

National Geographic vessels with different purposes “Resolution” and “Argo” call on Pohnpei’s port



By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

October 24, 2023

Pohnpei—On Sunday, October 22, luxury cruise ship, the “Resolution,”

2023, two separate vessels owned or operated by the National Geographic Society arrived at Pohnpei’s port on two entirely separate missions. The massive

docked first. It marked the first international cruise ship port call since before the FSM closed its borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Passengers aboard that vessel had each paid upwards

of \$26,000 for an all-expenses-covered expeditionary adventure cruise billed as a “Voyage Across the Remote Pacific.”

[click here for continuation](#)

President Simina meets with President Marcos in Manila

Labor ban lifted

FSM Information Services

October 13, 2023

Manila, Philippines—On Friday October 13th, H.E. President Wesley W. Simina met H.E. Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr., President of the Philippines at the Malacañang Palace in Manila.

At the outset of the meeting, President Simina raised the matter of the labor deployment ban that has prohibited citizens of the Philippines to work in the FSM since 2018, noting the crippling effect that it has had on the business sector and the FSM’s workforce since its implementation.

The two governments however have been working together to resolve the issue in recent years, and today, President Marcos Jr. announced to President Simina that he is “happy to announce to you and the people of Micronesia that we are lifting that ban.”, adding that the incident that

provoked the labor ban was an “isolated incident, and that’s why we feel confident that it is time to lift the ban to allow our people to go to Micronesia to work, should they choose.”

President Simina conveyed his sincerest appreciation on behalf of the government and people of the FSM, for this much welcome outcome, and commended all involved who worked towards this positive resolution.

President Simina and President Marcos Jr. also discussed an array of issues of mutual importance, including further continuing the spirit of cooperation through the FSM’s



support of the Philippines’ candidature for the United Nations Security Council as well as its candidate for the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director of the Western Pacific post.

The meeting ended on a high note with both governments expressing sentiments of looking forward to further positive cooperation.

Promoting Sustainable Tourism through Inclusive Consultation: FSM's NDC Tourism Action Plan Takes Shape

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

October 19, 2023

Yap—In a resounding call for inclusivity and collaboration, Sagaitu Konusi, the Pacific Regional NDC Hub Mitigation Advisor, emphasized the critical role of inclusive consultation in the formulation of effective policies. Konusi's words came to light during a series of workshops with tourism stakeholders in Yap, as part of the process to develop the Federated States of Micronesia's (FSM) National Determined Contributions (NDC) Tourism Action Plan (TAP).

The development of the FSM NDC Tourism Action Plan marks a significant milestone in the country's commitment to mitigating climate change and promoting sustainable tourism practices. This plan will establish a set of prioritized objectives and actions aimed at reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the tourism sector, all while ensuring the sector's growth remains effective, efficient, and sustainable.

Konusi, who is spearheading the consultations, reiterated the importance of engaging a diverse spectrum of stakeholders from across the tourism sector, including government, private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, and local communities. She stressed that an inclusive, integrated, and bottom-up approach is essential for the development of this vital document.

"Inclusive consultation is key in the formulation of effective policies that reflect the reality of things on the ground. Government, private sector, NGOs, civil society, and local communities all play a role in effective policymaking, and this is reflected in our approach to the formulation of the FSM NDC Tourism Action Plan," said Konusi.

The FSM NDC Tourism Action Plan holds significance not only for the tourism sector but also for the broader FSM economy. It will lay down a clear pathway towards the decarbonization of the tourism sector, aligning with global efforts to combat climate



change.

Key stakeholders from various sectors are actively participating in these consultations, ensuring that their valuable insights and perspectives are integrated into the plan. This collaborative effort underscores FSM's commitment to addressing the urgent challenges of climate change while fostering sustainable tourism practices.

The FSM NDC Tourism Action Plan is set to become a shining example of how diverse stakeholders can come together to shape policies that not only reduce emissions but also support economic growth and sustainability. The FSM government remains dedicated to working hand in hand with its partners to make the tourism sector a model of sustainability in the Pacific region.



