

After 30 years of service, FSM maritime surveillance vessels FSS Micronesia and FSS Independence sail their last

By [Bill Jaynes](#)
The Kaselehlie Press

January 12, 2022

Pohnpei— After three decades of service, the FSM wished the marine surveillance vessels FSS Micronesia and FSS Independence fair winds and following seas as they headed to Australia for decommissioning. It



is the end of an era for those vessels and the beginning of a new one as the two vessels and also, ultimately, the FSS Palikir are decommissioned and crew members are trained on two new larger and more Guardian-class vessels.

The well attended farewell ceremony

was held at the Marine Surveillance dock in Dekehtik, Pohnpei. On conclusion, family members of the crew members of the two vessels said farewell, at least for two months, while they train in Australia. Though the departure of the two vessels was delayed for two and a half hours due to the late arrival of

Click here for video of DOJ, and Ambassador Cowley's remarks.



Pohnpei Department of Health Officials who were to administer pre-departure COVID-19 tests, there still was a contingent of vessels in the harbor that escorted the vessels through the channel

and into open water.

“There is not question that this donation

[Click here for continuation](#)

Romeo Harry accused of murder, mayhem and other crimes for New Year's Day attack

By [Bill Jaynes](#)
The Kaselehlie Press

January 5, 2022

Pohnpei—A drunken New Year celebration tragically ended in Oumwoar, Sokehs with the murder of Apsai Roby of Sekere and the severe injury of Julie Paiden and her husband, Johnny Hellan. Romeo Harry was arrested and charged with the crimes. The Pohnpei Supreme Court denied bail and Romeo has been remanded to jail pending the outcome of a trial.

According to Pohnpei State detectives, the four relatives had been out driving around Pohnpei, drinking together.

They returned to the home of Paiden and Hellan where Paiden began to prepare food. At approximate 5:00 on the evening of January 1, witnesses told police that Harry became angry because he was hungry. He allegedly lashed out at Paiden with a weapon that the police describe in the charges as a knife that was approximately one foot long. The blow nearly severed Paiden's arm.

Witnesses say that Hellan came to his wife's defense and Harry slashed Hellan's face, multiple times with the same "knife". Immediately afterward, he allegedly slashed Roby in the back of the neck, severing an artery. Roby died from that injury.

Paiden and Hellan were treated at the Pohnpei State Hospital.

Three hours after the incident, police found Harry hiding in the jungle near the home in Oumwoar where the knife attacks occurred.

On January 3, Pohnpei State Prosecutors filed fourteen separate charges against Harry, including the most serious charge of murder.

For the crimes against Apsai Roby, prosecutors charged Harry with murder, manslaughter, assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, felonious assault and battery, and assault and battery.

For the disfiguring crimes against Julie Paiden, prosecutors charged Harry with mayhem. They also charge him with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, felonious assault and battery, and assault and battery.

For the crimes against Johnny Hellan, prosecutors charged Harry with felonious assault and battery, and assault and battery.

The State also charged Harry with disorderly conduct and disturbance of the peace.

Harry will have an arraignment hearing on January 25 at 9:30 in the morning.

Government of Japan provides \$78,303 to help Kitti clear its waterways

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

January 13, 2021

Pohnpei—Under its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Project funding scheme, this morning the government of Japan provided \$78,303 to the Kitti Government. The money will be used to purchase a portable saw mill, a lift truck and an excavator in order to recover the waterways in Kitti.

“Kitti Municipality is a very important district for the FSM-rich in nature with Mangrove forests and a lot of rivers which access to the ocean. Many local residents of Kitti Municipality still use the waterways to access the lagoons for fishing, to secure their own livelihood,” said Japan’s Ambassador Michigami Hisashi during the ceremony at the Japanese Embassy to present the check. “However, natural

disasters, such as floods and landslides, have caused broken mangrove trees and fallen trees to block the waterways. This makes it difficult to use the waterways. These natural disasters also cause flooding at drainage that connects to the waterways.”

Welson Panuel, Mayor of Kitti Municipal Government said that the equipment will be used to clear the waterways which they have not previously been able to do.

Panuel was joined at the ceremony by Kitti Speaker Alfredson Ladore, Garvy Spenser, Kitti Chairman of Finance and other Kitti dignitaries.



Government of Japan provides \$134,014 to Sokehs for new garbage and dump truck

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

January 13, 2022

Pohnpei—During a ceremony at the Embassy of Japan in Kolonia, Ambassador Michigami Hisashi handed over a check in the amount of \$134,014 to the government of Sokehs. The money was provided under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects grant scheme of the government of Japan.

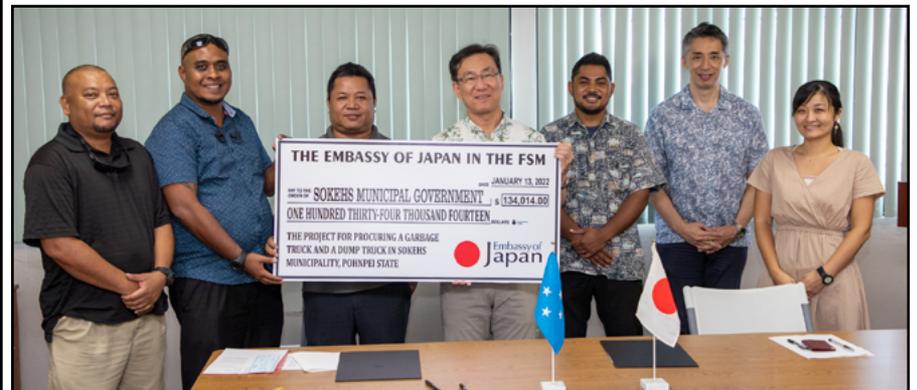
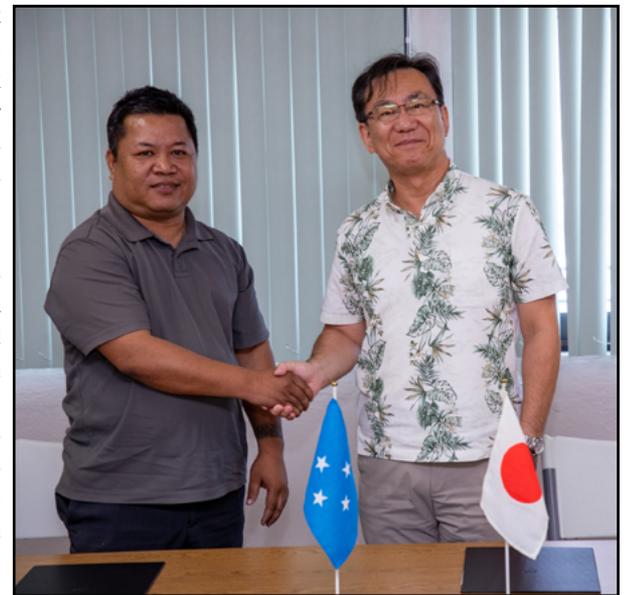
The Sokehs government will use the money to purchase a garbage truck and a dump truck in order to improve its waste management plan in the municipality.

