

environmental effects of nuclear weapons. Aside from the immediate damage at and near ground zero, we have experience with the contamination of animals and plants, and the poisoning of soil and water. There are islands, some still abandoned, some recently resettled, where as I have noted the presence of cesium in plants from the radioactive fallout renders them inedible. It is inconceivable that this kind of experience would not be repeated by the use nuclear weapons in military conflict.

For the Marshall Islands, there is no question of the competence of the World Health Organization and the United Nations General Assembly to ask the questions put before this Court. We see no good reason why the Court should decline to answer these questions. Our experience shows that these are not "abstract" issues, as some have rather insensitively suggested. Indeed, our experience compels us to conclude that the Court should answer these questions, as there are no issues of greater importance than these to the rule of international law, and to the future of civilization. As a Member of the United Nations, and as a former United Nations Trust Territory, the Marshall Islands respectfully calls upon this Court, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, to advise that there are no uses of nuclear weapons that are compatible with international law.

Mr. President, Members of the Court, with your permission, I would now like to invite Ms Lijon Eknilang to describe for you her experience, and that of her family, friends, and community, with the effects of nuclear weapons.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Honourable Theodore Kronmiller for his statement and now I give the floor to Mrs. Lijon Eknilang, the Honourable Council Member of the Rongelap Atoll Local Government.

Mrs. Lijon EKNILANG: Mr. President, Members of the Court, I would like to begin by thanking you for allowing me to present a statement on the effects which the explosion of nuclear weapons have had on my life and on the lives of my family, friends, and other fellow citizens of the Marshall Islands. These experiences are relevant to the questions put to this Court, because unnecessary injuries, indiscriminate impacts, and adverse collateral environmental effects of the

radioactive fall-out resulting from atmospheric tests which have so gravely affected the Marshall Islands would be repeated for other people and their lands in the event of any military use of nuclear weapons.

I hope that the Court will understand that I cannot be unemotional about the facts of my experience with nuclear weapons. The important point is that they are the facts, and they are not "abstract".

My name is Lijon Eknilang. I was born on Rongelap Atoll in the Marshall Islands, and I lived there at the time of the nuclear weapons testing programme conducted by the Adminstrating Authority for the United Nations during the period of the Pacific Island Territories Trusteeship. Rongelap is approximately 150 kilometres southeast of Bikini Atoll, and about 470 kilometres downwind from Enewetak Atoll, which were the sites of the nuclear detonations during the testing programme.

On the morning of 1 March 1954, the day of the "Bravo" shot, there was a huge, brilliant light that consumed the sky. We all ran outside our homes to see it. The elders said another world war had begun. I remember crying. I did not realize at the time that it was the people of Rongelap who had begun a lifelong battle for their health and a safe environment.

Not long after the light from Bravo, it began to snow in Rongelap. We had heard about snow from the missionaries and other westerners who had come to our islands, but this was the first time we saw white particles fall from the sky and cover our village.

Of course, in 1954, Marshallese children and their parents did not know that the snow was radioactive fall-out from the Bravo shot. The fall-out that our bodies were exposed to caused the blisters and other sores we experienced over the weeks that followed. Many of us lost our hair, too. The fall-out was in the air we breathed, in the fresh water we drank, and in the food we ate during the days after Bravo. This caused internal exposure and sickness.

We remained on Rongelap for two and one-half days after the fall-out came. The serious internal and external exposure we received caused long-term health problems that affected my parents' generation, my generation, and the generation of my children.

Then we were told that we had to leave Rongelap. Some of us left by airplane, but most of us on a large ship. We did not take our belongings or our animals. We did not know, when we left on 3 March 1954 that we would be leaving our homes for almost three years.

In June 1957, when we did return, we saw changes on our island. Some of our food crops, such as arrowroot, completely disappeared. Makmok, or tapioca plants, stopped bearing fruit. What we did eat gave us blisters on our lips and in our mouths and we suffered terrible stomach problems and nausea. Some of the fish we caught caused the same problems. These were things that had not happened before 1954. Our staple foods had never made us ill.

We brought these problems to the attention of the doctors and officials who visited us. They said we were preparing the foods incorrectly, or that we had fish poisoning. We knew that was impossible because we had been preparing and surviving from these foods for centuries without suffering from the problems that appeared after 1954.

Although our blisters, burns and hair loss eventually cleared up, we later experienced other, even more serious problems. It has always been interesting to me that even the people who were not on Rongelap in 1954, but who went there with us in 1957, began to experience the same illnesses we did in later years. Foreign doctors and other officials called those people the "control group", and we were told the sickness of that group proved our illnesses were common to all Marshallese. We did not believe that, and we learned only recently that the "control group" had come from areas that had also been contaminated by radioactivity from the weapons tests.

Our illnesses got worse, and many of us died. We had to believe that our island was radioactive, and we evacuated ourselves from Rongelap in 1985. The Rongelapese have been living in exile ever since.

My own health has suffered very much, as a result of radiation poisoning. I cannot have children. I have had miscarriages on seven occasions. On one of those occasions, I miscarried after four months. The child I miscarried was severely deformed; it had only one eye. I have also had thyroid surgery to remove nodules. I am taking thyroid medication which I need every day for the rest of my life. Doctors recently found more nodules in my thyroid, which have to be removed in the

near future. I have lumps in my breasts, as well as kidney and stomach problems, for which I am receiving treatment. My eyesight is blurred, and everything looks foggy to me.

Others in my community suffered, as well. Many children and seemingly healthy adults died unexpectedly in the years following Bravo - the reasons for which none of us fully understood at the time. There were strange and strong fevers which killed people and left them mentally retarded.

We began to learn about leukaemia for the first time when the body of Lekoj Anjain, a 15-year old boy who had been strong and healthy, was returned to Rongelap in a coffin. We did not understand his illness or the illnesses for which we were sent to the United States to be treated. Many of us were sent from our islands for the first time in our lives to hospital in the United States and Guam. We had surgeries and treatments which we knew little about because we did not speak English and, in most cases, there were no translators. Some of us had brain tumours and other cancers removed. In more recent years, we have come to learn that some of us had our entire thyroids removed.

Lekoj Anjain's father John began to keep a list of all the Rongelapese who died and all of those who went to the United States to have their thyroids removed, because there were so many people involved. We were afraid we would not remember all of them.

Women have experienced many reproductive cancers and abnormal births. Marshallese women suffer silently and differently from the men who were exposed to radiation. Our culture and religion teaches us that reproductive abnormalities are a sign that women have been unfaithful to their husbands. For this reason, many of my friends keep quiet about the strange births they had. In privacy, they give birth, not to children as we like to think of them, but to things we could only describe as "octopuses", "apples", "turtles", and other things in our experience. We do not have Marshallese words for these kinds of babies because they were never born before the radiation came.

Women on Rongelap, Likiep, Ailuk and other atolls in the Marshall Islands have given birth to these "monster babies". Many of these women are from atolls which foreign officials have told us were not affected by radiation. We know otherwise, because the health problems are similar to ours.

One woman on Likiep gave birth to a child with two heads. Her cat also gave birth to a kitten with two heads. There is a young girl on Ailuk today with no knees, three toes on each foot and a missing

arm. Her mother had not been born by 1954, but she was raised on a contaminated atoll.

The most common birth defects on Rongelap and nearby islands have been "jellyfish" babies. These babies are born with no bones in their bodies and with transparent skin. We can see their brains and hearts beating. The babies usually live for a day or two before they stop breathing. Many women die from abnormal pregnancies and those who survive give birth to what looks like purple grapes which we quickly hide away and bury.

My purpose for travelling such a great distance to appear before the Court today, is to plead with you to do what you can not to allow the suffering that we Marshallese have experienced to be repeated in any other community in the world. While no government or other organization can fully restore the health of the Marshallese people or our environment, steps can be taken which will make it less likely that the same kinds of horrors will be experienced again. I know first-hand what the devastating effects of nuclear weapons are over time and over long distances, and what those effects mean to innocent human beings over several generations.

The story of the Marshallese people since the nuclear weapons tests has been sad and painful. Allow our experience, now, to save others such sadness and pain. I ask the Court to consider the experience of the Marshallese and to give the people of our world what security you can for their health and for the safety of the environment upon which their survival depends.

Mr. President, Members of the Court, I would like to thank you for your patient consideration. This concludes the statement of the Marshall Islands. Kommol tata and thank you.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much Mrs. Eknilang. As you said that that concludes the oral argument of the Marshall Islands, I will now call upon the distinguished representative of the delegation of Solomon Islands, His Excellency the Honourable Mr. Victor Ngele to make his oral statement.

The Honourable Victor NGELE:

1. Mr. President, Members of the Court, I have the honour and pleasure to represent Solomon Islands today, as first appearance for Solomon Islands and for me. The issues before the Court are