

GOVERNMENT OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS  
MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS 96960

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AN OPEN LETTER

TO : IROIJLAPLAP JOANES,  
IROIJLAPLAP BINTON  
MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF UJELANG AND ENEWETAK AND  
THE PEOPLE OF UJELANG AND ENEWETAK

I HAVE ASKED OUR CHIEF SECRETARY OSCAR DEBRUM TO CONVEY THIS MESSAGE TO YOU, EXTENDING OUR GREETINGS AND WARM WISHES FOR A WISE AND CONSIDERED DECISION DURING THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE ENEWETAK RADIATION DOSE ASSESSMENT MEETINGS. I WISH ALSO TO EXTEND DEEP REGRETS FOR MY INABILITY TO BE WITH YOU DURING THESE MEETINGS TO DISCUSS THE MOST SERIOUS AND DIFFICULT QUESTION WHICH YOU YOURSELVES MUST RESOLVE FOR YOUR LIVES AND THE LIVES OF YOUR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

DESPITE MY ABSENCE FROM THESE IMPORTANT MEETINGS, I WISH TO ASSURE YOU OF OUR CONTINUED CONCERN FOR YOU AS YOU FACE ALL THESE COMPLICATED PROBLEMS WROUGHT UNFORTUNATELY UPON AN, INNOCENT AND NATURE-LOVING PEOPLE, AND TO AGAIN REITERATE THAT THE POSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS WITH RESPECT TO THESE PROBLEMS, WHICH HAS BEEN SHARED WITH SOME OF YOU ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN THE PAST, HAS NEVER BEEN ALTERED.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS UNDERSTANDS AND DEEPLY APPRECIATES THE LONG HARDSHIP YOU AS A DISPLACED PEOPLE HAVE SUFFERED AND ENDURED DURING THE MANY YEARS SINCE YOU WERE

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EVACUATED FROM YOUR BELOVED HOMELAND, AND THE BURNING DESIRES AND ANXIETIES WHICH HAVE RENDERED IT UNBEARABLE FOR YOU TO WAIT ANY LONGER TO RETURN TO YOUR LONG MISSED HOMELAND. HOWEVER, YOUR GOVERNMENT, IN ALL FAIRNESS, MUST ADVISE YOU THAT IT CANNOT BLESS NOR PARTICIPATE IN ANY DECISION MAKING FOR YOUR RETURN TO ENEWETAK WITHOUT BEING ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN OF ALL ASPECTS OF THE LINGERING DANGER OF RESIDUAL RADIATION IN ENEWETAK. THE RECENT GAO REPORT ON THE APPARENT RADIATION DANGER IN ENEWETAK HAS GIVEN US MUCH CONCERN AND GROUND FOR SERIOUS DOUBTS WHETHER YOUR RETURN TO ENEWETAK UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES AT THIS TIME IS ALL THAT PRUDENT AND SAFE. WE CANNOT BE SURE WHETHER THE CONCRETE ENTOMBMENT OF THE RADIO-ACTIVE ELEMENTS AND MATTERS BURIED IN THE BOMB CRATER IN ONE OF THE ISLANDS IN THE LAGOON OF ENEWETAK IS PERMANENTLY SECURED AGAINST ANY POSSIBLE LEAKAGE IN THE FUTURE. AND IF SUCH POSSIBILITY DOES EXIST, WE ARE NOT AWARE THAT THERE ARE PROPER AND ADEQUATE MEANS OF PRECAUTIONARY MONITORING TO CHECK AND WARN AGAINST FUTURE LEAKAGE. WE HAVE ALSO NOTED THAT THE RADIATION LEVEL ON THE ISLAND OF ENIU IN BIKINI ATOLL IS ANALOGOUS TO THAT OF THE HABITABLE ISLANDS IN ENEWETAK ATOLL. IF SUCH IS ACCURATE, IT IS, INDEED, DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND WHY THESE ISLANDS IN ENEWETAK ARE CONSIDERED SAFE WHILE ENIU ISLAND OF EQUAL RADIATION LEVEL HAS BEEN DECLARED UNSAFE FOR THE BIKINNIANS TO RESETTLE. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS TO WHICH YOUR GOVERNMENT MUST HAVE, BUT DOES NOT HAVE THE ANSWERS, IN ORDER TO BE BETTER POSITIONED TO ADVISE YOU OF THESE PROBLEMS.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS IS VERY MUCH

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AWARE OF ITS PROBLEM OF NOT HAVING BEEN FULLY INFORMED ON ALL THE ASPECTS OF RADIATION DANGER IN ENEWETAK, BUT WE SHALL ENDEAVOR TO SEEK FURTHER AND BROADER KNOWLEDGE SO WE MAY BE HELPFUL TO YOU.