In 2014 the Japanese Government provided a used garbage truck and a dump truck, which worked for approximately seven years before breaking down. Since then, the Sokehs government has been using two flatbed trucks

to collect waste, but they are insufficient.

The new garbage and dump trucks will help the Sokehs Municipality to increase its waste collection efforts from once every two weeks to once a week.

Chief Magistrate Michael Lieman accepted the grant, promising to ensure that the new trucks will be maintained so that they can last for years.



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Bill Jaynes
Managing Editor

THE NEXT ISSUE OF
THE KASELEHLIE PRESS

WILL BE RELEASED ON:

February 2, 2022

Deadline for submission of articles or advertisements for this issue is the end of working hours on:

Monday, January 31, 2022

Alcohol a factor in all 37 arrests in Pohnpei during New Year's weekend

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

January 10, 2022

Pohnpei—According to State Police Detective Lt. Bronson Martin, Pohnpei State Police arrested 37 people between New Year's Eve and January 3. Alcohol was a factor in each of the crimes. Eight of those arrested were juveniles.

Three of the crimes, including the one in a Sekere community that ended with the death of Apsai Roby, involved long knives or machetes. Lt. Martin said that at approximately two hours into the New Year, Rickenard "Richie" Edgar allegedly slashed a male victim in U. Physicians admitted the male victim to the hospital for two days as a result of injuries which Lt. Martin did not define.

Also on New Year's Day, a woman and her sister were arguing in Danpei, Sokehs. One of the women, who allegedly intended to injure her sister, instead injured her own husband. He

received stitches for the wound on his wrist and released. The court allowed for bail provisions for the victim's wife.

Five hours into the New Year, Welsinger Elpet lost his life in what appeared to be a single vehicle accident in Dolonier. After a currently unidentified person dropped off two injured people on the sidewalk at the hospital and then drove away, police are now investigating the possible involvement of another vehicle whose driver may have also left the scene of the accident in Dolonier. No arrests have yet been made.

Lt. Martin said that during the last New Year's celebration, he was assigned to the Kitti substation and that though there were several arrests in Kitti last year, there were fewer this year than last. Still, this year there were four traffic related arrests and four non-vehicular arrests for other criminal activity. Again, alcohol was a factor in each of those arrests.

This year in Madolenihmw there were

two traffic related arrests and one criminal arrest for disorderly conduct.

Lt. Martin said that arrests in Kolonia and surrounding areas were much higher this year than last, but he spoke in generalities that included arrest made in U, Nett, and Sokehs.

"The ban of alcohol sales (on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day) leads some people to stockpile alcohol," Lt. Martin said, expressing his personal opinion. "They sometimes end up with more than they might usually drink."

Whereas in some years past, residents of Pohnpei have been allowed to continue loud, all-night revelries for a week or more, recently, ordinances have clamped down on their duration. This year, residents could incessantly honk their car horns, beat on anything that would make noise, scream at the top of their lungs, and as one outer island tradition requires at New Year, try to drench drivers with water through their open windows, but

they could only do it until just before midnight on January 1.

While the cacophony of previous celebrations did diminish significantly at that time, some road blocks continued well into the New Year. One local resident said that her vehicle was stopped at one such road block in Dolonier during the day on January 2nd. Despite her telling the revelers that her son, who was in her vehicle, is autistic, they doused him with buckets of water not once but twice, laughing hysterically all the while.

"I should have called the police," she said, "They would have gotten in trouble."

Though some of the 37 arrests they made during that time may have been related to violations, State Police did not specifically say that any of the arrests were related to violations of the New Year celebration time limit ordinances.

...Surveillance Vessels

Continued from front page

by Australia contributed to the capacity building of the FSM in managing its ocean resources, and securing the maritime domain of this country," said Leonita Baccalando, Jr., Acting FSM Attorney General in the first speech of the morning. "The patrol boats were used in quarantine enforcement, search and rescue operations, disaster relief, medical evacuation support, sea support and general police work."

"They have played a key role in apprehending hundreds and possibly thousands of IUU (Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing) activities over the years," he said. "They will be replaced by two guardian-class patrol boats to better meet the law enforcement demands and maritime security challenges facing the FSM."

Australia's Ambassador Jo Cowley was the next to speak.

"When Australia handed over the first two vessels to Micronesia in 1990, the goal was to help your country, a relatively newly independent country, to control its own borders and protect its

people and its resources—to help you exercise your sovereignty over your own vast waters," she said.

"These boats are a part of the story of the FSM. For Pohnpei, Kosrae, Yap, and Chuuk, these vessels have touched the lives of people from all corners of your wonderful country."

Ambassador Cowley spoke of the crucial role in 2015 after Typhoon Maysak devastated portions of the FSM. The FSS Independence was deployed to Chuuk, and the FSS Micronesia was deployed to the outer islands of Yap carrying medical supplies and emergency assessment teams to help the islands to rebuild and to recover. She repeated the oft told story that en route to the deployment to Chuuk, the FSS Independence also apprehended four illegal fishing vessels.

She acknowledged all of the many men and women who served on the vessels and the Australian Defense officers who helped the FSM to ensure that the vessels were "among the best maintained patrol boats in the entire Pacific".

"The new vessels can sail faster and farther, carry more humanitarian supplies, and will accommodate more mixed gender crew so that many more women will have the privilege of

serving on the vessels," she said.

"It's more important than ever that nations like ours continue to work together because the security environment in the Pacific region that both of our countries call home is becoming more complex and uncertain. Together we are stronger. That is why Australia is committed to working with the FSM and the region to maintain a strong Blue Pacific that is secure, peaceful, and prosperous. The patrol boats are at the heart of this," the Ambassador said in conclusion.

"I would like to recognize that our friends and allies in Australia have always supported our national ideals of peace, unity, and liberty. Of the multitude of ways Australia has consistently shown its support to our country, one of the standout initiatives has been the Pacific Patrol Boat Program," said FSM President David Panuelo during his remarks.

"The Pacific Patrol Boat Program has helped ensure that the men and women who serve the People of the FSM, through the National Police, are able to play an active role in securing our own borders and natural resources. The practical effect has been that Micronesia has been safer, and has been freer, which in turn has contributed to Indo-Pacific

stability and security."

The President pointed out that during the short interim period of time between the departure of the two vessels and the arrival of the new ones, the FSM's response capabilities for search and rescue will be more limited, though there are international agreements that will take up some of the slack. He called upon the Governors to consider implementing measures to mitigate that factor. He encouraged the States to require the registration of outboard motors and require certain markings that would more easily facilitate successful rescue during and emergency situation.