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Bill Jaynes
Managing Editor

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Engaging Communities in Sustainable Tourism: FSM's Innovative Approach to Climate Action

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

October 19, 2023

Kosrae—The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is taking bold steps to combat climate change and promote sustainable tourism with its pioneering NDC (Nationally Determined Contributions) Tourism Action Plan with support from GIZ Climate Change Advisor, Ron Simpson. Over the past two weeks, FSM has engaged in a series of consultations that have not only united local communities but also paved the way for groundbreaking climate action strategies.

In the heart of the Pacific, the FSM government, in collaboration with Tourism Stakeholders from Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae, has embraced the traditional concept of "talanoa," known locally as "sham-sham." This approach encourages open dialogue and collaboration, fostering a sense of community and ownership in addressing climate change.

Mr. Tulensa Palik, Governor of the State of Kosrae, emphasizes the importance of involving local communities in national decision-making processes. "A good sham-sham (talanoa) is key," he states. "The issues at the global level need to be contextualized and addressed at a local level, in a way that is realistic and relevant to our Pacific Islands context."

FSM's innovative approach recognizes the unique challenges, resources, and culture of each island, underscoring the importance of localized solutions. While global climate targets are essential, they must be adapted to suit the realities of island nations.

These discussions serve as a bridge between global climate goals and the practicality of FSM's islands. As climate change intensifies, FSM's insights can offer valuable lessons for the world, showcasing the power of community involvement in climate action.

The two-week consultations will culminate in a validation workshop in Pohnpei, where key outcomes will



be presented. These outcomes will form the foundation of FSM's NDC Tourism Action Plan, setting clear and quantifiable targets to meet their NDC commitments.

FSM's commitment to sustainability is poised to make a lasting impact, not only for its islands but also as an inspiration to other nations grappling with climate change challenges.

As FSM concludes these insightful consultations, we extend our best wishes

for success in their mission to protect their natural wonders. FSM's leadership in sustainable tourism and climate resilience sets a powerful example for the world.

By embracing local wisdom and involving communities in climate decisions, FSM is demonstrating that positive change is possible. Together, we can work towards a greener, more sustainable future for the Pacific and the entire global community.

Governor Oliver explores salvage options for Micro Glory

Pohnpei State Public Information

October 17, 2023

Pohnpei—Governor Oliver received a team of U.S. Navy Divers and Explosive Ordnance Disposal experts to discuss salvage options for the Micro Glory. The U.S. Navy personnel were accompanied by U.S. Embassy Acting Defense Attache, Mr. Kyle Papish.

The Micro Glory, a passenger and cargo vessel, has been anchored at Dekehtik for several years now. The vessel is no longer operational and continues to deteriorate at the Dekehtik shore, drawing concern from the public.

The U.S. Navy Salvage team in cooperation and collaboration with Pohnpei Port Authority, Pohnpei Environmental Protection Agency; Pohnpei State Office of Transportation and Infrastructure; FSM Department of Transportation, Communication and Infrastructure; and the Department of Public Safety will work together to come up with the safest, cost-effective and environment friendly options to dispose of the Micro Glory.



One option that is being considered is to tow the Micro Glory from its present location and sink the vessel in a designated area that has been cleared by all parties involved. Governor Oliver conveyed his support for the safe removal of Micro Glory from its present location. He also expressed his appreciation to the U.S. Embassy for their continuing support and enduring friendship with the State of Pohnpei.

Governor Oliver will be receiving recommendations from all the parties involved for the next step to safely remove the Micro Glory from the Dekehtik shoreline, and these will be shared when available.

The U.S. Navy Salvage team that visited Governor Oliver consisted of Ensign Christopher Greene, Navy Diver Senior Chief Paul Doughtie, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Chief Blake Fletcher and Navy Diver First Class Blake Goins.

FSM delegation joins inaugural Archipelagic and Island States Forum in Bali

FSM Information Services

October 11, 2023

Bali, Indonesia—From October 10 to 11, 2023, a delegation from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), led by President Wesley W. Simina, took part in the inaugural Archipelagic and Island States (AIS) Forum, co-hosted by the Republic of Indonesia and the United Nations Development Program in Bali, Indonesia.

The AIS Forum serves as a platform for 51 archipelagic and island states worldwide to engage in discussions about sustainable development, with a particular focus on four key areas: Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, Blue Economy, Marine Plastic Debris, and Good Maritime Governance. The summit revolved around the theme of "Fostering Collaboration, Enabling Innovation, for our Ocean and Our Future" and included both a ministerial-level meeting, attended by FSM Secretary Andrew Yatilman, and a high-level meeting led by President Simina.

President Simina began the discussions by highlighting various regional and

national initiatives that align with the forum's core pillars. These include the Micronesia Challenge, Blue Prosperity Micronesia, efforts to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, FSM's legislation to prohibit the import of single-use plastics, and the recent signing of the BBNJ (Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction) Agreement, with the FSM as its inaugural signatory.

Following the AIS high-level meeting, President Simina and the FSM delegation engaged in a bilateral meeting with President Joko Widodo of Indonesia. The discussions encompassed topics of mutual interest, such as air transportation connectivity, agriculture and aquaculture, and ongoing collaboration concerning the continental shelf claims over the Eurapik Rise area.

The forum concluded on a positive note with the Leaders Declaration on the Solidarity of the Archipelagic and Island States. This declaration signifies the commitment of its members to enhance cooperation in addressing shared challenges, guided by principles of solidarity, equality, and inclusiveness.



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...Nat Geo

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The much smaller vessel, the “Argo,” had no paying passengers aboard and was, in fact, paid for its journey to research the FSM’s marine environment.

The “Resolution,” a vessel fully equipped for polar expeditions, began its journey in Palau. Before the Pohnpei port call, it made port calls in Guam and Chuuk. It departed for Kiribati on the evening of the same day it arrived. While in Pohnpei, approximately 30 passengers



Zealand, Palmerston Island, Cook Islands, Ra’iatea, Taha’a, French Polynesia, and Papeete, Tahiti, which serves as the final port for the cruise.

The “Resolution” expeditionary cruise carries a diverse team of experts, ranging from naturalists to regional specialists, there to share their knowledge and insights into the wildlife, landscape, and local culture.



chose to participate in a tour of Nan Madol, which was offered after lunch, followed by snorkeling excursions. Staff members from the Pohnpei Visitor’s Center and some government officials were offered a tour of the vessel’s luxurious facilities. Passengers also had the option to participate in an afternoon snorkeling outing before departure.

From Pohnpei, the “Resolution” will make stops in Kiribati, Tokelau, New



Dr. Nicole Yamase

The “Argo” has a purpose in the raw National Geographic style of research and expedition. While the “Resolution” boasts amenities like bars, restaurants, spas, infinity pools, observation decks, and luxurious rooms for the guests, the “Argo’s” deck is almost entirely covered with equipment suited to its special scientific purposes. The “passengers” aboard all possess expertise in one field or another related to the vessel’s research purposes. One of those experts is Pohnpei’s famous marine scientist, “Dr. Nicole Yamase,” who was the first Micronesian to travel to the floor of the deepest ocean point ever reached—the Marianas Trench.

While in port, “Argo’s” staff members conducted six tours by invitation that fully explained the research being conducted, the equipment used, and the overall philosophy. Meanwhile, ground teams of photographers and videographers have been in Pohnpei for several days, capturing some of Pohnpei’s essence on film.

During the tours, photography and videography experts aboard explained the roles and functions of specialized camera gear, ranging from simple

GoPro camera rigs made for limited-depth research of the health of coral populations, reef and migratory fish stocks, to more sophisticated video rigs designed to sit on the ocean floor at depths of up to 2000 meters.

While the former are tethered to buoys and stay underwater for only two hours each while recording video, the latter are untethered and are equipped with GPS and other tracking electronics. Each of the cameras carries a “bait box” to attract fish for recording.

Probably the most sophisticated equipment on board the vessel is a three-person submarine. The submarine, looking like

some sort of Jules Verne sci-fi device, can safely reach depths of 400 meters. The operator and passengers sit inside a sphere of three-and-a-half-inch-thick acrylic that offers a nearly complete 360-degree view. The materials of the sphere have a density similar to that of the ocean, providing a transparent view. “Sometimes

you feel like you need to touch the ‘glass’ to be sure it’s still there,” said the sub’s operator, who also noted that the cabin is pressurized so that occupants feel just as comfortable at depth as they would be at the surface.

