many other Marshallese have written the story of the Marshall Islands and nuclear testing into the history of WCC.

The courage and dignity of your people in the face of suffering and injustice continues to inspire us to work for the elimination of nuclear weapons and for much greater efforts to address the consequences of their use. The Marshall Islands' 2014 lawsuit to call the nuclear powers to account and your 2015 signature of the Humanitarian Pledge have sent a powerful message to the world.

Now the TPNW finally puts those who possess nuclear weapons on notice that states affected by these weapons have the right to take the lead in securing compensation for their people.

We believe the moral and ethical basis for the government of RMI to sign and ratify the TPNW is strong. Doing so will be very much in keeping with the government's responsibility for the well-being of your people. And we note with appreciation that Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic has concluded that RMI joining the TPNW is legally compatible with the RMI-USA Compact of Free Association.

We therefore urge the Standing Committee to adopt Resolution 46, and the Nitijeļā to determine that the Republic of the Marshall Islands will sign and ratify the TPNW.

WCC stands with the people of the Marshall Islands for a world free from nuclear weapons, and for greater care of God's beautiful Creation which is our common home.

Yours respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Peter Prove', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter Prove
Director, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs