

Australia-FSM maritime partnership deepens with FSS Bethwel Henry's arrival

By **Bill Jaynes**
The Kaselehlie Press

October 9, 2023

Pohnpei—This morning, hundreds of people gathered for a ceremony in Pohnpei at the Dekehtik Surveillance Site dock to welcome the FSS Bethwel Henry, the FSM's newest surveillance vessel. Donated by the Government of Australia, the FSS Bethwel Henry, together with the previously received FSS Tosiwo Nakayama, represents the totality of FSM's vessels for performing law enforcement and relief activities within the FSM's EEZ.

The FSM decommissioned the three previous vessels after more than 30 years of service—the FSS Micronesia, FSS Palikir, and the FSS Independence. Those vessels were



also a donation from the Australian government. The two new vessels are bigger, faster, and have a larger reach

than the other three vessels, giving the FSM greater capacity to monitor the FSM's EEZ, the second largest

in the Pacific and the 14th largest in the world. [Click here for continuation on page ?](#)

Congress seats Chuuk's At-large Senator Fabian Nimea, rejects Sigrah Congress Credentials Committee decision challenged in court by Yoslyn Sigrah

By **Bill Jaynes**
The Kaselehlie Press

October 7, 2023

FSM—Salomon Saimon, attorney for Yoslyn Sigrah, has filed a lawsuit on her behalf to stop a planned special election to fill the seat in the FSM Congress that Kosrae's voters elected her to fill after Congress decided not to accept her credentials.

On September 28, 2023, the Congress Credentials Committee recommended in their report that Congress should seat

Chuuk Senator-Elect Fabian Nimea but reject the seating of Kosrae Senator-Elect Yoslyn Sigrah. A majority of Senators agreed by a vote to adopt and act on the report. On September 29, Fabian Nimea took his oath of office and is now Chuuk's At-Large Senator. Speaker Esmond Moses declared the Kosrae seat vacant.

The FSM National Election Office has since published an election timetable for a new special election for the seat of Kosrae's At-Large seat in the FSM Congress after Congress rejected the credentials of Yoslyn Sigrah, the Senator-elect selected by the

voters of Kosrae. The Kosrae special election is scheduled for November 21, 2023.

The Congress decision caused an uproar among Kosrae voters and some other FSM voters who worry that Congress could usurp their votes at any time. Some Kosraeans on social media have called for a boycott of the election, while others suggest that Kosraeans should allow Sigrah to run unopposed to "see what Congress would do then".



[Click here for continuation on page ?](#)

PTA receives unqualified opinion but reports massive loss in 2022 Audit

By **Bill Jaynes**
The Kaselehlie Press

October 10, 2023

Pohnpei— The Pohnpei Office of the Public Auditor (OPA) has once again released an audit on the Pohnpei Transportation Authority, this one for the fiscal year 2022. While in 2021, auditors praised PTA's efforts, resulting in a net income of \$122,894, they could not issue such praise for the 2022 audit, which revealed what auditors called a "huge loss" of \$498,107.

OPA stated that PTA received an unqualified opinion on its financial statements for the fiscal year ending on September 30, 2022, indicating that the audit met acceptable accounting standards.

Operating revenue for the year was \$1,938,485, a decrease of \$207,009 or 9.6 percent compared to the prior year's revenue of \$2,145,494. Operating expenses increased by 20 percent or \$413,992, rising from \$2,022,600 to \$2,436,592. Payroll-related costs accounted for 57 percent of the total operating expenses. Supplies and Materials increased by \$95,530, while POL increased by \$40,318 from \$241,943 to \$282,261 for the year. Net assets for the year were \$488,967, a decrease of \$498,107 or 50 percent from the prior year.

PTA continues to owe money to the Pohnpei State government, with the amount increasing by 9 percent or \$156,501, going from \$1,674,860 to \$1,831,361. This amount represents what PTA owes to the Pohnpei State General Fund.

The audit noted six exceptions:

1. Lack of proper records and documentation delayed compilation of Financial Statements;
2. Internal control weaknesses in the processing of cash disbursements or payments;
3. Noncompliance with Pohnpei SSR relating to leaves;
4. Noncompliance with PTA's payroll process
5. Noncompliance with PTA's policies and procedures or revenue collection resulted to loss of funds; and
6. Unresolved prior year's audit findings. Management has not appropriately resolved all prior year audit findings. The non-resolution of the prior year audit findings is not in compliance with Pohnpei State Law No. 5L-08-00 and will continue to affect the effective maintenance of PTA's internal control system.

"We were stunned to know that the PTA was operating at a deficit of over \$400,000 for the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 as presented in the audit draft report," PTA Commissioner Berney Martin wrote. "After reviewing the report, we learned that the Net Loss includes two major non-cash expense items amounting to \$480,019, as shown below

Net Operating Income (Loss)			(\$ 18,088)
Less: Non-Cash Expense Items			
Audit Adjusting Entries	\$131,095		
Depreciation	\$348,924	\$480,019	
Net Income (Loss)			(\$498,107)

"Several factors contributed to the Net Operating Loss of PTA. Completion of road projects was delayed due to the intermittent rain which is beyond the PTA's control, and the depreciation of equipment. Some types of equipment are non-operational, some break down often, and (are) too costly to maintain. The PTA Management will continue to seek assistance from foreign donor countries, and from the FSM government stakeholders for the procurement of needed types of equipment. These additional types of equipment will address the delaying factor in the completion of road projects," he wrote in response.

Martin's response indicated that some of the difficulties with the audit exceptions are related to how PTA must interact with Pohnpei State Finance. He suggested that having a copy of "Fundware," software installed on their servers with read-only access and only as related to PTA, would be helpful.



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Bill Jaynes
Managing Editor

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WILL BE RELEASED ON:**

October 25, 2023

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

Monday, October 23, 2023

FSM President Simina expresses confidence in Cabinet team during swearing-in

FSM Information Services

October 2, 2023

Palikir-- On October 2, 2023, His Excellency Wesley W. Simina, President of the Federated States of Micronesia administered the oath of office for his recently confirmed cabinet members. Among those members are:

- T.H. Mr. Lorin S. Robert to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs;
- T.H. Mrs. Elina P. Akinaga who will again be serving as the Secretary of the Department of Resources and Development;
- T.H. Mrs. Rose N. Nakanaga who will be serving as the Secretary of the Department of Finance and Administration;
- T.H. Mr. Carlson D. Apis who will again be serving as the Secretary of the Department of Transportation, Communications and Infrastructure;
- T.H. Mr. Samson E. Pretrick who will again be serving as the Director of the Office of Personnel;
- T.H. Mr. Andrew R. Yatilman who will again be serving as the Secretary of the Department of Environment, Climate

Change and Emergency Management, and
- T.H. Mr. Marcus Samo who will again serve as the Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Affairs.

In front of family and colleagues, each member took their turn in swearing their oath of office followed by brief remarks by President Simina, adding that he has full faith in each of them to lead their respective departments with distinction.

President Simina and Vice President Palik congratulate each of their new cabinet members and look forward to working together under the executive



branch to move the nation forward. Cabinet nominations that are pending advice and consent by Congress are the

Department of Justice and Department of Education.



President Simina issues Presidential Proclamation for the Amendments to the Constitution of the FSM

FSM Information Services

October 4, 2023—In accordance with the last step of the Constitutional Amendment Procedure Act, today, President Simina signed and issued a Presidential Proclamation announcing the ratification of the nine FSM Constitution amendments that FSM voters passed during the July 4 referendum. The proclamation said that the amendments became effective as of the date of the election

In mid-September, the results of the July 4th Special Election/Referendum were officially certified with all nine proposed

constitutional amendments declared as sufficient for ratification by the Office of the National Election Director...

In terms of next steps and implementation, the Executive branch through the Department of Justice is now working on the enabling legislation for the amendments, whenever such legislation is needed. Some of the amendments are self-executing and do not need any further legislation, in which case, the Department of Justice is drafting the necessary regulations.

“The people have spoken. Now it’s our

job to navigate and uphold these changes. Today our Constitution is more reflective of what the people of the FSM value and the times we live in.” President Simina stated.

“The political leaders of Micronesia recognized from the beginning that the people of Micronesia had a right to adopt their own Constitution and to amend or change that Constitution,” the Constitutional Convention’s official website says regarding the vision of the FSM’s forefathers. “The Delegates to the 1975 Constitution knew that there would be social, economic, and political

changes that would require amending the Constitution and provided for an orderly and legitimate process for making those amendments so that the FSM could adjust to changing times and circumstances.”

The Simina-Palik administration wishes to thank the honorable delegates to the 4th Constitutional Convention and to all of the citizens who exercised their right to vote, and ultimately led the FSM to this important milestone in our nation’s history.

More information on the amendments can be found at FSM Constitutional Amendments

Budget Crisis: FSM's fiscal year 2024 begins with uncertainty

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

October 7, 2023

FSM—On October 1, the governments of the FSM, both State and National, entered the 2024 fiscal year on the shakiest financial footing they have experienced in many years. For the State governments, the sector grants under the Compact of Free Association from which they could draw funds were set to expire at the end of fiscal year 2023.

The national government has not kept any Compact funds for itself in several years. The so-called Compact “fiscal cliff” would not have affected its operational budget. However, in July, FSM voters approved a Constitutional amendment to share 50 percent of fisheries fees with the States. Fisheries licensing fees have been one of the principal sources of income for the National government’s operational budget which includes, among many other things, capacity for enforcement of fishing regulations.

As a result, for the first time in history, the FSM passed a significantly decreased operations budget for FY 2024, 47 percent lower than the previous year’s budget. The deepest percentage cuts in the budget—those with reductions of 81 percent and above—were made in the areas of grants, subsidies, and contributions; capital and human resources development; Congress delegation offices; Social Security Subsidies; aid to non-public schools; and national scholarships. The budget entirely eliminated subsidies for conservation societies and FSM student assistance.

In an attempt to recover some of its budget losses, FSM Congress overrode a Presidential veto to increase its share of Compact funds, which have not yet been ratified by the U.S. Congress, from nothing to 10 percent. It also restructured tax distribution formulas to allow for a larger share to return to the FSM government (see FSM Congress press releases in this issue).

In its budget, the Pohnpei State Government increased salaries for all employees by 45 percent based on the fisheries revenue sharing now mandated by the FSM Constitution. It may be several months before the FSM completes policies for the mechanisms of sharing that revenue. Until that time, Pohnpei’s salaries will remain at their current levels.

In terms of Compact funds, the FSM States have received a short-term reprieve. According to a Pohnpei State press release, the U.S. Office of Insular Affairs notified

the FSM that sector grants could continue to be drawn down until the end of the calendar year. The drawdown will be at 2023 rates, the lowest amount on the declining scale of the Compact that was amended 20 years ago.

According to the 20-year-old amended Compact, the ending of Fiscal Year 2023 was supposed to have been a fiscal cliff for the FSM when U.S. funds would cease, and the FSM would have been left only with the interest it earns from the Trust Fund that was established under that amended Compact. Compact sector grants were on a declining scale each year, with the balance of the allocated money being deposited in the Trust Fund, which never approached the level of returns that the framers of the amended Compact had anticipated.

The Compact treaty itself remains in perpetuity and did not “expire” at the end of September 30, 2023, in terms of U.S. access to the FSM EEZ for protection purposes. FSM citizens also continued to be allowed to freely travel and work in the U.S. The immigration terms for U.S. citizens in the FSM became more reciprocal than they previously had been.

This calendar year, FSM and U.S. negotiators agreed on new terms for U.S. financial assistance. However, those terms have not yet been ratified by the U.S. Congress, which is currently embroiled in a bitter dispute over the budget. At the very last moment, Congress did pass a contentious stopgap funding bill that avoided what would have been a devastating partial U.S. government shutdown, but that funding bill, which will expire on November 17, did not include any funding for the Freely Associated States. Ratification of Compact financial provisions can't occur, if it ever does, until Congress passes a full budget.

The temporary funding bill led to the historic ousting of House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, the first Speaker of the House to ever be removed from that body in a no-confidence vote.

The U.S. Congress has announced that it will vote on a new Speaker by October 11, but there still is no agreement on budget terms between the nearly evenly divided parties in the House. As always, Republicans and Democrats have their own completely different agendas for the budget. While there seems to be partisan support for the financial provisions of the Compacts of Free Association, that part of the budget bill remains hostage to those agendas.

It was not unexpected.

“Your question was, ‘Do we see the potential for partisanship to derail the process?’ and the answer is yes,” Congress representative Melanie Stansbury of New Mexico told The Kaselehlie Press during a visit of a bilateral committee to the FSM on a Compact fact-finding mission. “There is the risk that due to partisanship in Washington, all legislation can get derailed right now, including our ability to fund the U.S. government... I think what you see is a strong and unified bipartisan message with the delegation that we have here, that we’re committed to getting these Compacts done and associated appropriations that go with them, but we also all of us are realists and work in this political world and understand that when we go back to Washington, we have a lot of work in front of us, and we’ll have to figure out how we get these Compacts done in the context of all the other legislation that is pending in Congress.”

The stated bipartisan support for the ratification of the mutually agreed upon terms of an amended Compact of Free Association is not purely U.S. altruism. For several years, the U.S. message delivered by several U.S. Ambassadors to the FSM, the State Department, and the Office of Insular Affairs was that the financial provisions of

the Compact of Free Association would definitely not be renewed and that the FSM must step up its game to become financially independent. But the geopolitical situation in the Asia-Pacific region has changed in the last few years. Global events have led to the perception of China as a threat, specifically in the Asia-Pacific region.

The FSM’s Exclusive Economic Zone is the second largest in the Pacific, and the U.S. has had strategic control of that EEZ since the end of World War II.

Enough has changed in the world’s political climate that near the end of U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration, he sent then U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to the FSM to announce that the U.S. government had changed its position regarding the Compact and was open to renegotiating the financial provisions with the FSM.

Those talks successfully concluded earlier this year, with the FSM and the U.S. coming to mutually agreed terms. Though there is bipartisan support for the Compacts of Free Association, the fate of that agreement now rests entirely with a deeply divided U.S. Congress currently in disarray on a host of other issues.”



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BSBAA Program Conducts Internship Workshop on Intercultural Communication

On October 6, 2023, the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBAA) program held its first Internship Workshop. The workshop was titled “Enhancing Intercultural Oral and Written Communication Skills Essential for Career Success” and was designed to address the gap identified in midterm evaluations. The workshop began with an inspirational speech from Vice President for Instructional Affairs Delihna Manuel-Ehmes, who congratulated the first BSBAA graduates in advance. She encouraged the students to appreciate what is available and on hand locally, using storytelling to illustrate her point. She also asked trivia questions and gave out prizes to successful students. Resource persons were invited to discuss with students useful topics that they can use in their workplace.

Dr. Maclain Worswick discussed business communication trends, emphasizing the importance of documenting office communication and using available technology to write business letters. Professor Marian Gratia Medalla inculcated the importance of workplace decorum and office etiquette by relating humorous anecdotes. Dr. George Mangonon gave tips and strategies on securing work and promotion. The workshop provided students with the opportunity to meet and see each other face-to-face for the first time, as all their classes are held online. They were happy to mingle with their classmates and professors and share their joys and laughter, even for a short period of time. The workshop was organized by Professor Marlene Mangonon, who also handles the internship program.

SBA Induction Ceremony Photos



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

College Nurse FSM-FMI Campus (Yap)

Provide medical treatment to students (cadets) for minor illness, injuries, and other medical and dental complaints, and refer students (cadets) to physicians or appropriate health agencies as necessary.

Security & Safety Officer I (Kosrae)

Under the college’s department of enrollment management and student services through the vice president for instructional affairs and the campus dean, and immediate supervisor of the campus’ student services coordinator (or designee), the campus security and safety officer is responsible for ensuring and maintaining a safe and secure environment for students, faculty and staff, and the guest of the college while protecting or safeguarding the college’s facilities and assets

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...FSS Bethwel Henry

Continued from front page

the world, for illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, human and goods trafficking, and also for relief efforts.

When Bethwel Henry died on December 16, 2020, he was the last of the FSM's founding fathers. Born in Mwoakilloa, Bethwel Henry was the second and last speaker of the Congress of Micronesia through the breakup of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands from 1966 to 1978. He was elected as the Speaker of the first FSM Congress after the birth of the new nation and was seated on May 10, 1979. He held that position of Speaker for eight years as the new nation was born. He served as the FSM Postmaster General from 1988 to 2007. Even after retirement, he continued with civic activity in the FSM, serving with "wisdom" as a member of the Joint Committee on Compact Review and Planning (JCRP), as Vice President Aren Palik said during his speech at the welcoming ceremony for the vessel named after Mr. Henry.

When Mr. Henry passed away, he was the Senior Pastor of Kepinle. Fittingly, the welcoming ceremony for the FSS Bethwel Henry featured two vocal numbers by the Kepinle Church of the United Church of Christ Pohnpei. It also featured a traditional dance number by Jupwikiparano and a large group of Mwoakilese war dancers. The Enipein Ecotourism Cultural Dancers also performed for the large gathered crowd.

The FSS Bethwel Henry arrived promptly at the announced time of the start of the ceremony, accompanied by boatloads of Mwoakilese dancers. After docking, the FSS Tosiwo Nakayama also arrived and docked.

Bethwel Henry's family members were present at the welcoming ceremony for the FSS Bethwel Henry. Barton Henry, the eldest son of Bethwel Henry, had the last word at the ceremony with his speech. "We grew up knowing Bethwel Henry as our dad, but to the people of the nation, he was one of the founding fathers of



the Federated States of Micronesia. We knew him as a man who loved his God, family, friends, and all those who came to know him. He guided us through life with his wise words and laws. He was an eternal optimist and a pure joy. To put it simply, he was someone, just one to be around, to listen to, to learn from, and to love him."

As many people who knew the man would do, his son spoke of his father's encyclopedic knowledge of the FSM's people and its history and his ability to tell the nation's story.

"We thank Australia for all the commitment to the FSM in supporting maritime security, working together to address maritime challenges and threats to ensure we all live in peace. As they say, the ocean does not separate us, it brings us together. To the FSM government, we are extremely grateful and honored for seeing this as respectfully fitting the name the FSM's new Guardian Class Patrol Corps... My siblings and I and the entire family are forever humbled for this special occasion for the FSM—a country that we love and a country that will forever be a country of peace."

He presented a plaque featuring a photo of his father and a sailor's prayer for the FSM's people on it. The plaque will be displayed onboard the vessel that bears his father's name.

Pohnpei's Governor Reed B. Oliver was the first speaker of the morning. He said that Bethwel Henry spent



the first years of the FSM's history shaping the destiny of the nation. He quoted Henry as having said, "together we are stronger," a simple quote that drove his thinking in terms of the FSM's unity.

Congress Speaker Esmond B. Moses was to have been the next speaker. He said that although he knew him well and served on the JCRP with him where he said Henry was widely known as a wise and gentle man. However, he said that he thought it would be more fitting for a member of Congress who knew him at the very beginning should speak on his behalf and introduced Former President and current Senator Peter Christian. Christian spoke of his many memories of working with Bethwel Henry and told the story of serving as the Speaker Pro Tempore at the beginning of the first FSM Congress before yielding the chair to Speaker Henry, who members of Congress had selected to take the seat.

"Australia is honored to be associated with a distinguished founding father of the FSM, a highly respected Mwoakilese, Pohnpeian, and Micronesian with a record of outstanding public service," said Australian Ambassador Jo Cowley during her remarks.



"These new generations of boats are part of Australia's multi-billion-dollar program called the Pacific Maritime Security Program. Through this program, Australia is helping to build a stronger FSM, a stronger Pacific family. We are very pleased to have with us today two representatives from the Australian Department of Defense who are responsible for managing that program, and may I acknowledge Dr. Lis Brierley (Assistant Secretary, Pacific Maritime Branch, Australian Department of Defence) and Ms. Naula McMillian (International Policy Officer, Department of Defence)."

"...Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude by saying that the Federated States of Micronesia and Australia this year marks 36 years of diplomatic relations," she said. "Over that time, the patrol boats helped forge the friendship, the respect, and the trust that we enjoy between our countries today. These values underpin a partnership that is built on a shared vision of resilience, peace, and prosperity for our homelands and our blue Pacific. I am confident that the FSS Bethwel Henry, like its outstanding namesake, will provide outstanding service to the FSM in

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...FSS Bethwel Henry

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pursuit of that vision.”

Before moving on to the events of the day, Vice President Aren B. Palik began his time at the podium, saying that the FSM stands in solidarity with Israel. He called for a moment of silence for the lives lost during the recent Hamas shelling of Israel and for the current state of war.

“Australia’s Pacific Maritime Security Program features prominently and remains as the flagship project between our two countries,” Vice President Aren B. Palik said. “The FSM government can attest to the success and importance of this program. These maritime assets will help us to govern our vast exclusive economic zone and protect our vital fisheries resources that sustain our livelihood. They represent the latest in cutting-edge maritime technology,

a platform that will enhance our ability to protect our waters, combat illegal, unregulated, unreported IUU fishing activities, monitor human and drug trafficking, and support disaster and emergency relief efforts.”

“Naming this vessel after such a towering figure is not only fitting but also a remarkable way to show our nation’s gratitude and deep appreciation,” he said. “His was a very humble story, one that epitomizes the mission and values of our nation’s

maritime and surveillance services: courage, determination, commitment to service, and putting the safety and well-being of our people first,” he said.

Vice President Palik and Australia’s Ambassador Jo Cowley cut the ribbon to the gangway leading to the vessel docked in the port, after which crew members conducted tours of the vessel.

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...Congress Credentials

Continued from front page

Kosrae's Senator Paliknoa Welly, a member of the credentials committee, 'refrained' from signing the committee report and attributed Congress's actions to 'two non-FSM legal missionaries who worked diligently to ensure that Senator-Elect Yoslyn Sigrah is not seated in the 23rd Congress.' He called Congress's actions a violation of the Constitution. These comments were made as a point of privilege on the floor of Congress immediately after Speaker Moses declared the Kosrae seat vacant.

Welly did not name the "legal missionaries" but mentioned that they are currently in the "court system".

"One day they will return to their homeland, leaving us alone here to undo the damage they have caused to the unity of this Federation. The landscape of our unity will never be the same again," he said.

"Once again, the wishes of the State of Kosrae and its people are being ignored. And once again, this is one more reason why Kosrae should explore further political alternatives and consider seceding from this Federation," he added. "Our future destination should not be dictated by Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Yap."

On September 25, Yoslyn Sigrah took to Facebook in a message to "families and friends", saying that it was the fastest way to reach them. The message stated that she had received word that the credentials committee was set to oppose seating her. "I knew it was challenging for a woman to run for FSM Congress," she wrote. "I just did not know that seating a woman for the At-Large Senator-Elect would be this difficult. I felt that this latest turn of events had something to do with me being a woman-lawyer ready to be seated for the At-Large seat. The more I have been attacked as a woman, the more pride I felt as a woman. For God has created me—a woman."

Although Sigrah would have been the first female At-Large Senator in the FSM

Congress had she been seated, she is not the first female to have been elected to Congress.

Though Sigrah met all the constitutional requirements to run for office, the credentials committee recommended that she not be seated due to several sanctions, admonishments, and censures in FSM courts and her current status as a suspended attorney of the FSM Supreme Court.

"Your committee reaffirms Congress's exclusive authority as the sole judge of the elections and qualifications of its members," the Credentials Committee report said. "As the sole judge, Congress

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Rotary Pohnpei, FSM

Rotary INTERNATIONAL

Cyrus Susaia

Anntashia Rettin

Pamela Williams

Eve Joel

Shanalin Ling

Michelle Untalan

Mercedes Olter

Graham Henry

Gabrina Garangmau

Richard Oliver

The Rotary Club of Pohnpei, partnered with Vital FSM, and Mobil, is pleased to announce their 2023-2024 Rotary Scholarship recipients. Congratulations to these scholars this academic year:

Gabrina Garangmau, Shanalin Ling, Richard Oliver, Michelle Untalan, Anntashia Rettin, Eve Joel, Mercedes Olter, Cyrus Susaia, Macmillan Willyander (not pictured), Pamela Williams, Myron Yoma (not pictured), and Graham Henry.

The Rotary Club of Pohnpei awards scholarships every academic year to qualified FSM citizens attending or enrolled in an accredited institution of higher education. Special thanks to Rotary's partners Vital FSM, and Mobil.

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...Congress Credentials

Continued from previous page

must ascertain the character and fitness of members-elect to serve in Congress and uphold their obligations to abide by the law and oath of office. The oath of office bestows a serious responsibility that must be upheld with the utmost regard as the legislative branch of the national government writes the laws of the nation.

“The actions of Yoslyn Sigrah raise serious concerns about her qualification to serve as a member and Senator of Congress. The fact that Yoslyn Sigrah engaged in conduct, including but not limited to filing misleading and false documents with the FSM Supreme Court, willfully violating an FSM Supreme Court order, and facing allegations of assaulting a police officer in her professional capacity as an attorney; sworn to uphold the FSM Constitution and the laws of the nation, an oath analogous to the oath of office taken by members of Congress; draws into question her capacity to abide by the oath of office and fulfill her responsibilities as a member of Congress. Your committee finds that Yoslyn Sigrah is not qualified to be seated as a member of the Twenty-third Congress.”

Sigrah's lawsuit explains most of the situations mentioned in the Congress report and their mitigating factors. It does not discuss the incident of an alleged assault on a Pohnpei police officer. It states that the FSM Supreme Court had overturned her suspension from the Kosrae State bar, explaining in its ruling that her 'ghostwriting' would be similar to attorneys using paralegals—a common practice. Regarding the FSM Supreme Court suspension, the filing says that affidavits filed by her clients support Sigrah's claims that she never told her client to disobey a court order. On July 21, 2023, the suit says that Sigrah filed for reinstatement. It claims that it would reinstate her after 'satisfactory completion of two steps.' It states that she completed those steps and her reinstatement should be reversed as if she had never been suspended.

The suit argues that the Congress vote to accept the Credentials Committee's report was a voice vote, making it impossible to know whether, in fact, 2/3 of the members of Congress had actually voted to adopt the report.

“Congress did not prescribe by statute that character is a qualification requirement. Until Congress amends the statutory

requirement for 'additional qualifications' for members' eligibility, Petitioner Sigrah has lawfully satisfied all requirements to be seated in the 23rd Congress,” Sigrah's case argues.

Sigrah's case requests the court to issue the following relief:

1. “Declaratory judgment finding that the 23rd FSM Congress violated Article IX, Section 9 of the FSM Constitution and 9 F.S.M.C. § 201 when it exceeded its powers given to it at Article IX, Section 17(a) of the FSM Constitution, and decided not to seat Petitioner Sigrah, and that such act not to seat is not subject to the doctrine of political question;
2. Declaratory Judgment that, based on findings of violations of Article IX, Section 9 of the FSM Constitution and 9 F.S.M.C. § 201, this court should issue an order that Congress must seat Petitioner Sigrah, the declared winner of this past July 4, 2023, special election, State of Kosrae, in accordance with a democratic election process.
3. Injunctive relief of a temporary restraining order, preliminary injunction, and then a permanent injunction (concurrently filed Rule 65 motion) enjoining all respondents from carrying out the effect of not seating Petitioner

Sigrah in the 23rd FSM Congress until the legality or the declaratory relief hereinabove is decided on its merits. The court is reminded that statutorily, Special Elections may be extended.

4. Declaratory judgment that the constitutional and statutory rights of the Respondents, who are registered voters in Kosrae, were violated, and their constitutional and statutory rights were violated, thereby entitling them to damages, including attorney fees and costs.
5. Should statutory attorney's fees fail, then attorney's fees under the private attorney-general doctrine for having to file such a matter that will benefit the entire country;
6. A permanent injunction barring the National Election Commission Office from carrying out the illegal acts of Congress; and
7. All other relief deemed just and equitable.”

At press time, Congress attorneys had not yet filed a legal response to Sigrah's claims. Although they are allowed by law more than 20 days to file the response, the Congress legal department says that they are trying to expedite their response.



Australia commemorates World Teachers' Day, pledges ongoing support to FSM education

Australian Embassy to the FSM

October 5, 2023

FSM-- In celebration of #WorldTeachersDay, Australia takes pride in acknowledging the profound contributions of educators worldwide. Teachers play an instrumental role in shaping lives, inspiring young minds, and nurturing future leaders. This day offers an opportunity to reflect on their indispensable role in society and the support they need to excel in their profession.



Australia's commitment to supporting education in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is exemplified through two vital initiatives: the Improving the Quality of Basic Education (#IQBE) Project in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the #WASH in Schools project in collaboration with UNICEF Pacific, as well as National and State departments of education.

The global theme for this year's #WorldTeachersDay is "The teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage." This theme celebrates the transformative impact of teachers on education while emphasizing the importance of addressing teacher shortages and providing the necessary support to enable them to excel in their noble vocation.

Thanks to the collective efforts of Australia and ADB, the IQBE project has had a significant impact on FSM's education landscape. The project has provided training to over 1,200 elementary school teachers across the FSM, equipping them with valuable skills and knowledge. Additionally, it has allocated over USD \$500,000 in literacy and numeracy resources to enhance the learning experience for students.

Collaborating closely with State Departments of Education, the IQBE project has organized teacher workshops focused on the use of locally-sourced materials for hands-on learning. These workshops aim to foster interactive and engaging classroom environments.

In addition to these teacher-centric initiatives, the IQBE National Working Groups, a collaborative effort involving State and National Departments of Education in partnership with the College of Micronesia, have made significant policy contributions. They have successfully drafted key policy documents, including the FSM National Teacher Quality Standards and the National Professional Learning and Development Framework for educators. A comprehensive student assessment framework is also in the pipeline.

Australia's steadfast commitment to supporting education in FSM demonstrates its dedication to nurturing the next generation of leaders and fostering a brighter future for all FSM students. On this #WorldTeachersDay, the nation pays tribute to teachers worldwide and reaffirms its commitment to empowering educators and improving the quality of education in FSM.

Chuuk Department of Education FSM
National Department of Education
Pohnpei State Department of Education
Kosrae Public Information Office, KSG
YapGov

President Simina Administers Oath of Office to Mrs. Universe Yamase Lawrence – Deputy Permanent Representative of the FSM to the United Nations

FSM Information Services

September 27, 2023

Washington D.C.-- While in Washington, DC for the US - Pacific Island Forum Summit and subsequent meetings relating to the FSM's compact of free association, President Simina administered the Oath of Office to recently confirmed Mrs. Universe Yamase Lawrence, who will serve as Deputy Permanent Representative (DPR) of the FSM to the United Nations.

The ceremony took place at the FSM's Embassy in DC, with her family, embassy staff, and members of the President's delegation in attendance to witness the occasion. Following the oath,

President Simina gave some remarks, where he noted that this moment is a significant step in the right direction to achieving more gender equality within his administration, stating that "we need more young, energetic and capable women in these roles." Acting Secretary of the Dept. of Foreign Affairs Mr. Ricky Cantero, proposed a toast, thanking DPR Lawrence and her family for answering the call to service.

The Simina-Palik administration congratulates and welcomes the FSM's newest diplomat aboard, and looks forward to working with her, Ambassador Jeem Lippwe, and the entire team at the Mission in New York to advance the FSM's goals at the United Nations.



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UN Coordinator and FAO deployee work alongside Australian Embassy to strengthen FSM's climate resilience

Australian Embassy to the FSM

October 4, 2023

Pohnpei-- In a collaborative effort to bolster climate resilience and disaster preparedness in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Australian Embassy's Second Secretary, Rachelle Wood, recently met with Mr. Jaap van Hierden, UN Resident Coordinator, and Mr. Swapnil Mindhe, an Australia Assists deployee stationed in Pohnpei.

Australia's development program continues to play a crucial role in addressing climate change and enhancing resilience in the Pacific region. As climate-related challenges loom large, partnerships like these are instrumental in fortifying communities against the impacts of natural disasters.

Deployee Swapnil is actively supporting the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in FSM. His role encompasses the implementation of agriculture, food security, and emergency projects throughout the North Pacific sub-region. These projects are vital in

enhancing food security and disaster response capabilities in FSM, particularly in the face of changing climatic conditions.

Mr. Jaap van Hierden, the UN Resident Coordinator, expressed his appreciation for the support extended by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia. He acknowledged the valuable contributions of competent and hardworking experts deployed through RedR Australia. These experts serve as a critical resource in the efforts to build resilience and address the unique challenges faced by FSM and its neighboring nations.

This collaboration highlights the commitment of Australia and the United Nations to addressing the pressing issues of climate change and disaster resilience. By combining resources and expertise, they aim to create a more resilient and sustainable future for FSM and the broader Pacific region. This ongoing partnership serves as a testament to the shared dedication to strengthening communities and protecting lives in the face of climate-related challenges.



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Virtual assembly addresses unratified Amended Compact of Free Association

Pohnpei State Public Information

September 28, 2023

Pohnpei—Pohnpei’s Governor Oliver and Speaker Yamaguchi recently participated in a virtual meeting with FSM President Simina, State Governors, Speakers, and key members of the Joint Compact Review and Planning Committee (JCRP). The primary agenda of the virtual assembly was to address the unratified newly amended Compact of Free Association, with Chief Negotiator Leo Falcam Jr. delivering a comprehensive update on the Compact’s current status and its potential implications.

The virtual meeting served as a crucial platform for discussions surrounding the Compact, a pivotal agreement that governs the relationship between the FSM and the United States.

Chief Negotiator Leo Falcam Jr., an esteemed member of the JCRP, provided valuable insights into the Compact’s intricacies, shedding light

on its implications and potential future developments. His presentation allowed attendees to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Compact’s status and its implications for both nations.

Following the virtual assembly, the Office of the President issued a press release, highlighting significant outcomes from the meeting. The press release states:

"Yesterday, on September 28th, the FSM and the United States governments signed the final subsidiary agreement under the Compact, known as the Federal Programs and Services Agreement (FPSA). The FPSA is a critical component that provides essential services, including the United States Postal Service (USPS), Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) coverage for the Bank of FSM, and disaster assistance through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), among others."

The agreement was formally signed by

Chief Negotiator Leo Falcam Jr. on behalf of the Federated States of Micronesia and Special Presidential Envoy for Compact Negotiations Joseph Yun on behalf of the United States at the U.S. State Department. This development marks a significant step forward in the ongoing discussions surrounding the Compact and underscores the commitment of both nations to strengthening their relationship.

The Compact continues to be a vital framework that dictates numerous aspects of cooperation, and these recent developments are expected to have far-reaching implications for both nations in the years to come. As discussions progress, the FSM and the United States remain committed to working together to ensure the continued growth and prosperity of the Micronesian region.



Congratulations
to the 2023-2024 Vital Scholars!

Sara-Edith Saimon State: Pohnpei Major: Business at St. Martin’s University Standing: Freshman	Louella Lemoglieng State: Yap Major: Electrical Engineering at the University of Hawai’i-Hilo Standing: Freshman	Aniken Perman State: Pohnpei Major: Business at Chaminade University Standing: Freshman	Alec L. Alosima State: Pohnpei Major: Engineering at the University of Guam Standing: Freshman

Congressional measures readjust National tax structures

FSM Congress Information Services

September 20, 2023

FSM—To cushion the Nation against the economic impacts of the new Constitutional Amendments, the Twenty Third Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia has passed measures to re-adjust the national tax structure.

On September 20, the Congress passed Congressional Act (CA) 23-20, which called to change the percentage of revenue sharing between the National and State Governments on the collection of tax revenue.

In light of the new Constitutional Amendment requiring the revenues from fishing agreements to be divided equally between the National and State Governments, the Congress deemed it “an appropriate time to review and modify” certain aspects of the current structure of revenue sharing. Under the law, the state governments receive eighty percent (80%) of the fuel tax collected; and fifty percent 50% of taxes from wage and salary, gross receipts and import duties, other than fuel taxes.

Through Public Law 18-107, the Congress had enacted an additional 20% to be added to the states’ 50% share of tax collected. Therefore, beginning fiscal year 2016 the states’ share of taxes collected from wages and salary, gross receipt and import duties an increased from fifty percent (50%) to seventy percent (70%). The states’ additional 20% share was deposited by the National Government into each State Government’s sub-account ‘A’ of the FSM Trust Fund with a provision that the funds are not to be withdrawn by the States. During the COVID-19 pandemic the Law was amended to allow: “on an extraordinary basis,” the extra 20% of the net tax collected during the fiscal year 2021, 2022, 2023 ...to be made it available to the States for their use instead of being deposited into the states’ subaccount ‘A’ of the FSM Trust Fund.

Taking into account the new Constitutional Amendments, the Congress passed CA 23-20, to remove the extra 20% and return the revenue sharing to its original levels prior to FY-2016. Accordingly, the State Governments will maintain its eighty percent (80%) of the fuel tax collected and its original fifty percent (50%) of the wage

and salary tax, gross receipts tax, and import duties other than the fuel tax.

The other measure on the national tax structure is CA 23-21, which called to zero out the deposits into the FSM Trust Fund from major corporation tax and from fishing access fees.

Under current law, fifty percent (50%) of major corporation tax and twenty percent (20%) of all National Government revenue derived from fishing access fees are automatically deposited into the FSM Trust Fund.

According to the Committee Report (SCR No. 23-17) on the measure, “in light of recent events, this is an appropriate time to review and reconsider these automatic deposits into the FSM Trust Fund. The Constitutional Amendment requiring the sharing of fishing access fees with the State Governments will have a substantial impact on the revenue available for National Government operations.

While the National Government is adjusting to the effects of the revenue decrease, your



Committee finds this is an appropriate time to suspend the automatic deposits into the FSM Trust Fund, and notes that Congress can still make appropriations into the FSM Trust Fund as revenue allows.”

The Congress passed CA 23-21, to stop the automatic distributions to the FSM Trust Fund from the two revenue sources: taxes on major corporations and fishing access fees.

The two measures along with other Congressional Acts have been transmitted to the President to be signed into law, or they automatically become law after 30 days.

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PUC Chairman and staff extend warm welcome to Pohnpei students pursuing higher education at Palau Community College

Pohnpei Utilities Corporation

September 27, 2023

Pohnpei—In a heartwarming gesture aimed at fostering educational opportunities and strengthening the future prospects of Pohnpei's youth, the Chairman of the Board and Vice Chairman of the Pohnpei Utilities Corporation (PUC) recently joined hands with PUC staff to host a special dinner. The honored guests of the evening were a group of Pohnpeian students who are presently pursuing higher education at Palau Community College, with a shared commitment to improving not only their own futures but also the future of Pohnpei.

The event, held in the spirit of camaraderie and community support, symbolized the dedication of the PUC leadership and staff to empower the youth of Pohnpei. By providing an opportunity for these students to expand their horizons and acquire knowledge and skills at Palau Community College, they aim to equip them for a brighter future.

The dinner, characterized by warm

hospitality and meaningful conversations, allowed the PUC leadership to express their pride in the students' determination to seek higher education and invest in their personal growth. It also emphasized the PUC's commitment to nurturing talents and supporting educational initiatives that contribute to the overall development of Pohnpei.

From left to right(Bottom):

Midner Hainrich (PICS High School), AJ Sigbert (MHS), Sumileen Peter (MHS), Jaybert Solomon ((MHS), Thursten Amusten (NMHS).

PUC Members (Middle Row L/R)

Trevayne Esiel, Chief of Corporate Services, Christina Lynhae Jack, Water Quality Lab Tech, (Back) Erick Paul, Chairman of the Board, Joseph Felix Jr, Vice Chairman of the Board, Eddy Pelep, Water Works Electrician, Bradely Henry, Chief of Wastewater Treatment Plant, Jessica Salvador Paulus, PWMT Coordinator, Leerenson Airens, Chief of PUC Water Works, Rodney Lebehn, Supply Technician.

FSM presents \$100,000 donation for Typhoon Mawar relief assistance to CNMI

FSM Information Services

September 18, 2023

Saipan, CNMI--Acting Consul General Johnny Silbanuz of the FSM Consulate Office in Guam and Honorary FSM Consul to the CNMI (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) Mr. Diego Benevante met with T.H. Arnold I. Palacios, Governor of the CNMI, T.H. David M. Apatang, Lt. Governor of

CNMI and Mr. John Hirsh, the Executive Director for the American Red Cross to present a \$100,000 donation on behalf of the government and people of the FSM to assist with ongoing typhoon Mawar recovery efforts.

The Simina-Palik administration wishes to thank the 23rd Congress of the FSM for its swift action in appropriating the funds for the donation.




PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM
Director Policy

Ratu Sukuna Road, Nasese, Suva, Fiji
T: (679) 331 2600 | info@forumsec.org
www.forumsec.org

The Pacific Islands Forum

PIFS is an Employer of Choice in the region, aiming to recruit and employ staff based on merit and organisational needs, and ensures that employment selection upholds its values and commitment to Forum membership, gender balance and building a diverse and inclusive organisation. PIFS is committed to achieving gender balance and being fully representative of our member countries. Our workforce is currently over 50% female, and we have representatives from twelve of the eighteen Forum member countries.

To achieve greater workforce representation from our member countries we strongly encourage applicants from the following countries to apply: Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Nauru, Niue, New Caledonia, and Palau

The Opportunity

The Director Policy is a member of the PIF Senior Management team. The position provides leadership, strategic direction and management of staff assigned to related Key Result Areas (KRAs), particularly those relating to the security, social, gender, labour mobility and 2050 Strategy policy areas. The position also provides high quality strategic advice and thinking to the Executive and Senior Management Team.

Directors are responsible for the delivery of the strategy and outputs of the organisation. Directors also provide close support and advice to the Executive (Secretary General and Deputy Secretary Generals) to enable them to focus more on their strategic and outwardly focused roles. Directors will also deputise as required ensuring they can step in reasonably seamlessly. The key responsibilities are summarised as:

- Team performance & leadership.
- Senior management coordination.
- Manage relations & partnerships.
- Continuous improvement.

Applicants should have an advanced University degree (Master's degree or higher) in law, political science,

international studies or similar (with postgraduate qualifications in management preferred). Candidates will need to have had at least ten years practical experience in a senior management position in a regional or international arena. Furthermore, they should have a demonstrated ability to provide high quality advice at the highest levels and proven leadership and management skills.

The Benefits

The position carries a competitive and attractive remuneration and benefits package including medical and life insurance, education, and housing allowance. The position is placed at Band 15 / Executive level of our salary scale, starting at SDR 68,988 to 86,235 equivalent to FJD 206,861 to 258,577.

Note: Amounts are based on 1 August foreign exchange rate, but your final salary will be dependent on foreign exchange rates at the time of payment.

How to apply

Interested applicants can find out more information on our website: www.forumsec.org where an information package containing the full responsibilities, selection criteria and remuneration details is available. Candidates must include in either their application or Curriculum Vitae the full contact details of three referees. For non-Fijian nationals, this salary may be tax-free. To be eligible for this position, the applicant must be a national of a Forum member country*. Applicant must be willing to travel periodically via economy class.

Deadline for applications is at 5pm (Fiji time), 27 October 2023.

*Member States of the Pacific Islands Forum: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

Congressional Act to re-establish National share of Compact Funding

FSM Congress Information Services

September 20, 2023

FSM-- After nine years of allocating its share of amended Compact funding to the states, the Twenty Third Congress, today passed Congressional Act 23-19 to re-establish the National Government's share through modification of the distribution formula for the 2023 Amended Compact funding.

In anticipation of the new Constitutional Amendments and in preparation for the 2023 Amended Compact, CA 23-19 called for the modification of the distribution formula for amended Compact funds to allow the National Government a ten-percent (10%) share; centralize the Compact Infrastructure sector grants within the Department of Transportation, Communications and Infrastructure; and to establish transitional provisions for the amended compact portions of the Budget for Fiscal Year 2024.

The first part of the Act would modify the Amended Compact distribution formula to re-establish the National Government's share from zero percent (0%) to ten percent (10%). The distribution formula for Compact Two had provided the National Government with the following percentage of Compact funds: for FY 2005 and FY 2006 - 8.65%; from FY 2007 to 2013 - 10%; for FY 2014 - 5.%, and for the past nine years from FY 2015 to current FY 2023, the National Government's share has been zero percent (0.0%).

The amendment is necessitated by the new Constitutional amendment requirement that 50% percent of the local revenue from fishing agreements be retained by the National Government and the other 50% to be divided among the States.

Historically, local revenue from fishing agreements has funded the National Government operations, the National Public Auditor, national agencies, boards, authorities and commissions, in addition to providing grants, subsidies, contributions to capital and human resource development needs for the Nation. With half of the local revenues from fishing agreements removed, the National Government is unable to assist those programs

and functions across the nation reliant on funding from National Government. It is necessary therefore to increase the National Government share of available Compact funds from zero percent (0%) to ten percent (10%).

Accordingly, the amended Compact proposed distribution formula beginning FY 2024, would be as follows: Chuuk – 38.00%, Kosrae – 10.89%, Pohnpei – 25.31%, Yap – 15.80%, National Government – 10%.

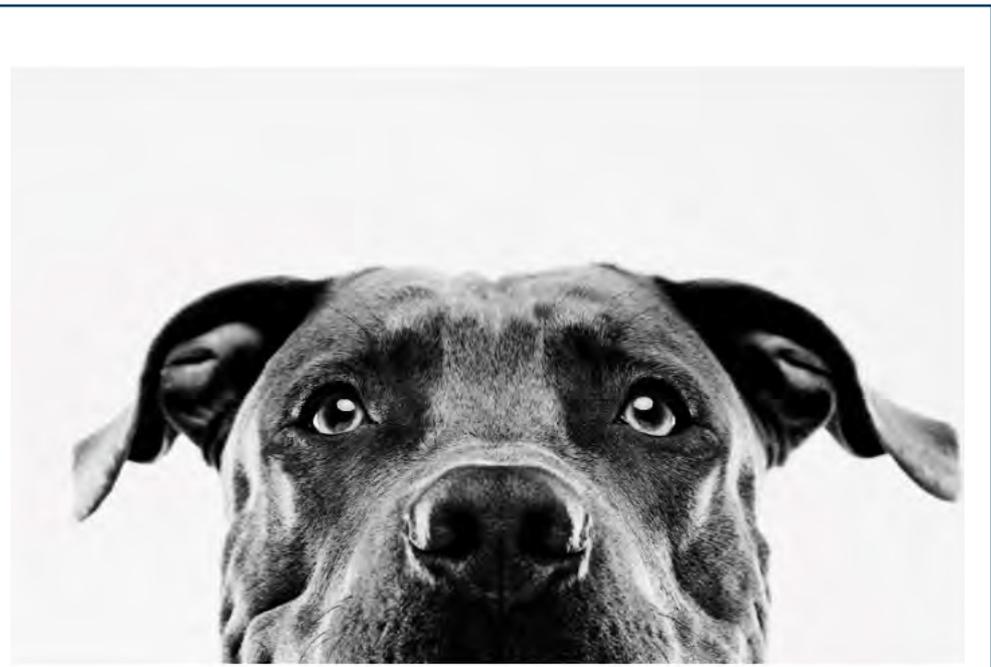
It was noted that 10% share to the National Government reflects additional costs that will be borne by the National Government under the 2023 Amended Compact. Funding that was historically provided for the National Department of Education under Supplemental Education grants and excluded from the distribution formula is now part of the Education Compact Sector and subject to the distribution formula.

The National Government will also be responsible for appropriating funds for the Single Audit, either from its share of Compact Funds or domestic revenue. Finally, there will be substantial extra costs associated with the enhanced reporting and compliance requirements relating to the infrastructure projects.

The 2023 Amended Compact also includes various compliance requirements, enhanced performance and financial reporting on the infrastructure projects along with the hiring of a third-party for the reporting. To ensure compliance with the requirements relating to infrastructure projects, CA 23-19 further called for the centralization of the Compact Infrastructure Funds for the national and four state governments within the Department of Transportation, Communications and Infrastructure (TC&I).

As such, each State Government's infrastructure budgets would be "moved to and consolidated with the National Government's for purposes of the Plan for the Division of Annual Economic Assistance. Infrastructure Sector Grants shall then be retained by the National Government and managed by the Department of Transportation, Communications & Infrastructure, and released as sub-grants to the States, on a project-by-project basis."

Finally, in recognition of certain lapse dates, CA 23-19 called for transitional provisions for FY 2024 to include adjustment of dates for certain internal fiscal procedures for compact implementation along with revised Compact planning estimates and revised Compact budget request, among others.



DOG DAY AFTERNOON TEA

Fundraising for November Vet Team Visit
Crafts, Food, Plants, Pre-loved, Pet Meds

When: October 14, 2023 11am to 3pm

Where: New Tokyo Medical College

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FSM and Italian Republic explore diplomatic cooperation in courtesy call

FSM Information Services

September 15, 2023

Palikir—On September 15, 2023, the Honorable Aren B. Palik, Vice President of the Federated States of Micronesia received His Excellency Marco Clemente, non-resident Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Italian Republic to the Federated States of Micronesia based in Manila, Philippines, for a courtesy call.

During the courtesy call, Vice President Palik and Ambassador Clemente immediately exchanged welcoming pleasantries including sentiments of congratulations by Ambassador Clemente to President Simina and Vice President Palik on their assumption to their posts of President and Vice President. Towards that end, Vice President Palik reciprocated by conveying regards on behalf of President Simina as well as his regrets to Ambassador Clemente for his

unavailability to receive him due to attending prior commitments that were already set overseas.

Vice President Palik highlighted the importance of the upcoming COP28 to be held in Dubai which he looks forward to the outcomes of, and sought support from the Italian Republic in anticipation of the issues to be raised during the COP28 towards agreement on bold, practical and ambitious solutions to the most pressing global challenge of climate change. On the same note, Vice President Palik and Ambassador Clemente discussed the issue of climate change as a top priority for both their respective governments, noting the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) Declaration on “Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea-Level Rise” as a key instrumental tool in the fight against climate change.

Vice President Palik and Ambassador Clemente also highlighted the importance

of having an Honorary Consul in both the Federated States of Micronesia and the Italian Republic, noting the presence of the Honorary Consuls of European countries that were already established in the FSM. With that, Ambassador Clemente expressed his country’s desire to establish its Honorary Consul in the FSM and sought support and guidance from the national leadership.

Vice President Palik concluded by thanking the Ambassador for the visit and conveyed his wish for a cooperative working relationship during the Ambassador’s tenure. Attending the courtesy call were Acting Secretary Brendy Carl, staff from the Office of the President as well as staff from the Department of Foreign Affairs.



The United States of America and the FSM signed the 2023 Federal Programs and Services Agreement



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C.

September 29, 2023

Washington D.C.—Yesterday, the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia signed the 2023 Federal Programs and Services Agreement on the continuation of essential programs and services provided by U.S. agencies to the Federated States of Micronesia. The conclusion of this Agreement is an affirmation of our close and continuing partnership.

The Federal Program and Services Agreement was signed as part of the negotiations related to Compact of Free Association and confirms the shared desire to strengthen the special and historic partnership between our nations.

Special Presidential Envoy for Compact Negotiations Joseph Yun signed the Agreement for the United States and Chief Negotiator Leo Falcam, Jr. signed for the Federated States of Micronesia.

JCRP Chair Asterio Takesy, Charge d’affaires Jackson Soram of the Federated States of Micronesia, and U.S. Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor attended the signing at the State Department in



FSM Delegation wraps up US-PIF Summit meetings in Washington, DC

FSM Information Services

September 29, 2023

Washington D.C.—An FSM delegation led by President Simina, have completed rounds of meetings in DC under the US - Pacific Island Forum Summit as well as meetings to progress the 2023 Amended Compact. Engagements that President Simina and delegation members participated in addition to the US - PIF Summit main plenary with President Biden, included:

- Roundtable discussions focused on combatting climate change with Special Envoy John Kerry;
- A dinner function hosted by Secretary of State Blinken and U.S. Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield – focused on promoting sustainable, people-centered development, preserving peace and the rules based international order, and other multilateral priorities;
- Roundtable discussions with Special Envoy John Kerry and USAID Administrator Samantha Power and members of the philanthropic community focused on the climate-ocean nexus;
- A luncheon with members of the U.S. Congress hosted at the Capitol Hill;
- Roundtable discussions with U.S. business and investment leaders with a focus on leveraging the diverse and vibrant economies in the Pacific to enhance economic and commercial connectivity between our countries and;
- A friends of the Pacific reception hosted by the Australian Ambassador to the U.S. Kevin Rudd.

In addition to the above US - PIF Summit engagements, President Simina and members of the delegation also took the opportunity to meet with Secretary Blinken along with President Whipples of Palau, and Minister Ading of the Marshall Islands to discuss the final aspects of each of the Freely Associated States’ Compact agreements. To the same end, President Simina and delegation members also took the opportunity meet with key members of the US congress to continue advocating for its timely action, including Congressman Ami Bera who serves as Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on the Indo-Pacific as well as the Co-Chair of the Pacific Islands Caucus and Congresswoman Young Kim who serves as Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Indo-Pacific.

The delegation’s trip concluded with a dinner function that welcomed FSM citizens from around the area, bringing together a broad group of family and friends who live and work in the DC area.

Following the delegations' above activities and departure from DC on Wednesday Sept. 27th, the Compact's FPSA (Federal Programs and Services Agreement) was subsequently signed by both governments on Thursday Sept. 28th.