DESPITE THESE UNCERTAINTIES, WE HAVE NO RESERVATION IN INFORMING YOU THAT ENEWETAK ATOLL AND THE ISLANDS DESIGNATED FOR YOUR RESETTLEMENT ARE NOT, AND WILL NOT FOR A LONG TIME, BE ONE HUNDRED PER CENT SAFE FOR YOUR LIVES AND THE LIVES OF YOUR GENERATIONS TO COME. THIS IS THE CRUX OF THE DOSE ASSESSMENT MEETINGS WHERE YOU WILL BE ASKED TO CONSIDER THE AMOUNT OF RADIATION RISK AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE CONTROLLED AND DISCIPLINED CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH YOU WILL HAVE TO DRASTICALLY ADJUST YOUR LIVING STYLES. THE OLD, FREE AND BEAUTIFUL ENEWETAK THAT YOUR ELDERS KNEW AND LOVED HAS FAR GONE. IT IS NOW A HOMELAND, SCARRED BY WAR, DEFACED BY NUCLEAR OBLITERATION, AND IN THE CASE OF RUNIT, FOREVER CONDEMNED. FORTUNATELY, SOME OF ITS FAMILIAR SCENERY AND CHARMS HAVE SURVIVED ALL THESE NIGHTMARES. A REHABILITATION PROGRAM BY THE UNITED STATES MILITARY TO REMOVE HAZARDOUS DEBRIS OF YESTERDAY HAS PROGRESSED WELL AND WILL BE COMPLETED BY NEXT YEAR. MODERN EDIFICES AND HOMES HAVE BEEN BUILT ON THE RESETTLEMENT SITES. ENEWETAK TODAY IS A DIFFERENT HOMELAND, WHICH IN FACT REQUIRES YOU TO CONFORM TO THE DICTATES OF YOUR NEW ENVIRONMENT AND CHANGE YOUR LIVING HABITS IN ORDER TO SURVIVE. BUT TO THOSE OF YOU WHO LOVE NATURE AND THE TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIVING, YOU WILL FIND THAT MUCH HAS BEEN LOST, AND MORE CRITICALLY, MUCH OF YOUR FREEDOM WILL BE CURTAILED BECAUSE MUCH OF YOUR DOMAIN HAS BECOME UNSUITABLE FOR THE FULL ENJOYMENT OF ISLAND LIVING THAT YOU USED TO KNOW.

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LASTLY, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS IS EXTREMELY CONCERNED WHETHER THESE INITIAL DOSE ASSESSMENT MEETINGS CAN ACHIEVE A PROPERLY INFORMED CONSENT BY THE PEOPLE OF UJELANG AND ENEWETAK TO THE SATISFACTION OF ALL CONCERNED. WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC EXPERTISE OBTAINED TO RENDER YOU ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE IN FULLY UNDERSTANDING THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THE SERIOUS DECISION ARE COMPETENT. BUT IT WILL BE MOST IMPROPER THAT THEY MAKE THE DECISION FOR YOU BECAUSE IT IS NEITHER THEIRS, NOR THE VARIOUS GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES' TO MAKE. IT IS, INDEED, YOURS ALONE TO MAKE. IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU ARE NOT READY TO MAKE IT AT THIS TIME, WE ASK THAT YOU DO NOT RUSH WITH IT. BUT IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU ARE READY TO ENTERTAIN IT, WE PRAY THAT GOD HELP YOU IN YOUR DILIGENT DELIBERATIONS AMONG YOURSELVES.

IN CONCLUSION, WE WISH AGAIN TO ASSURE YOU THAT WHATEVER THE FATE OF UJELANG AND ENEWETAK PEOPLE WILL BE IN THE FUTURE BY THEIR OWN DECISION, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS WILL ALWAYS BE READY AND WILLING TO SHARE YOUR PROBLEMS AND ASSIST YOU IN ANY WAY IT CAN.

WITH MY DUE RESPECT AND REGARDS TO YOU, I AM

SINCERELY YOURS

ANITA KABUA, PRESIDENT