"You, the crews of the Micronesia and the Independence, have a long journey ahead of you. You will travel a long distance, to the shores of one of our Nation's closest allies and friends, say goodbye to these vessels you have known throughout your careers, and bid warm greetings to their replacements. Individually, and collectively, in my capacity as your President, I want you to know that I am proud of you. In a moment I will shake each of your hands, but first I will take this opportunity to say each of your names," the President said and proceeded to read each of the names of the 32 crew members that would be making the journey, before shaking the hands of each one.

Humanitarian partners support emergency response to King Tide damage

International Organization for migration (IOM)

From December 3rd through the 7th 2021, regions in the North Pacific experienced significant saltwater inundation from a combination of king tides, elevated sea levels, and strong northerly winds. King tides occur when the Earth, Moon and Sun are aligned resulting in the largest tidal range seen over the course of a year. Saltwater inundation poses a hazard to residents and freshwater sources in addition to damaging public infrastructure, housing, and agriculture such as taro.

In response to flood damage in affected communities, Chuuk issued a Declaration of State of Emergency on December 9, 2021 and began an immediate emergency response. As the scope of the damage grew, the president of FSM, His Excellency David W. Panuelo, signed a Presidential Emergency Declaration on December 15th.

As initial reports indicated significant damage to public infrastructure throughout the region including community buildings,



docks, and seawalls, detailed damage assessments are now in the process of being completed jointly by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management (DECEM) and state-level Disaster Coordinating Offices with technical support from IOM, UNICEF, CRS and Red Cross.

On December 28th, humanitarian partners provided prepositioned supplies funded by USAID and UNICEF which were loaded onto Chuuk state's vessel, Chief Mailo, headed to the Mortlocks region. The emergency supplies distributed included 500 WASH and dignity kits, 500 jerry cans, 500 five-gallon buckets with waterspouts and lids, 110 bottles of bleach, and 30 kitchen sets. Response activities will be ongoing as communities continue to recover from the effects of the flood damage.



President Panuelo advocates for overseas development priorities, supplemental budget request for emergency relief & constitutional convention reconvening, & numerous pending legislation

FSM Information Services

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—On January 13th, 2022, the 22nd Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) began its 3rd Regular Session. After the opening session, His Excellency David W. Panuelo virtually received the Committee to Wait on the President. Chaired by the Honorable Esmond B. Moses, Vice Speaker of the FSM Congress, committee members included the Honorable Joseph J. Urusemal, the Honorable Perpetua S. Konman, and the Honorable Aren B. Palik.

The bulk of the meeting focused on the Executive Branch's six proposed overseas development assistance priorities, a supplemental budget request, and discussion on various pending legislation. Regarding the six proposed overseas development assistance priorities, the President requested Congress' endorsement on the following nation-wide priorities: Climate-resilient infrastructure for outer island transport; the construction of a medical diagnostic facility; the Pave the Nation Initiative; renewable energy; the construction and utilization of a vocational school; and water security for the FSM.

Having these priorities endorsed by the FSM Congress would, in the President's view, be a concrete demonstration of country ownership, and cooperation and commitment with the FSM's development partners.

Regarding the proposed supplemental budget request, President Panuelo requested that Congress appropriate approximately \$4,900,000 for various Capital Projects, subsidies, contributions, and for Executive Branch operations.

Part of the operation budget for the Executive Branch would cover funding for the salary of a Chief of Staff, additional personnel for the Department of Justice, and contracts at the Department of Transportation, Communication, & Infrastructure, among others.

Part of the subsidies budget would include additional funding for the United Nations Multi-Country Office, and \$250,000 for the FSM Telecommunications Cable Corporation, commonly referred to as the Open Access Entity to distinguish it from the FSM Telecommunications Corporation.

President Panuelo also noted that the 4th FSM Constitutional Convention has requested an additional \$85,000 in funding so that the essential work of the Convention can continue. Part of the Capital Projects budget would include \$313,200 for the operation of national vessels, and slightly more than two million dollars (\$2,000,000) for the construction of a new Executive Branch building to house the Department of Education and Department of Health & Social Affairs.

Additionally, the President has requested one million dollars (\$1,000,000) to continue funding the repatriation process, e.g. the cost of pre-quarantine in the U.S. Territory of Guam. The President advised that approximately \$150,000 donated by the People's Republic of China, and a further \$850,000 donated by New Zealand, had nearly been depleted, and so additional funding is necessary in order to ensure the sustainability of the repatriation process over the course of 2022.

The bulk of the remainder of the meeting focused on the various pending legislation the Executive Branch has submitted for Congress' review and, ideally,

endorsement. These legislation include the proposed Freedom of Information Act; the proposed cybercrimes bill; the proposed noncommunicable diseases bill (which seeks to lessen the occurrence of diabetes and high-blood pressure in the FSM); the proposed passport extension bill, which would increase the lifetime of an FSM passport from five years to ten years; the proposed legislation on the bunkering and provisioning of vessels; the proposed legislation for penalties on the importation of prohibited plastic materials; legislation to enhance the Secretary of Finance's tax enforcement capacity; and proposed legislation to allow non-profit corporations to become chartered, among others.

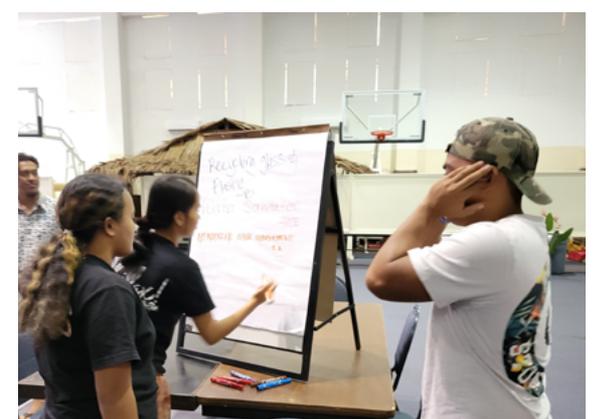
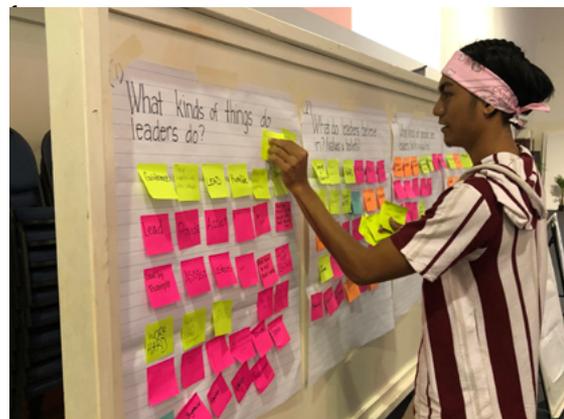
The remainder of the meeting covered the President's responses to questions from the Honorable Senators. In this regard, there was substantial discussion on several legal matters concerning both the Executive and Legislative branches of the Government, as well as discussion on an increase of work related to the ongoing negotiations for the Compact of Free Association being a partial justification for an increase in the fees paid to the Nation's legal counsel and lobbying firm in the United States.



IOM Holds Youth Leadership Summit at National

On January 3rd to the 7th 2022, students from the College of Micronesia (COM) National Campus attended the Youth Leadership Summit on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation. The event was implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and funded jointly through USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) under the Inclusive Mitigation and Preparedness in Action project (IMPACT) and the Department of State under the Inspiring Women's Empowerment through Collective Action project (IWA). The project partnered with College of Micronesia Student Services Office, National Campus to host and facilitate the event. The event brought together 25 students from COM and trained them on leadership and project implementation over the course of five days. The overall theme of the summit was increasing resilience to climate change at the community level and topics included climate change and its impact on FSM, grant writing, financial literacy, food security and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), public speaking, leadership and gender sensitization. Guest lectures included representatives of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management (DECEM), the Micronesian Legal Services Corporation (MLSC), and the FSM Department of Resources and Development (R&D).

Participants were given the opportunity to apply the lessons learned from the summit by developing their own project proposal to benefit fellow students on the campus. On the last day, a total of five groups presented their ideas, which ranged from community gardens, water security to waste management to a panel of judges. Of the five projects, a panel of judges selected a water security project that will seek to install water tanks on campus, as well as a waste management project that will support recycling efforts on campus. IOM will work with the two winning teams to support the implementation of their projects, with each project amounting to 750 USD. Overall, the five-day Leadership Summit was a unique opportunity to provide youth with the tools and knowledge to make a difference in their community. Moreover, the skills acquired during the Summit will help prepare the leaders of tomorrow to respond to climate-related challenges their communities may face in the



2021 Employee of the Year

Congratulations to Dr. Danilo Mamangon as the first Employee of the Year! The employee of the year is selected from this year's employees of the month. Dr. Mamangon was employee of the month for September. He has taught math at the college for 26 years mainly at Chuuk Campus, but also for a short time at National Campus. He was born on October 17, 1957 in Baguio City,

Philippines. His married and has two sons. Dr. Mamangon holds a bachelor's degree in secondary education, a master's degree in mathematics education and a doctorate in math. Dr. Mamangon has demonstrated exceptional teamwork and professionalism throughout his 26 years at the college and is highly respected by all.



Ahead of final Compact negotiations, legal counsel to the FSM increases retainer by over 75%

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

January 5, 2022

FSM—Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer, the law firm that has been representing the FSM since 2016, increased the retainer fee it charges the FSM from \$35,000 per month to \$62,500 per month.

The fee increase went into effect in the fall but the contract wasn't filed at the FSM Department of Justice until late last month. Arnold & Porter expects a bigger workload as the FSM and United States discuss the looming termination of financial provisions of the Compact of Free Association between the United States and the FSM.

“This fee reflects the anticipated increase in the Firm’s workload and its staffing of FSM matters in the upcoming talks with the United States, which will require more time from both our attorneys and our legislative staff than during the previous two contract periods,” wrote Sam Witten, Arnold & Porter counsel.

During the Trump administration, the United States announced that it would

Timeline met on the completion of the Single Audits for the FSM governments

The Office of the National Public Auditor (Office), through this press release statement is pleased to inform that the Single Audits for the FSM National and State Governments for the fiscal year 2020 have been completed as of December 31, 2021.

The audits, which are conducted annually are a requirement of the Amended Compact Agreement between the United States of America and FSM. The timeline for completion of audits for each fiscal year is on June 30th each year, or nine (9) months after the end of each fiscal year. However, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the due date of audits for the fiscal year 2020 was extended to December 31, 2021.

The Heads of the Finance

hold talks with the FSM regarding the expiring portions of the Compact and talks did formally begin, though they were hampered by the coronavirus pandemic. Not much forward progress has been made since Joe Biden became the United States president, and much has been made about that fact. However, the negotiations have not been able to move forward as the United States awaits official feedback from the FSM on documents the FSM is still reportedly reviewing.

Additionally, a “Politico Influence” article on the increase of the retainer the FSM will pay to Arnold & Porter reports that ten members of the U.S. Congress wrote to National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan late last year urging the Biden administration to finalize the pacts with the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. “The lawmakers called it ‘distressing that these negotiations do not appear to be a priority,’ citing the lack of formal meetings since Biden became president and calling for the designation of a lead negotiator on the National Security Council,” Politico reported.

Departments for the primary governments as well as the chief executives and their chief financial officers for the component units, were ably responsible for the preparation of financial reports, internal controls and compliance that facilitated the audits’ completion on schedule.

The Public Auditor commends the management for all the FSM single audit entities and the independent CPA firm (Deloitte & Touche) for executing their responsibilities and ensuring that the FSM Governments meet the timeline for the completion of single audits as it is a crucial requirement of the Amended Compact.

The single audits reports can be accessed on the link: FSM Wide Single Audits

FSM reports largest debt decrease since the end of fiscal year 2017 with nothing owing to any foreign government

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

January 17, 2022

FSM—In December the FSM Department of Finance and Administration (DoFA) published a debt bulletin outlining public debt. At the end of last fiscal year, which was September 30, 2021, total public debt stood at \$66.4 million, the equivalent of 15.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), an annual decrease of \$13.7 million, or 17.1 percent annually. \$62.9 million of the debt was domestic debt. Of that amount, \$13.8 million was government guarantees, and \$17.8 million was on-lent, or money that governments borrowed and then lent to other entities. On-lent money was generally lent at the favorable concessionary terms that the National government receives from the ADB. Domestic debt was \$3.5 million. All domestic debt are lines of credit at the FSM Development Bank, secured over the assets of the National Government owned PetroCorp.

The FSM has no debt with any foreign nation or government. Of the \$66.4 million, \$62.8 million was for external debt to lending institutions. Of that, \$4.5 million is owed to the Asian Development Bank. \$11.0 million is owed to the US Rural Utilities Services. \$4.0 million is owed to the Bank of Guam, and \$3.3 million is owed to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The report says that the annual decline is significant and reflects the US Rural Utilities Services writing of \$8.2 million in debt owed to them by the FSM Telecommunications Corporation.

The DoFA report points out that while the external debt-to-GDP ratio is low by developing country standards, the International Monetary Fund has said that the FSM is at high risk of debt distress. The evaluation is based on the “high level of uncertainty around the expiring of the economic provisions in the Amended Compact in 2023 and the possible need to borrow to maintain operations of State governments.

The FSM’s most extensive borrowing activity came in the early 1990s in order to finance development project. However, since then, external debt has fallen significantly. In more recent times, the FSM has maintained a prudent external debt profile.

Total outstanding domestic debt as of September 30, 2021, stood at \$3.5 million. All domestic debt is owed to the FSMDB. The only entity currently borrowing in the domestic market is the National Government owned Petrocorp. The domestic debt is in the form of lines of credit, secured over the company’s assets.

The FSM National Government’s share of public debt is the highest of the governments at \$26.2 million. Yap’s government follows with \$13.6 million. Pohnpei State is third at \$10.1 million. Chuuk is next at \$9.9 million. Kosrae’s debt is \$3.1 million.

Of the \$7.4 million paid in debt servicing (principal and interest payments), \$6.1 million was for external debt servicing and \$1.3 million was domestic. Principal payments were \$3.1 million. Interest payments were \$4.4 million.

“As a share of domestic revenues, debt service was 3.1 percent in FY2021, a slight increase over the ratio of 2.0 percent at the end of FY2020. Debt service ratios remain very favorable by international standards, reflecting the concessionary nature of FSM’s outstanding debt” the debt bulletin said.

The Debt Bulletin contained debt totals since FY 2017. This year’s percentage of change in FSM debt totals is by far and away the biggest change since that time. In 2017, the debt total was 84.4 million. By the end of 2018 the debt was at 83 million, a decrease of 1.7 percent. Between 2018 and 2019, debt decreased from 83 million to 77.8 million, a decrease of 6.3 percent. Between 2018 and 2019, debt increased to 80.1 million, an increase of nearly 3 percent.

The total decrease in FSM debt since the end of fiscal year 2017 was \$18 million, or 16.2 percent.

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Vacancy Announcement: 2021/42

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme (SGP) provides non-governmental and community-based organizations (NGO/CBO) in developing countries with grants to help them tackle climate change, conserve biodiversity, protect international waters, reduce the impact of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), and prevent land degradation. With these environment-centered 'grant projects' the programme also seeks to generate sustainable livelihoods and reduce poverty in the world's neediest countries and regions. The SGP motto is "Community Action – Global Impact!"

Through UNDP/UNOPS, the FSM GEF Small Grants Programme seeks to recruit a suitably qualified national for the position of National Coordinator.

VACANCY DETAILS

Post Title: National Coordinator

Post Level: SB-4

Contract Type: Service Contract

Duty Station: Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia

Duration: Initially one year, renewable subject to satisfactory performance

KEY RESULTS EXPECTED / MAJOR FUNCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Effective technical, financial, and operational management of the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme and its portfolio.
- Effective managerial function, by building an effective SGP Country Programme team and foster teamwork within the SGP Country Programme team, the National Steering Committee members, and with the UNDP Country Office team
- Mobilize and leverage financial and other resources as well as establish strong partnerships at the programme and project levels for sustained and scaled up initiatives.
- Effectively facilitate knowledge management, share and exchange knowledge on lessons learnt and best practices of SGP programme and projects..

Minimum Qualifications and Experience:

Education: Advanced university degree in environment or natural resource management, Environmental Economics, Development, Business Administration or similar field.

Experience: At least 3 years of relevant experience in environment and development work, which should include programme management, preferably

with an extended specialized experience in any of the GEF-SGP thematic areas at the national level. Excellent teamwork, people management and interpersonal skills. Excellent analytical, writing, and communication skills. Strong negotiation, conflict resolution and problem-solving skills. Experience in the usage of computers and office software packages (MS Word, Excel, etc) and advance knowledge of spreadsheet and database packages, experience in handling of web based management systems.

Language Requirements: Fluency in the official national language and English is required. Knowledge of other UN languages is considered asset.

Level: SB4

Contract Type – Service Contract (SC)

Full details of positions are available on UNDP Jobs website: <http://jobs.undp.org/>

General Terms and Conditions of Employment:

Various benefits including health insurance, pension, dependency allowances and annual/sick leave apply. Contract duration is 12 months initially with the possibility of an extension depending on performance and availability of funds.

Closing date of applications: Friday 28 January, 2022 (NY Time).

Applications are to be submitted electronically on <http://jobs.undp.org/>. Applicants should provide all relevant information required, to the best of their ability.

Incomplete applications will not be considered and only candidates for whom there is further interest will be contacted. Candidates shortlisted for interviews will be required to provide a completed and signed P-11 form at the time of interviews. Additional information including the Post Profile, Results-Oriented Curriculum vitae format and P-11 form is available from the UNDP website: www.fj.undp.org or the UNDP Office.

UNOPS SGP Programme is committed to achieving workforce diversity in terms of gender, nationality and culture. Individuals from minority groups, indigenous groups and persons with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply. All applications will be treated with the strictest confidence.

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Rotary's 3x3 "King of the Court"

In honor of Rotary International's December month of Disease Prevention and Treatment, the Rotary Club of Pohnpei hosted an exciting one day 3-on-3 basketball tournament on December 11, 2021 at the Pohnpei State Public Gym. A total of 24 teams, with a maximum of four players per team, registered for this 3 game guarantee event. The teams battled it out and in the end, Team HOTDOGS and Team SAPWU2 played for the grand prize of \$500 cash. Team HOTDOGS won the intense championship game and was crowned the "Kings of the Court."

The Rotary Club of Pohnpei wishes to thank our sponsors FSM Health and Social Affairs, Pohnpei State Health and Sports, Kolonia Town Government, FSMTC, CDC, WHO, and most especially UNICEF. Additionally, we'd like to thank the FSM and Pohnpei State Immunization Team who was at the event providing COVID-19 shots. The event also wouldn't be possible without the amazing volunteers who gave up their Saturday and the players who assisted with the official tables.

Look out for more Rotary sponsored events in the coming months.



Calling All Islands: Application deadline extended for the Island Innovation Awards, launched by President Bill Clinton

The Island Innovation Awards, open to entrants from every island around the world, are seeking applications and nominations for individuals, organisations and projects who are driving innovative, sustainable and positive change in their communities and beyond.

Island Innovation has partnered with the Clinton Global Initiative to initiate the awards, which were officially launched by President Bill Clinton during Island Innovation’s flagship event, the Virtual Island Summit last September and attracted over 14,000 attendees from more than 500 islands worldwide. Watch President Clinton’s call for action here. Applications and nominations for the awards can be found here and will now close on February 15th 2022.

Island Innovation and the Clinton Global Initiative are seeking applications from individuals, organizations or projects, as well

as nominations for those who don’t necessarily already have recognition in their community. James Ellsmoor, Island Innovation CEO commented: “The Island Innovation Awards provide an important opportunity for unsung heroes to gain the publicity and recognition that they deserve. This will help to increase their presence within their local community and share their achievements with the wider world. We’re thrilled to be working with the Clinton Global Initiative to support the awards and are calling for individuals, organisations and projects to apply and nominate across the 12 categories, which are all centred around sustainable development on islands. Applications will be reviewed and assessed by a truly stellar lineup of judges.”

The panel of 20 judges is made up of many highly esteemed and recognisable individuals, including two former Presidents, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy

for the Ocean, and various other high level leaders and experts. The full list of judges can be found here.