13th Festival of Pacific Arts & Culture (13th FestPAC) Website Launch and Event Confirmation

SPC

06 October 2023

HONOLULU, HAWAII – The Hawai'i Commission for the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts & Culture ('Commission') is pleased to announce the launch of the website for the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts & Culture (13th FestPAC) which can be accessed here: <https://www.festpachawaii.org/>.

Kalani L. Ka'anā'anā, Chair of the Commission, shared that: "Hawai'i is honoured to be hosting the 13th FestPAC over 6 - 16 June 2024, and we look forward to receiving our Pacific sisters and brothers then, to celebrate and showcase Pacific arts and culture after eight long years since the 12th FestPAC in Guam in 1998."

The website, a significant milestone, offers comprehensive details about festival delegations, the event program, and venue information.

Ka'anā'anā added, "The Commission is delighted to launch the website for the 13th FestPAC, which we hope will build on the growing excitement and anticipation for this significant event. As more information comes to hand, it will be uploaded onto the website, so keep watching that space."

Despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the rescheduling of the 13th FestPAC to 2024, and the recent tragic wildfires in Maui, the Commission and the State of Hawai'i remain steadfast in their commitment to hosting a successful festival next year.

Ka'anā'anā expressed the Commission's heartfelt support for those impacted by the wildfires, stating, "The 13th FestPAC will honor the courage and resilience of all those impacted by the wildfires."

He extended gratitude on behalf of the Commission to various partners and stakeholders, including the Council of Pacific Arts & Culture, the Honourable Governor of the State of Hawai'i, Governor Josh Green MD, and his wife, First Lady Green, Pacific Ministers for Culture, the Pacific Community, and others for their unwavering support.

Ka'anā'anā particularly acknowledged Governor Green's proclamation, solidifying Hawai'i's support for the festival, saying, "Working together, we will make this festival one to remember, and we look forward to seeing the Pacific family join us in full force in Hawai'i in June 2024!"

Dr Stuart Minchin, Director-General of SPC, also shared his thoughts, emphasising SPC's role in being the custodian of the Festival of Pacific Arts & Culture.

"SPC is honoured to be working closely with the Commission, the State of Hawai'i, the Council of Pacific Arts & Culture, SPC members, and the broader Pacific family to convene the 13th edition of the world's largest celebration of indigenous Pacific Islanders."

Acknowledging Hawai'i's brave decision to proceed with the festival in June 2024, despite the recent tragedy in Maui, Dr Minchin noted, "I know the festival will honor the people of Maui in the appropriate way."

New UNICEF analysis shows that East Asia and the Pacific accounts for the most weather-related child displacements in the world

East Asia and Pacific region accounts for more than 44 per cent of global child displacements linked to weather-related disasters such as floods and storms

UNICEF

6 October 2023

BANGKOK/NEW YORK - Weather-related disasters caused 43.1 million internal displacements of children in 44 countries over a six-year period – or approximately 20,000 child displacements a day - according to a new UNICEF analysis released today. [Children Displaced in a Changing Climate](#) is the first global analysis of the number of children driven from their homes between 2016 and 2021 due to floods, storms, droughts and wildfires, and looks at projections for the next 30 years.

According to the analysis, East Asia and Pacific experienced an estimated 19 million child displacements linked to weather-related disasters between 2016 and 2021, representing more than 44 per cent of the global total.

Most displacements of children in East Asia and Pacific were triggered by floods, which led to over 12 million displacements, and storms, which led to over 6 million displacements. Aggravated by the naturally occurring La Niña phenomenon, storms such as Typhoon Rai in 2021 led to particularly high numbers of child displacement.

China and the Philippines are among the countries that recorded the highest absolute numbers of child displacements, due to their exposure to extreme weather, large child populations and progress made on early warning and evacuation capacities. However, relative to the size of the child population, children living in small island states such as Vanuatu, Fiji, Palau and the Northern Mariana Islands were most affected by storms. For example, in 2020, Cyclone Harold caused the displacement of nearly a quarter of Vanuatu's population, including 34,000 children.

"Climate-related displacements upend children's lives," said Debora Comini, Regional Director, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific. "Girls and boys displaced by floods and storms face elevated risks to their protection and wellbeing, while their access to healthcare, education, clean water and sanitation services can be cut off. We call on leaders to prepare communities, protect children at risk of displacement, and support those already uprooted."

Worldwide, floods and storms accounted for 40.9 million - or 95 per cent - of recorded child displacements between 2016 and 2021, due in part to better reporting and more pre-emptive evacuations. Meanwhile, droughts triggered more than 1.3 million internal displacements of children.

Decisions to move can be forced and abrupt in the face of disaster, or as the result of pre-emptive evacuation, where lives may be saved but many children still face the dangers and challenges that come with being uprooted from their homes, often for extended periods.

Children are especially at risk of displacement in countries already grappling with overlapping crises, such as conflict and poverty, where local capacities to cope with any additional displacements of children are strained.

Using a disaster displacement risk model developed by Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the report projects riverine floods have the potential to displace almost 96 million children worldwide over the next 30 years, based on current climate data, while cyclonic winds and storm surges have the potential to displace 10.3 million and 7.2 million children respectively, over the same period*. With more frequent and more severe weather events as consequence of changing climate, the actual numbers will almost certainly be higher.

UNICEF works with governments in countries most at risk to better prepare for and minimize the risk of displacement, develop and implement child-responsive disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies, and design resilient and portable services to protect and reach children before, during and after disaster strikes.

As leaders prepare to meet at the COP28 Climate Change Summit in Dubai in November, UNICEF urges governments, donors, development partners, and the private sector to take the following actions to protect children and young people at risk of future displacement and prepare them and their communities:

- **PROTECT** children and young people from the impacts of climate change-exacerbated disasters and displacement by ensuring that child-critical services – including education, health, nutrition, social protection and child protection services – are shock-responsive, portable and inclusive, including for those already uprooted from their homes.
- **PREPARE** children and young people to live in a climate-changed world by improving their adaptive capacity and resilience and enabling their participation in finding inclusive solutions.
- **PRIORITIZE** children and young people – including those already uprooted from their homes – in disaster and climate action and finance, humanitarian and development policy, and investments to prepare for a future already happening.

East Asia and the Pacific remains the most disaster-prone region in the world. Over 210 million children in the region are highly exposed to cyclones; 140 million children are highly exposed to water scarcity; 120 million children are highly exposed to coastal flooding; and 420 million children to air pollution. The region also has significant child and youth populations living in riverine environments, with the Lower Mekong River basin alone home to 30 million children and young people across Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Chinese Ambassador welcomes dignitaries to celebrate 74th Anniversary

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

September 28, 2023

Pohnpei— Dignitaries gathered on September 28th for a reception at Cliff Rainbow Hotel hosted by the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China. The reception served as a celebration of the 74th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China and as a welcome event for Ambassador Wu Wei, who has assumed office.

Ambassador Wu spoke for some time about China’s development accomplishments during the last 74 years and expressed gratitude to those in the audience who have continued to support China. He stated, “China is moving towards the Second Centenary Goal of building itself into a great modern socialist country in all aspects—prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful—when the People’s Republic of China celebrates its centenary. We are pursuing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernization. We welcome

friends from all walks of life in the FSM to visit China and experience the real modern China for yourselves.”

“Looking ahead, China will remain committed to the fundamental national policy of opening up, advancing international cooperation in more areas, at higher levels, and to a greater depth, and will continue to share new opportunities created by China’s development with countries, including the FSM,” he continued.

“Next month, China will host the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. Following the approach of consultation and cooperation for shared benefits, China is ready to collaborate with all countries, including the FSM, to expand the Belt and Road initiative, making it more comprehensive and beneficial to the world.”

Ambassador Wu continued his speech, emphasizing that China’s development plans are of a peaceful nature, and he expressed gratitude to the FSM for maintaining the “One China policy.” He provided a list of many development

projects that China has undertaken in the FSM.

“Next year will mark the 35th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and the FSM,” he said in closing before offering a toast. “As the Chinese Ambassador, I am ready to work with colleagues and friends in the FSM to further advance the friendship and cooperation between China and the FSM. I am confident that with the shared commitment and efforts of both sides, along with help and assistance from friends present tonight, the relationship between China and the FSM will have an even brighter future!”

A video presentation about China followed Ambassador Wu’s speech.

Vice President Aren B. Palik spoke on behalf of the FSM and reaffirmed the One-China Policy.

After the speeches, there was a demonstration of a fan dance, and students from the College of Micronesia FSM Chinese language class sang two

songs, one of which featured Chinese Embassy staff members joining in.

Dignitaries who attended the reception included FSM and Pohnpei cabinet members, members of Pohnpei and FSM’s legislatures, and the representatives of the diplomatic corps to the FSM.



Project Monitoring and Evaluation Critical for Development Progress in the Pacific – ADB Panel

Asian Development Bank

SUVA, FIJI (28 September 2023) — Systematic and objective monitoring, evaluation, and learning from projects and programs are critical for Pacific developing member countries to achieve their development goals, panelists at a seminar organized by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said.

Speaking at the event “Supporting Development Projects in Fiji and the Pacific”, ADB Independent Evaluation Department Deputy Director General Sona Shrestha said: “Over the years, support from international finance

institutions has expanded steadily in terms of financing and numbers of projects. Translating increased development assistance to the region into better results for the people of the Pacific will require stronger focus on project design, implementation capacity, and early identification and mitigation of risks.”

Pacific countries face unique development challenges and opportunities. Achieving the development aspirations of the region while addressing the key risks will require significant resources and support. Major partners have been scaling up and diversifying their development support. Support from ADB and the World Bank, for example, has expanded in terms of financing, numbers of projects, and modalities. Their Pacific portfolios now exceed \$3 billion each. Grant resources from concessional windows such as the Asian Development Fund and International Development Association and from Australia and other bilateral partners have also grown.



Pohnpei State Government partners with LDS Church to assist mobility-challenged residents

Pohnpei State Public Information

September 27, 2023

Pohnpei-- The Pohnpei State Government extends heartfelt gratitude as it acknowledges the generous contributions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). The recent donation by the LDS Church, consisting of wheelchairs, walkers, and crutches, represents an act of compassion and generosity that promises to improve the lives of Pohnpeian residents facing mobility challenges.

The recipients of these life-changing mobility aids have already been identified through local municipal governments, in close collaboration with the Governor's Office. Those individuals selected to receive these mobility aids will be contacted with further details regarding the distribution process.

In a modest ceremony held at the Governor's Cabinet Conference room, Elder Bill Davis acknowledged and praised the "faithful members" of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints for their contributions, which have made this donation possible. He emphasized the fundamental principles of loving God and loving one's neighbor as the driving force behind the humanitarian work undertaken by the LDS Church, transcending boundaries of race, nationality, and religion.

