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**Commissioner | Republic of the Marshall Islands National Nuclear Commission**

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Enhanced interactive dialogue on the nuclear legacy in the Marshall Islands

*Check against delivery*

Although the US is no longer the UN administrating authority of the RMI, colonialism endures in US responses to the nuclear legacy. Structural racism is evident in the failure to provide adequate health and environmental monitoring to the same standards as US citizens.

* For example, the nuclear waste storage facility on Enewetak does not meet US standards for household garbage containment, let alone plutonium.

The Marshall Islands was the “proving ground” to design, test, observe, innovate and perfect weapons of genocide -- the islands and the people became a living laboratory to extract and interpret data from the bodies of people and their islands.

Community anger and distrust are rooted in decades of dehumanizing treatment in the hands of US researchers who reduced people to mere test subject numbers. Test subjects received placebos so researchers could observe the unaltered medical impacts of their weapons designs. As bodily data sources to the US Government:

* Human populations were purposefully exposed to radiation as the US did with its own populations and
* Community members were routinely sent to military hospitals in Guam and the US for organ removal and other procedures without consent, translation, or understanding; sometimes children were sent without accompanying family

The truth about the nuclear legacy and its impacts is far from being known:

* There are four known fires that destroyed medical records of impacted communities
* Fallout information for entire test series has yet to be given to the RMI making it impossible to know the cumulative impacts of radiation exposure
* The US Department of Defense, and particularly the US Navy that had initial jurisdiction for the tests, has not declassified documents despite repeated requests by the RMI

The NNC and the RMI needs technical assistance and capacity building, for example, training Marshallese who can lead community-based work, and establishing a Scientific Advisory Board of independent scientists without ties to the interests of the US or the nuclear industry. Despite the millions of dollars spent by the US on the nuclear legacy, the vast amount of that money supported weapons laboratory contractors in California and New York to improve US Government knowledge about nuclear weaponry.

Looking towards the future, the U.S. should embark on a process of self-reflection to understand why and how it maintains colonialist and racist responses to the RMI nuclear legacy, and to acknowledge the wrongs, with transparency and honesty, as an essential first step to restore trust and provide adequate and humane support to the people of the RMI.