Categories for the 12 awards are on the website here and include:

- Future Island Leader Award
- Women SDG Leadership Award
- Sustainable Energy Initiative of the Year Award
- Blue Economy Initiative Award
- Green Finance and Investment Award
- Innovative Island Research Award

A shortlist of finalists will be announced next year with the virtual awards ceremony taking place at the Island Finance Forum in April. Finalists will benefit from the potential for long-term future prospects, including opportunities to have work highlighted across Island Innovation and Clinton Global Initiative platforms, a press release dedicated to each winner and an opportunity to discuss development of the project at Island Innovation

events.

Island Innovation has recently been announced as an official nominating organisation for The Earthshot Prize, a global prize launched by Prince William, designed to solve our

planet’s greatest environmental challenges. Island Innovation has been invited to submit nominations across all five categories:

- Protect and Restore Nature.
- Clean Our Air.
- Revive Our Oceans.
- Build a Waste-Free World.
- Fix Our Climate.

Winners in each category are awarded £1 million to help scale and roll out their innovations. Finalists in the Island Innovation Awards will be considered for nomination to the Earthshot Prize, if they fit into the above categories.

Learn more on our website: www.islandinnovation.co/island-innovation-awards

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King of Pingelap bans betel nut and declares all Pingelap homes to be smoke-free zones

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

January 13, 2022

Pohnpei—Today, Doahkaesa, Nahnwarki of Pingelap, Dr. Berysin Salomon decreed that all Pingalapese houses will be smoke-free areas within 25 feet of the homes. He also banned betel nut trees and chewing of betel nuts within the kingdom. His decree also said that only healthy food and beverages would be served at all Pingalapese public gatherings.

As basis for the resolution memorializing the decree, the king said that in Pohnpei, one out of every three people either has a non-communicable disease or will develop one in their lifetime. It points out that there has been an increase in the number of deaths from cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and other NCD related illnesses as a direct result of eating and drinking unhealthy foods and beverages, smoking cigarettes, and chewing betel nut. It says that NCDs are the leading cause of hospitalization and has significant implications on the socio-economic consequences on families and local communities in Pohnpei.



The news of the decree was announced on social media by the Pohnpei Comprehensive Cancer Control Program and Coalition and was officially signed by his Majesty Dr. Salomon at 1:00 at the Island Palm Conference Room.

The Fefen Wokopwun holds fourth meeting

Chuuk Conservation Society

The Fefen Wokopwun held their fourth meeting on the ninth of January at the Sacred Heart Church parish hall, Fefen Isalnd, Chuuk State. T-shirts provided by the Micronesia Conservation Trust forest program in Pohnpei State were distributed at the meeting.

Fefen Wokopwun is a network of family planters and farmers from the villages of Fein, Sannuk, Mwen and Saporenong, west of Fefen. The network's main objective is to assist sustainable agriculture and encourage agroforestry among Fefen's farmers.

The Covid 19 food security grants from the government of the Federated States of Micronesia has helped in energizing planters on

the island, especially those who have been awarded some planting funds.

Fefen Wokopwun works closely with the Chuuk State Department of Agriculture and the Chuuk Conservation Society in charting a coordinated agriculture approach for food security issues, strengthened market access, and the overall improvement of livelihood situation for farmers.

Activities for the network are aligned according to villages under the supervision of the village chiefs. Some of the planters share tools on rotation schedule as not all of them have farming equipment. The food security grant coordinators have agreed to assist with equipment provisioning.

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U.S. Indo-Pacific Command hosts Mid-Joint Committee Meeting in the Republic of Palau

COMMANDER, JOINT REGION MARIANAS

Dec. 28, 2021

ASAN, Guam – U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) senior military leaders hosted the mid-Joint Committee Meeting (JCM) in the Republic of Palau on Dec. 14-15, which featured the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Palau John Hennessy-Niland, Republic of Palau Vice President Jerrlyn Uduch Sengebau Senior, U.S. Department of State leadership, and federal agency representatives.

Joint Region Marianas Commander and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command’s senior military official for Palau Rear Adm. Benjamin Nicholson delivered opening remarks for the mid-JCM and highlighted the critical importance of JCMs as a component of the Compact of Free Association between the Republic of Palau and the U.S. Additionally, Adm. Nicholson reiterated the importance of the semi-annual meetings that facilitate open and honest dialogue on topics of mutual interest to Palau and the Department of Defense.

“The JCM process allows us to have

discussions about defense agreements, to forge new partnerships, to expand relationships and friendships bound by trust--reaffirming our commitment to each other’s safety and well-being,” said Nicholson. “We are fortunate to have shared values and a close bond of friendship with our likeminded partners in the region as we work together on issues and concerns toward our most fundamental and common needs: defense and security of Palau and the region,” said Nicholson. “This collaboration is critical to achieving our shared goal of economic prosperity, to preserving our common values, and to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.” In addition to the JCM, Rear Adm. Nicholson met with Ambassador Hennessy-Niland, received briefings from several state and local officials, and toured significant areas germane to military operations, including the Civic Action Team’s (CAT) Camp Katuu located in Airai. Camp Katuu is overseen by the Navy’s 30th Naval Construction Regiment (30 NCR) based on Guam, with rotational operational responsibility now assigned to the U.S. Air Force.

“Our men and women in uniform of the Civic Action Team (CAT) have been performing amazing work in Palau for decades, and I am extremely proud of their achievements as they work alongside the people and government of Palau,” said Nicholson. “I am honored to have been able to visit with them during this trip and to recognize their dedication and sacrifices.”

Nicholson further expressed his gratitude on behalf of the United States to the nation of Palau for hosting U.S. Military training exercises, as he said these opportunities have strengthened the military’s mission capabilities and interoperability with allies and partners.

“I’d like to extend my gratitude for the outstanding and enduring partnership between our two nations. Without the support of Palau’s government and local community, we would not be able to fulfill our promise to protect and safeguard this country, a commitment that began when the U.S. came ashore on Peleliu during World War II,” added Nicholson.



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Giant Clams are abundant and widespread in Palau, new study finds

Palau International Coral Reef Center

A recently published study led by former PICRC researcher Lincoln Rehm reports that, in spite of pressures from tourism and fishing, giant clam populations remain abundant and healthy throughout Palau. The study attributes Palau’s healthy clam populations to conservation measures such as marine protected areas and bans on exporting clams.

Current PICRC Research Office Assistant Randa Jonathan and former researcher Lincy Marino joined Rehm as co-authors.

The authors found that oruer was the most abundant clam species, followed by melibes and ribkungal. Kism, oktang and duadeb were less common.

Oruer, melibes and ribkungal were also found to be more abundant in Palau than other areas of Micronesia and the Indo-Pacific. Oruer in particular has become scarce in other Micronesian islands but remains dense in Palau.