Governor Oliver expressed his deepest gratitude to Elder Bill Davis and the LDS Church, representing both the Pohnpei State Government and the intended recipients of these donations. He highlighted the collaborative efforts of local municipal governments in identifying and verifying those in need of wheelchairs, walkers, or crutches.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has a rich history of humanitarian service throughout the world. This is not the first donation of wheelchairs made by the LDS Church to Pohnpei. This donation reaffirms the Church's mission shared by Elder Bill Davis to "love and serve our neighbors".

Accompanying Elder Bill Davis on this generous occasion were several dedicated Church members, including Elder Allan McMakin, Humanitarian Project Manager, Sister Dana McMakin, Humanitarian Project



Manager, Elder Kim Burtenshaw, Public Affairs & Communications, Sister Cyndi Burtenshaw, Public Affairs & Communications, and President

Williamson Rodriguez, Pohnpei Stake President.



FSM Congress overrides President's Veto, enacts Compact Funds Distribution change

FSM Information Services

September 22, 2023

Palikir—The 23rd Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) overrode President Wesley Simina's veto, thereby enacting Congressional Act 23-19. This legislative change pertains to the allocation of the 2023 Amended Compact funds between the national government and state governments.

Congressional Act 23-19 aimed to adjust the distribution formula for Compact funds, increasing the national government's share to 10 percent while centralizing Compact infrastructure sector grants within the Department of Transportation, Communications, and Infrastructure. The impetus behind

this adjustment stemmed from a recent constitutional amendment, mandating that the national government retain only 50 percent of local revenue from fishing agreements, with the remaining half divided among the States.

The Act argued that this redirection of local revenue would strain the national government's capacity to support its functions and programs that rely on its funding. Hence, it proposed an increase in the national government's share of Compact funds, rising from zero to 10 percent.

However, this development followed a crucial Chief Executive Council & Presiding Officers (CEC + PO) convening in Yap in early September. That meeting convened key stakeholders,

including President Simina, to deliberate and reach a consensus on a distribution formula for Compact funds. Ultimately, they agreed upon the Arngel Formula, named after the concluding village where the agreement was reached, which allocates eight percent to the national government.

President Simina vetoed Act 23-19, underlining the significance of adhering to the Arngel formula to maintain national unity. His veto was transmitted to Congress on September 28th, along with an expression of gratitude for the generosity and support shown by FSM states during this critical period.

Following the President's veto, Congress opted to override it on September 30th. The Committee on Ways and Means

maintained that the President's decision was rooted in policy rather than a legal or constitutional issue. It disagreed with the policy decision and recommended the veto override.

On October 3rd, the Act was re-transmitted to the President, notifying him that it had been re-passed in Congress on September 30th, thus becoming law.

The Simina-Palik administration intends to reopen discussions with Congress to find a resolution that honors the Arngel Formula and addresses the ongoing debate regarding Compact fund distribution.

Seeking stability: FSM and Pohnpei State Leaders discuss possible post-Compact financial provision strategies

Pohnpei State Public information

September 24, 2023

Palikir, Pohnpei— Governor Oliver paid a visit to FSM Vice President Palik at the Office of the President for a conversation aimed at addressing the impending fiscal year-end and the uncertain status of the newly amended Compact of Free Association with the United States. The meeting underscored the vital importance of continued cooperation and collaboration between the State and National Governments, recognizing the Compact's enduring role as a cornerstone of support for the people of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

The Compact of Free Association has long been instrumental in providing critical resources and opportunities to the people of FSM. With the U.S. Congress yet to ratify the newly amended Compact, the discussions between Governor Oliver and Vice President Palik took center stage, focusing on identifying viable alternatives to safeguard the well-

being and prosperity of the FSM citizens.

An important note from September 27, 2023 confirmed that Pohnpei State Government had received approval for an extension of sector grant funds for Fiscal Year 2023. These funds remain available and are ready to be utilized through December 31, 2023, as communicated by the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) through the FSM Compact Management Office.

During the meeting, Governor Oliver expressed his gratitude to Vice President Palik and the National Government for their indispensable role and assistance to the State Governments. Notably, Governor Oliver extended congratulations to Rose Nakanaga, the newly confirmed Secretary of the Department of Finance and Administration, who attended the meeting in her first official capacity as Secretary. The Governor also acknowledged and thanked Assistant Secretary Sohs John, Compact Management Unit Administrator Kemsy Sigrah, and

Special Assistant to the Vice President, Ari Skilling, for their unwavering support and assistance at the Chief Executive Council in Yap earlier this month.

Other key officials were also present including Attorney General Belsipa Mikel-Isom, Director of the Department of Treasury and Administration, Christina Elnei, Budget Officer Stacy Santos Nanpei, and Financial Advisor Kelly Keller. Assistant Attorney General Nixon Alten from the FSM Department of Justice was also in attendance.

As the fiscal year-end rapidly approaches and the ratification of the third amended Compact remains pending, the discussions between Governor Oliver and Vice President Palik serve as a testament to the commitment of FSM leaders in seeking alternative solutions to ensure the continued welfare and prosperity of the FSM people. These



critical talks underscore the resilience and determination of the nation in navigating challenging times and securing a bright future for all.

UNICEF and U.S. Coast Guard deliver educational supplies to remote FSM schools

US Embassy to the FSM

September 28

Pohnpei-- In a collaborative effort to enhance education opportunities and strengthen maritime security in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), UNICEF and the United States Coast Guard's Fast Response Cutter Oliver Henry have teamed up to deliver vital supplies to remote schools in Chuuk and Yap States.

The delivered supplies encompass 39 Schools-in-a-Box, 31 Early Childhood Development kits, and 2 Recreation Kits. These resources are designed to ensure that children in these remote regions can continue to learn and play, even in emergency situations. The initiative underscores the commitment of both organizations to support the well-being and education of FSM's young learners.

During this joint mission, Ambassador Johnson and newly arrived Foreign Service Officer Amy Gradin had the opportunity to tour the Fast Response Cutter Oliver

Henry. They gained valuable insights into the crucial roles the Coast Guard fulfills, including Search and Rescue operations and the deterrence of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in FSM territorial waters and the broader regional context.

The delivery of educational supplies to remote schools aligns with UNICEF's mission to ensure access to quality education for children, regardless of their geographical location or the challenges they may face. These resources will contribute to the resilience and preparedness of schools in Chuuk and Yap States, enabling continued learning and recreation even in adverse circumstances.

In addition to supporting education, the mission also underscores the vital role the U.S. Coast Guard plays in safeguarding maritime security in FSM and the surrounding region. Their efforts in Search and Rescue and IUU Fishing deterrence contribute to maintaining the safety and sustainability of the ocean's resources, which are crucial for the livelihoods and well-being of FSM's coastal communities.

The collaboration between UNICEF and the U.S. Coast Guard exemplifies the commitment of international partners to work together in addressing pressing challenges and promoting the welfare of FSM's people, especially its children. As these essential supplies reach remote schools, they symbolize hope, resilience, and the potential for a brighter future for FSM's young generation.

(Photos by Robin Mae Magangat, WASH Knowledge Management Consultant, UNICEF Pacific and U.S. Embassy Kolonia)



Pacific health leaders commit to action to tackle emerging and persistent challenges

WHO

22 September 2023

Nuku'alofa, Tonga – Health leaders from 18 Pacific island countries and areas (PICs) convened in the Tongan capital of Nuku'alofa this week for the Fifteenth Pacific Health Ministers Meeting (15th PHMM). During the meeting, held from 20 to 22 September, health leaders committed to 26 coordinated actions to tackle priority health issues: human resources for health, health information systems and digital health, health system resilience, and obesity among children and young people. The outcomes of the meeting also included 20 requested actions from development partners.

“The spirit of camaraderie, collaboration and determination I have witnessed over the past three days has been admirable and it's clear that this group of ministers cares deeply about the health and well-being of their peoples,” said Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, Acting Regional Director for the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific. “The set of commitments they established over the past three days will now drive collective action to deliver better health for people across these island nations.”

The agenda items for the 15th PHMM explored both emerging and long-standing health issues in the Pacific. The training and retention of sufficient numbers of health workers remain a challenge, with shortages being exacerbated by increasing out-migration overseas. Rates of obesity and overweight continue to rise in the Pacific, with PICs making up the top 10 countries with the highest prevalence of overweight among children and young people, with an average of around six in 10 children and young people who are overweight or obese. While the Pacific may have emerged from the worst days of the COVID-19 pandemic, they must be ready to face other pandemics, disease outbreaks and disasters in the future, including those related to climate change. At the same time, the pandemic highlighted opportunities to harness health information and digital health, such as telemedicine and electronic medical records, to arm health workers with better data to inform decision-

making and strengthen the delivery of health services, especially for those living on remote islands.

“Pacific nations have made headway in tackling some of these pressing challenges, but there is still a lot more to do. There will be a lot of bumps in the road towards realizing the Healthy Islands vision, but we must face the challenges head-on, taking advantage of the world's increased understanding of the importance of health and its pivotal role in the functioning of economies and societies, while also drawing valuable lessons from the wisdom and experiences of the Pacific to forge a healthier future for all,” said Dr Jakab.

The Healthy Islands vision has been serving as a unifying theme for health protection and health promotion in the Pacific ever since it was established at the first Pacific Health Ministers Meeting in 1995. Since then, ministers have been meeting every two years to discuss and find solutions for health issues in the Pacific. It was decided that Tonga would host the 15th PHMM during the 14th PHMM hosted virtually by Tuvalu in 2022. Samoa was confirmed this week as the host of the next PHMM in 2025.

This year's PHMM brought together ministers and senior delegates from Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. They were joined by delegations from Australia, Japan and New Zealand, as well as representatives from SPC, WHO, and other United Nations agencies and development partners in the Pacific.

“We have shared insights, deliberated and charted a path forward – guided by a foundational truth that Pacific peoples' health matters,” said Dr Jakab in her closing remarks addressing the ministers. “By working together, we can implement the decisions and recommendations from this meeting. As always, WHO stands side by side with our Pacific island countries and areas, ready to support your efforts to achieve health for all.”

Pohnpei State Department of Education Join Hands with UNICEF and various agencies to celebrate Global Handwashing Day 2023

Pohnpei Department of Education

On October 6, 2023, over 200 people from various offices, departments and 13 schools (Rohi Elementary School, Sokehs Powe Elementary School, Seinwar Elementary School, Pohnlangas Elementary School, Sapwalap Elementary School, Saladak Elementary School, Pohnpei Catholic School, Awak Elementary School, Ohmine Public Elementary School, Nett Elementary School, Our Lady of Mercy Catholic High School, Kolonia Elementary School, and Calvary Christian Academy), joined the Pohnpei State Department of Education and UNICEF to celebrate Global Handwashing Day with the theme “Clean hands are within reach.” The event was attended by representatives from the Japanese, Australian, US and Chinese Embassies, as well as different UN agencies.

During his welcoming remarks, the Director of Pohnpei State Department of Education, Mr. Stanley Etse, expressed his gratitude for the establishment of the WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) program in schools and emphasized the immense value of children learning proper hygiene practices, stating that it is not just about cleanliness, but also about fostering healthier lives for the students.

