

*lokwe in raelep.* The Republic of Marshall Islands is a chain of volcanic islands and coral atolls impacted disproportionately by plastic pollution. Because of this, we have national legislation banning the importation, manufacture, sale or distribution of styrofoam cups and plates, disposable plastic cups and plates, and plastic shopping bags. We have already implemented a container deposit law to encourage recycling. In the Marshall Islands retailers only promote reusable bags or reuse cardboard boxes. Yet, single use and other plastic pollution, including from the fishing industry, dominates our shores, breaking down and choking the marine life.

The atolls of the Marshall Islands are only 12 inches or so above sea level at high tide. They are flat. However, we now have a new and growing mountain in our landscape. A mountain made of trash.

The scientific evidence is clear: plastics breakdown into microplastics found in the air, water, and even in fish and other marine life. There are over 10,000 chemicals found in plastics and as they break down, these chemicals leak into the environment, poisoning our foods, the ocean, the fish we eat, even the air we breathe. We need an agreement that takes both the health and environmental crisis into consideration.

Different nations, individuals and groups attending the INC have expressed their concerns on plastics - they have brought detailed evidence that describe what has been happening in their communities. It must be mentioned, this conversation has been going on for many years while business continues as usual yet little progress has been made.

I have two young sons back home in the Marshalls. I ask your help, all of you present here. Let us work together to develop this instrument to reduce the overproduction of plastics and address plastic pollution, including marine plastic pollution. Help me ensure that my sons, our future generation, do not grow up on an atoll island made up of mountains of plastics.