Despite a fourfold increase in tourism in the past decade and rising fishing pressure, the implementation of marine protected areas and export bans seem to have succeeded in preserving Palau’s clams. The Palau Mariculture Demonstration Center has also likely reduced fishing of wild clams by supporting local clam aquaculture.

However, the authors also

caution that Palau’s clam populations still face challenges. The study found low numbers of large adult oruer and ribkungal, which signals high fishing pressure and could limit the species’ ability to reproduce in the future.

To continue supporting these populations, and to replenish dwindling kism, oktang and duadeb, the authors recommend continued investment in clam aquaculture, restocking wild populations with farmed clams and implementing harvest limits. These measures could ensure that giant clams remain a valuable economic and food resource for Palau into the future.

For any questions about the study or if you would like a copy of this paper, please do not hesitate to contact the center at 488-6950 or reach us by email at picrc@picrc.org .



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16 September 2021 - 31 March 2022



Artwork Categories



Graphic Design

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Drawing



Traditional hand-drawing/painting or other two-dimensional hand-made art and digital drawing

Photography



Original photographs taken from a camera without heavy digital manipulation



Artwork Content

1. Achievements, actions, benefits to ozone layer protection and climate change attributed to the Vienna Convention, the Montreal Protocol including the Kigali Amendment.
<https://ozone.unep.org/ozone-and-you>



WORLD OZONE DAY

2. Theme of World Ozone Day 2021 - Montreal Protocol - Keeping us, our food and vaccines cool.
<https://ozone.unep.org/ozone-day/montreal-protocol-keeping-us-our-food-and-vaccines-cool>



Eligibility & Submission Info

- **Youth:** Age 15 years or below with parental consent
- **General:** Age above 15 years
- **Artwork submission:** in JPEG/ GIF/PNG; at least 2,000 pixels; Max size 1 MB with information of name, title, date and caption



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For inquiry about **The National Contest**, please contact:

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unesco

UNICEF ready to support families and children in the aftermath of volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga

UNICEF

SUVA, FIJI (17 January 2022) – UNICEF Pacific is ready to work together with the Government of Tonga and its partners to ensure urgent life-saving support is provided to families and children in the aftermath of the volcanic eruption and tsunami.

“We are on standby to provide humanitarian support to the Government of Tonga and its people affected by the volcanic eruption and tsunami,” said UNICEF Pacific Representative, Jonathan Veitch. “UNICEF will work with the government, civil society organizations, and other development partners to ensure immediate response efforts on the ground, which includes providing clean water, and emergency health supplies for children and families affected.”

Following weeks of volcanic activity emitting ash, the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha’apai underwater volcano in Tonga erupted violently on January 15, with satellite imagery indicating a 5 km wide plume of ash, steam, and gas, rising approximately 20 km above the volcano. Within minutes, the volcanic eruption generated a 1.2-metre tsunami that crashed ashore in coastal areas of Tonga’s capital, Nuku’alofa. Tsunami warnings were also issued for Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Australia, and New Zealand.

The majority of the country has been impacted by a 1-2cm layer of volcanic ash, which is affecting water and food supplies, and negatively impacting air quality. In the coming days, access to clean water supply will be an immediate priority. Communication lines have been interrupted since January 15, making it difficult to get information on the extent of the damage.

Once the needs are confirmed by the Government of Tonga, UNICEF is ready to transport its pre-positioned emergency supplies from Fiji and Brisbane warehouses. These include essential water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) kits, water containers and buckets, water field test kits, tarpaulins, recreational kits, and tents, that can be immediately mobilized for distribution.

With borders closed in Tonga due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF will work with the government and its partners on the ground to reach children and families with the support they urgently need.

FSM repatriation dates for January confirmed; if eligible, booster doses required for repatriating persons

FSM Information Services

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—The Government of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), through its COVID-19 Task Force, has amended its standard operating procedures for repatriation into the FSM, and confirmed dates for the next repatriation flights.

There are three changes to the repatriation procedures. The first change is that any person who is eligible to receive a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine is required to obtain it prior to repatriating into the FSM. Additionally, as pediatric and adolescent vaccines are available for children aged five (5) and up, all persons aged five (5) and above are mandated to be fully vaccinated prior to repatriating into the FSM.

The second and third changes to the repatriation procedures are with regards to pre-quarantine in the U.S. Territory of Guam. The duration of pre-quarantine has been amended from ten (10) days to seven (7) days. A single test for COVID-19 will occur on either the fifth or sixth day of pre-quarantine, approximately forty-eight (48) hours prior to travel.

Additionally, persons will need to demonstrate proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within seventy-two (72) hours prior to entry into the pre-quarantine site. Combined, this means persons will undergo two separate COVID-19 tests: one before, and one during, their pre-quarantine experience.

It is the intention of the FSM National Government that a practical effect of these amendments is that repatriation activities will be able to continue more frequently, while also helping to keep the Nation safe from COVID-19. With the highly infectious Omicron variant, the FSM COVID-19 Task Force wants to make sure its repatriation standard operating procedures are able to screen out positive cases before entering quarantine in order to prevent cases spilling into the FSM.

All other elements of the standard operating procedures remain unchanged, e.g. a minimum of seven (7) days of in-country quarantine upon arrival into the FSM, and multiple negative COVID-19 test results during that in-country quarantine process.

The next repatriation flight to Pohnpei State is scheduled to occur on January 24th, 2022.

The next repatriation flight to Chuuk State is scheduled to occur on January 26th, 2022.

The next repatriation flight to Kosrae State is scheduled to occur on January 31st, 2022.

The next repatriation flight to Yap State is scheduled to occur on February 6th, 2022.

Global growth to slow through 2023, adding to risk of ‘hard landing’ in developing economies Spread of COVID-19 variants alongside inflation, debt, and inequality intensifies uncertainty

World Bank

WASHINGTON, Jan. 11, 2022—Following a strong rebound in 2021, the global economy is entering a pronounced slowdown amid fresh threats from COVID-19 variants and a rise in inflation, debt, and income inequality that could endanger the recovery in emerging and developing economies, according to the World Bank’s latest Global Economic Prospects report. Global growth is expected to decelerate markedly from 5.5 percent in 2021 to 4.1 percent in 2022 and 3.2 percent in 2023 as pent-up demand dissipates and as fiscal and monetary support is unwound across the world.

The rapid spread of the Omicron variant indicates that the pandemic will likely continue to disrupt economic activity in the near term. In addition, a notable deceleration in major economies—including the United States and China—will weigh on external demand in emerging and developing economies. At a time when governments in many developing economies lack the policy space to support activity if needed, new COVID-19 outbreaks, persistent supply-chain bottlenecks and inflationary pressures, and elevated financial vulnerabilities in large swaths of the world could increase the risk of a hard landing.

“The world economy is simultaneously facing COVID-19, inflation, and policy uncertainty, with government spending and monetary policies in uncharted territory. Rising inequality and security challenges are particularly harmful for developing countries,” said World Bank Group President David Malpass. “Putting more countries on a favorable growth path requires concerted international action and a comprehensive set of national policy responses.”