The event was marked by two activities and a Question & Answer session. The first activity was a school presentation on the steps of handwashing, conducted by WASH Schools. This activity aimed to educate students about the importance of proper hand hygiene and its role in preventing

See continuation on next page



...UNICEF

Continued from previous page

diseases. The second activity was another school presentation which focused on First Aid Demonstrations. This was led by the Micronesian Red Cross Society, providing students with valuable knowledge on how to respond to emergencies and administer basic first aid.

The third and final activity was a Question & Answer session conducted by WASH Clubs. This interactive session provided an opportunity for WASH Club Students to engage in a meaningful dialogue with representatives from the Embassies and UN agencies. The discussion revolved around pressing issues related to climate change and its impact on water, sanitation, and hygiene. The exchange of ideas also fostered a sense of global solidarity among the participants, reinforcing the notion that addressing climate change is a shared responsibility.

In a significant step towards bolstering health and hygiene education, UNICEF handed over first aid kits to the Pohnpei Department of Education. These kits, equipped with essential medical supplies, are intended to enhance schools' capacity to respond promptly and effectively to health emergencies.

Towards the end of the event, the Government of Japan, in partnership with UNICEF, also handed over the first batch of hygiene kits to the Department of Education. These kits, containing basic hygiene items, are part of a broader initiative to instill good hygiene practices among students and reduce the spread of diseases.

Ms. Cynthia Saimon, from the National Department of Education's Early Childhood Special Education, delivered her closing remarks for Global Handwashing Day with a strong message of unity and solidarity with everyone involved in this initiative.

The event concluded on a high note with WASH game booths prepared by the US Embassy, Australian Embassy, WHO, UNDP and UNICEF. These booths were not just about fun and games; they were designed to be interactive and educational, providing children with a unique opportunity to learn about health and hygiene in an engaging way.

Opinion Editorial

Open your eyes to the world. Micronesia can explore bright future.

In this beautiful country I met kind, smart, and hardworking officials, citizens, and schoolkids. State Governors told me, "From our grand-grand-grandparents, we have developed special friendship and collaboration with Japan. Thank you."

Both in Micronesia and Japan we respect our parents, elders, and ancestors. With super-modern and scientific mindset, we Japanese still lower down our heads to traditional values.

A traditional leader in Pohnpei told me, "We don't have industry or employment here. Young boys and girls go to the US."

Officials said, "Micronesia was a sustainable economy in Japanese period. We had a lot of rice field and several manufacturing industries. Hardworking with Japanese friends, we produced what we eat and use. And beyond that we even exported. But after dozens of years we have to import almost everything, even daily foods."

Retired senior officials complained, "Youngsters don't know the basic history as well as national anthem of the FSM, although they learn about the fifty states of the US in elementary school." I nodded and replied, "The US did not ask you to teach about the US prior to the FSM. The school curriculum is in your hands. You can change that."

One of my American friends said, "I met a high school student who did not know Germany." This is also shocking for me. I believe young students and officials of the FSM should learn from the struggles and success of Ghana, Kenya, Vietnam, Bangladesh, or other rapid-growing countries. How have they overcome their poverty? The key was not inviting money or big infrastructure from foreign countries. They made huge efforts to build up their human capacity for education, industry, and health. The



young people there had strong motivation to learn and work, based on their national identity and insatiable desire to get better. They stood up on their own feet.



Not to give them fish, but to teach them how to catch fish. This has been a motto of Japan when helping other countries. It may take time, but that will help them to stand up on their feet. We had numerous infrastructure cooperations, but human capacity building can be more crucial key. We Japanese, are honored to have made some contributions to those success stories.

Opening your eyes to the world and having basic knowledge of your country will be a key for the FSM people to explore their bright future.

Some of you may not have accurate knowledge about why Japanese were here until 1945. This is an important part of your modern history. Pursuant to the Mandate of the League of Nations, Japan started administration in the region in 1920. "It was just like US did administration after World WarII, pursuant to Trusteeship of the United Nations." A former Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the FSM said to me.

Do you know about the international agreement between the US and Japan in 1969? In this basic framework (Micronesian Agreement), you can find that the US administration after WWII is parallel to Japan's administration after WWI, just like the FSM official said.

Eighty years ago, in Peleliu island of Palau, the islanders worked together with Japanese and sang Japanese songs. Some of them wanted to fight for Japan, but Japan forced all people there to evacuate. First, they thought that was discrimination over the islanders, but they found Japan actually put Palauans' survival before the Japanese. Japan anticipated heavy attacks from the US and actually ten thousand Japanese were killed on the island in the autumn of 1944. It is said Palauan

thanked Japan, not only for school education and industrial development but for those considerations.

Japan is not a trumpet-blowing or self-praised country. We know the presence of Japan at that time invited the bombings from the US. Several months before Peleliu, the US bombed Ponape, Truk, and Yap of Micronesia but Japan did not anticipate or was not prepared for it. It was impossible to order the people to evacuate. I'm personally terribly sorry for those who suffered from the bombings which destroyed the towns.

Japan and the US officially expressed their common sympathy in the Micronesia Agreement for the suffering caused by the hostilities of WWII. The two countries made the same amount of ex gratia contributions to the welfare of the people in the region. And now the two countries closely cooperate for prosperity and peace, and to protect national sovereignty in many countries.

Once I memorized the FSM's national anthem and sang it in an event, a friend of mine said, "Ambassador, it's nice. But young people don't know the song." It is good to respect the traditional culture of the four states and sing the state anthems. And the FSM will need additional effort to build-up its national unity and pride.

Open your eyes to the world and to your own country, and you will find your challenges to tackle. You will have spirit to get better by working together. You have hope to reach another promised land.

(These are my personal views and may not represent the Japanese government.)

Hisashi Michigami
Ambassador of Japan to the FSM

UOG and University of Hawai'i Sea Grant partner to expand Green Growth Initiative

University of Guam

The University of Guam recently announced the expansion of the Green Growth Initiative across the Western Pacific. A \$1.4 million grant from the U.S. Department of State via the NOAA National Sea Grant College Program will strengthen the partnership between the UOG Center for Island Sustainability and Sea Grant and the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program.

UOG made the announcement on September 12, during the National Sea Grant Association meeting at the Hyatt Regency Guam. This marked the first time that Guam hosted the biannual meeting, bringing together over 70 directors and representatives from nearly all the 34 Sea Grant programs nationwide.

The new grant will support efforts to expand the scope of Local2030 Islands Network and UOG's Guam Green Growth Initiative to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

During the press conference, Austin Shelton, Director of the UOG Center for Island Sustainability and Sea Grant, emphasized the potential impact of this collaboration, stating, "This seed funding will enable our island neighbors to hire their own Green Growth coordinators. We aspire to collectively strengthen our capacity across Micronesia and the Pacific to advance sustainable development."

"Our island neighbors are at the forefront of sustainability, and this partnership offers an exciting opportunity to expand capacity and knowledge exchange throughout the Pacific," Shelton added.

Randall V. Wiegand, Vice President of Administration and Finance/Chief Business Officer at UOG, acknowledged the transformative potential of the collaboration. "This partnership expands the ways we, as a region, can support each other in advancing the green economy and addressing climate change," he said.

Galvin S. Deleon Guerrero, President of the Northern Marianas College and one of the program partners, said partnerships

like these "are essential to our collective efforts to improve the world."

"Our aspirations are as expansive as the Pacific our ancestors traversed, and as profound as the Marianas Trench," Deleon Guerrero added.

Darren Lerner, President of the Sea Grant Association and Director of the UH Sea Grant College Program, commended the long-standing partnership between the two universities. He praised UOG for its commitment to excellence, emphasizing the strength derived from the dedication of every program to this shared goal.

Jonathan Pennock, Director of the National Sea Grant College Program, also recognized the impressive growth of the UOG Center for Island Sustainability and Sea Grant program in a relatively short period of time. He emphasized its strong connection to the community and praised the program for effectively carrying forward the mission of Sea Grant.

In 2022, UOG achieved Sea Grant Institutional Status following a unanimous recommendation from the National Sea Grant Advisory Board and official designation from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) senior leadership.

The National Sea Grant College Program is a collaborative effort between universities and NOAA. It is dedicated to enhancing the practical utilization and conservation of coastal and marine resources, with a vision of fostering a sustainable economy and environment. The Sea Grant network comprises more than 3,000 scientists, engineers, public outreach experts, educators, and students.



Jonathan Pennock, PhD, Director of the National Sea Grant College Program, commends the University of Guam Sea Grant Program for its growth since achieving institutional status in 2022

Pacific Gender Statistics Dashboard to enhance availability of gender statistics and promote equality

6 October 2023

Noumea, New Caledonia

The Pacific Community (SPC) is launching the Pacific Gender Statistics Dashboard, a tool offering a comprehensive overview of gender-related indicators and metrics in the region. The Dashboard is accessible here:

Gender Dashboard - Pacific Data Hub.

Peter Ellis, Director of SPC's Statistics for Development Division, noted: "This is a platform developed to disseminate gender statistics that can empower policymakers, researchers, and other gender statistics users with valuable insights into gender dynamics in the Pacific."

"The dashboard offers a holistic view of gender dynamics by consolidating data from member countries in the Pacific," he added.

The Pacific Gender Statistics Dashboard organises data into five thematic areas—Population Demographics, Economic Participation, Education, Health, and Safety. Thematic areas will be added as more data becomes available. The Dashboard includes statistics on labour market participation between men and women, education enrolment and completion rates of girls and boys, access to health indicators, and gender-based violence.

The data is sourced from Pacific Household Surveys that are currently available in the Pacific Data Hub. These include official SPC member country surveys, such as Household Income and Expenditure Surveys, Labour Force Surveys, and Censuses.

Mr Ellis stated: "Our long-term goal is to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date resources for gender statistics in the Pacific region, working closely with member countries that are the custodians of the Dashboard."



The Pacific Gender Statistics Dashboard is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through PROJECT Governance and the Governments of Australia and New Zealand.

Ms. Zema Semunegus, Mission Director for USAID/Pacific Islands, applauded the efforts of SPC in developing such a platform for the Pacific Region. She noted: "The dashboard offers vital information that can serve to bolster the ability of Pacific Island Countries to adequately develop evidence-based policies and enact targeted measures to strengthen democratic governance and uphold rights-based development to address inequality, increase empowerment, and reduce gender-based violence."

About PROJECT Governance: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Pacific Community (SPC) have partnered to implement the Promoting Just, Engaged, Civic-minded and Transparent Governance program (PROJECT Governance). PROJECT Governance aims to empower the voices of women, youth, and other marginalised groups and strives to strengthen democratic governance, foster consensus, promote inclusion in local communities, build understanding, and inspire participation in the democratic process. It is implemented in 12 Pacific Island Countries (PICs): The Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Nauru, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.