



## **INTRO –**

The President of the General Assembly,

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

*Iakwe* and greetings to all. My name is Danity Laukon and I am from the Marshall Islands.

I am humbled for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of nuclear testing victims, survivors, and their descendants. I pay my respects to them and to the numerous nuclear defenders who risked their lives to end nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands and around the world.

As we commemorate International Day Against Nuclear Test, I ask myself, “Would my children ever know who they are? Where they belong?” And if they truly do, “will they fear living in their contaminated lands and water, as we are surrounded by the sea?”

## **THE LEGEND OF TOBOLAR**

Recently, my 6 year old daughter shared a school presentation on the Marshallese legend of *Tobolar*, which is about the first coconut in the Marshall Islands. *Tobolar* was born from a beautiful woman from Aelonlaplap Atoll. In short, *Tobolar* was mocked and ridiculed for seen as useless in the village. His mother loved and cared for him despite the village’s disapproval. Then, *Tobolar*, who knew himself well, asked his mother to bury him because he said he would become more useful. His mother did so with great sadness. But one day, to her and the village’s surprise, *Tobolar* became a full grown coconut tree. Every part of *Tobolar*, his trunk, leaves, fruits, fibers and flowers became the most useful source of life for his people.

My daughter expressed to her peers that the moral of the story is to love and respect others despite their differences. But how do I explain to her that her people, land and ocean were insulted by nuclear weapons and destruction?

## **MORAL OF THE STORY AND CALL FOR ACTION**

The Marshallese nuclear legacy mirrors the woes of the scorned *Tobolar*. My daughter will live to know that her people endured 67 nuclear and thermonuclear tests conducted by the United States government straight after the second World War. Of these tests, the Bravo Shot on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1954, was 1000 times more powerful than the Hiroshima atomic bomb. So powerful, it completely obliterated an entire land mass and erased several of her islands out of existence. Fall out on that day fell and burned many children’s hair, skin, and contaminated their family’s

water and food sources. But that's not all. Her people today continue to endure being displaced from their ancestral lands and are fighting to heal from cancers and contaminated ecosystems. Of key concern is the radioactive waste contained in the Runit Dome on Enewetak Atoll that is currently leaking into the ocean and groundwater. This dome, combined with the effects of climate change and shared nuclear legacies in her neighboring islands of French Polynesia and Kiribati is even more concerning.

In my daughter and her people's honor, I demand the nuclear armed states to right their wrongs and adopt nuclear justice. You must show the utmost regard for those whose lives have been altered forever by nuclear testing. The rest of us are tasked with bringing more concrete actions and establishing better practices, moving forward.

## **CONCLUSION**

I would like to conclude by saying that I, along with the many mothers of my generation, do not want the tragedies of nuclear testing to be the stories that we pass to our children. Instead, we wish to leave them behind a legacy of peace, filled with stories of nuclear heroes. We refuse to remain buried in the sand. We will rise and ensure that our people are treated with respect and love.

“The International Day Against Nuclear Test is a day for us to declare that each life affected by nuclear tragedy is of unconditional worth” – Bedi Racule, mother and member of MISA4thePacific

*Kommool tata.* Thank you very much.

- September 2021