The slowdown will coincide with a widening divergence in growth rates between advanced economies and emerging and developing economies. Growth in advanced economies is expected to decline from 5 percent in 2021 to 3.8 percent in 2022 and 2.3 percent in 2023—a pace that, while moderating, will be sufficient to restore output and investment to their pre-pandemic trend in these economies. In emerging and developing economies, however, growth is expected to drop from 6.3 percent in 2021 to 4.6 percent in 2022 and 4.4 percent in 2023. By 2023, all advanced economies will have achieved a full output recovery; yet output in emerging and developing economies will remain 4 percent below its pre-pandemic trend. For many vulnerable

[Click here for continuation](#)

... Global Economy

Continued from page 13

economies, the setback is even larger: output of fragile and conflict-affected economies will be 7.5 percent below its pre-pandemic trend, and output of small island states will be 8.5 percent below.

Meanwhile, rising inflation—which hits low-income workers particularly hard—is constraining monetary policy. Globally and in advanced economies, inflation is running at the highest rates since 2008. In emerging market and developing economies, it has reached its highest rate since 2011. Many emerging and developing economies are withdrawing policy support to contain inflationary pressures—well before the recovery is complete.

The latest Global Economic Prospects report features analytical sections that provide fresh insights into three emerging obstacles to a durable recovery in developing economies. The first, on debt, compares the latest international initiative to tackle unsustainable debt in developing economies—the G20 Common Framework—with previous coordinated initiatives to facilitate debt relief. Noting that COVID-19 pushed total global debt to the highest level in half a century even as the creditors' landscape became increasingly complex, it finds that future coordinated debt relief initiatives will face higher hurdles to success. Applying lessons from the past restructurings to the G20 Common Framework can increase its effectiveness and avoid the shortcomings faced by earlier initiatives.

“The choices policymakers make in the next few years will decide the course of the next decade,” said Mari

Pangestu, the World Bank's Managing Director for Development Policy and Partnerships. “The immediate priority should be to ensure that vaccines are deployed more widely and equitably so the pandemic can be brought under control. But tackling reversals in development progress such as rising inequality will require sustained support. In a time of high debt, global cooperation will be essential to help expand the financial resources of developing economies so they can

achieve green, resilient, and inclusive development.”

The second analytical section examines the implications of boom-and-bust cycles of commodity prices for emerging market and developing economies, most of which are heavily dependent on commodity exports. It finds that these cycles were particularly intense in the past two years, when commodity prices collapsed with the arrival of COVID-19 and then surged, in some cases to all-time highs last year. Global macroeconomic developments and commodity supply factors will likely cause boom-and-bust cycles to continue in commodity markets. For many commodities, these cycles may be amplified by the forces of climate change and the energy transition away from fossil fuels. The analysis also shows that commodity-price booms since the 1970s have tended to be larger than busts, creating significant opportunities for stronger and more sustainable growth in commodity-exporting countries—if they employ disciplined policies during booms to take advantage of windfalls.

The third analytical section explores COVID-19's impact on global inequality. It finds that the pandemic has raised global income inequality, partly reversing the decline that was achieved over the previous two decades. It has also increased inequality in many other spheres of human activity—in the availability of vaccines; in economic growth; in access to education and health care; and in the scale of job and income losses, which have been higher for women and low-skilled and informal workers. This trend has the potential to leave lasting scars: for example, losses to human capital caused by disruptions in education can spill over across generations.

Ayhan Kose, Director of the World Bank's Prospects Group, said: “In light of the projected slowdown in output and investment growth, limited policy space, and substantial risks clouding the outlook, emerging and developing economies will need to carefully calibrate fiscal and monetary policies. They also need to undertake reforms to erase the scars of the pandemic. These reforms should be designed to improve investment and human capital, reverse income and gender inequality, and cope with challenges of climate change.”

WHO supports whole-of-UN response to volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga

World Health Organization

18 January 2022

Suva – The World Health Organization (WHO) is closely coordinating with other United Nations agencies and partners to support the response to the recent volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga, including acting as a central channel of information in the face of continued telecommunications outages.

The Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai volcano erupted at approximately 5:30pm local time on 15 January, spewing forth an ash plume said to be almost 20km high. The eruption, which was the largest Tonga – and potentially the world – has faced in 30 years, could be heard as far away as Australia and New Zealand and caused tsunami alerts to be issued across the Pacific.

The Government of the Kingdom of Tonga reacted swiftly, including deploying a naval vessel to the Ha'apai islands carrying the WHO-trained Tonga Emergency Medical Assistance Team (TEMAT) to help treat any people who may have been injured. The government has advised the Tongan public to remain indoors, use masks if going out, and to drink bottled water to avoid consequences of the ashfall.

The United Nations has been working to support the government's response since the moment the eruption occurred, with WHO's Country Liaison Officer for Tonga, Dr Yutaro Setoya, playing a critical role in channeling communication between UN agencies and the Tongan government, and between the UN and their staff in Tonga. With international phone lines and internet connectivity still down, Dr Setoya's satellite phone is one of the few ways to get information into and out of the country.

“Yuta has literally been standing outside from dawn until long into the night for the past few days to ensure that the phone can reach the satellite signal and he can pass along vital information,” WHO's Health Cluster Coordinator for the Pacific, Sean Casey. “All of us here at WHO, and in the broader UN family, are thinking of Tonga right now and doing what

we can to support the government's response efforts.”

Initial reports from inside Tonga, channeled via Dr Setoya, are that buildings and infrastructure have been damaged – around 100 houses have been damaged and 50 completely destroyed just on the main island of Tongatapu. Two deaths have been reported to date. Many remain displaced, with 89 people taking shelter in evacuation centres on the island of 'Eua and many more seeking shelter with relatives. Around 2cm of ash and dust has fallen on Tongatapu, raising concerns of air pollution and the potential contamination of food and water supplies. Thankfully, all health facilities on Tongatapu are fully functioning and clean-up efforts have been initiated.

However, information on the degree of destruction is still being gathered. The Ha'apai and Vava'u island groups, for example, remain out of contact with the capital. There are particular concerns about the smaller and low-lying islands of Mango and Fono'i in the Ha'apai group.

The UN's emergency response is coordinated via the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) which brings together United Nations agencies, the Red Cross movement and international non-governmental organizations to organize the provision of in-country and remote support to the Tongan government's response efforts. The PHT's initial focus is on supporting the re-establishment of communications, finding ways to bring in relief supplies, and providing technical advice on a range of issues such as how to ensure the safety of ash-affected drinking water.

“We have very little way to contact the people of Tonga right now but, for all of their family and friends in other countries around the world, please know that your loved ones have our support,” continued Mr Casey. “Our thoughts – but more importantly our action – is with all of those who have been affected.”