

Human Rights Council
16th Session
Item 6: UPR Marshall Islands

17 March 2011

Speaker: Joshua Cooper EIP OceaniaHR

Mr. President,

EIP welcomes the participation of the Marshall Islands in the UPR process. We echo the encouragement by many states for Marshall Islands to ratify the core human rights conventions and to immediately implement the articles to guarantee human rights in Oceania. We look forward to hearing about the timetable for ratification and implementation. We look forward to a more detailed outline and prioritization of the treaties.

We also believe the Marshall Islands should immediately issue an open invitation for the UN special rapporteurs to be able to assist in important human rights issues remaining in Marshall Islands. We believe specifically the Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. We look forward to assist in future visits of UN special rapporteurs as partners in the Pacific.

We also note the importance of a National Human Rights Commission in conformity with the Paris Principles. We are organizing with fellow Pacific Island States including State of Hawaii and believe it could be a valuable tool.

We understand the power of education. We believe human rights education must become part of the curriculum. We hope the Marshall Islands partners with regional and international NGOs and institutions of higher education. We can work together through the University of Hawaii and East-West Center to develop positive curriculum models in formal classes and popular community education. We know many NGOs in the region are interested in a regional human rights body for the Pacific and hope the Marshall Islands would participate in it in the future.

Two main issues that are crucial to explore and continue the conversation focus on the environment and health. One is from a historical wrong of conducting 67 atmospheric, land and underwater atomic and thermonuclear weapons detonated in the Marshall Islands specifically the atolls of Bikini and Enewetak. The indigenous peoples of Rongelap and Utrik were poisoned by these nuclear tests that used them as guinea pigs in the name of national security. The long term health impacts must be addressed.

The second is for the future relating to climate change and human rights. The Marshall Islands are only 2 meters above sea level. It is a matter of life and death, basic cultural survival. The rights-based approach to adaptation to climate change is essential. Just like

the Marshall Islands have partnered with Columbia University's Climate Law Centre in New York for a structured approach to the complex issues. The University of Hawaii Hawaii Center for Human Rights Research & Action pledge to collaborate together on a human rights approach to guarantee basic rights for the people inhabiting all of the islands for the future.

The Marshall Islands were sacrificed for the sake of world security decades ago. Now, they are on the sacrifice alter for the current economic model with climate change. The human rights of the Marshall Islands deserve to be promoted and protected.

Mahalo.

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