Today, some lucky Pohnpeians, including Governor Reed Oliver, are getting the laymen’s once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to “take a ride in the submarine,” a treat that several envious



onlookers said they would give their left arm to experience.

Every day that the “Argo” conducts marine research in the FSM, their



cameras capture many hours of video. Cameras roll the entire time they are underwater, whether operated remotely or by a human diver. The media specialist said that by the time they finish their journey in Yap, the data captured will likely occupy 40 terabytes of disk space, plus backups. She backs up everything.

The footage will be used for multiple purposes, including the production of a documentary series that will likely take as long as a year and a half for video editors at National Geographic headquarters in Washington, D.C. to edit. More importantly, marine



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Farewell Reception Honors Japanese Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

October 10, 2023

Pohnpei—This evening, the Embassy of Japan to the FSM hosted a farewell reception to bid farewell to Japan’s Ambassador, Hisashi Michigami, and also to Deputy Chief of Mission, Kendaro Mizuuchi. Members of the Japanese community in Pohnpei, the diplomatic corps, government leaders, including Vice President Aren Palik, and other members of the community, joined the Embassy staff in saying farewell after nearly two years of service in the FSM.

At Japanese receptions, DCM Mizuuchi had traditionally served as the Master of Ceremonies. This evening, he spoke in his own voice about his experiences in the FSM. He spoke of the challenges of reaching his post during the FSM COVID-19 border shutdown. He said that when he finally was able to get a flight to Pohnpei to continue his quarantine and to take up his post at the Japanese Embassy, former Vice President Yosiwo George was on his flight. "Regrettably, he passed away soon after, but he was the very first Micronesian who spoke to me, and it is my great honor to be the last Japanese diplomat welcomed by His Excellency Yosiwo George," he said.

Mr. Mizuuchi is swapping duty stations with Mr. Hamano, who was due to arrive in Pohnpei from Cairo, Egypt, in time for the evening's reception but was, at the time, stuck in Chuuk due to a flight cancellation.

Ambassador Hisashi took to the podium for his final words.

"It's been 22 months, less than two years since I came here," he said. "It's a relatively short time in this beautiful country, but this is clearly one of the, not one, maybe the biggest highlight of my 40 years of a career as a diplomat. So that is thanks to your kindness, cooperation, and I've been very lucky to meet you all here. I've been lucky to meet kind, smart, hard-working people of this country, from political leaders, government officials, citizens, to school kids."

He kept his remarks brief, saying that his personal feelings were expressed in his opinion editorial article that had been published in the Kaselehlie Press on that day. "The title (of the article) is very simple: Open your eyes to the world and to your own country. The country has good hope to explore what to achieve. Another promised land.



That is the title of my personal views."

He said that, though he is now 65 years of age and old enough to retire, the Japanese government had called him into service again. He will be departing for Bulgaria within a week. His replacement, Mr. Kagomiya, will arrive in the FSM in

three weeks.

FSM's President Simina was on duty travel at the time of the reception. Vice President Palik took his place at the podium to represent the FSM. "Your commitment and devotion to come to the FSM further signify the assurance of your desire to work closely with us and to fulfill the mutual interest between our two countries," Vice President Palik said. "So, on behalf of all of us, especially those who are friends and families that gathered tonight, I wish to thank you for your service, Ambassador, for your leadership at the Embassy and for working very closely with our government and our staff.

"The FSM will continue to uphold its commitment to maintaining and

promoting a free, peaceful, and open Indo-Pacific region, which we know on a bilateral basis we've been discussing between FSM and Japan in that regard, in that joint, shared commitment. On that note, I would like to, on behalf of FSM government and people, convey our utmost appreciation for the efforts and contributions Japan has made to the elevation and enhancement of our Kizuna bond, embedded in the root of our historical relations...I appreciate your personal observations on many things that you see on the island. I believe that from the diplomatic community, when you're here, you are our family, and we appreciate candid observations and recommendations that you share with us. Yours is a developed country. We're an underdeveloped third-world country, and so often we need to pay attention and learn from what you've done. And we can also mimic or do some of those things. So, I appreciate your candidness. I know some of the things we discussed are very, very important. And some of those we've already implemented, especially related to our developmental priorities."

He spoke for a time about the many special projects that the government of Japan had funded during Ambassador Hisashi's short tenure in the FSM and over the 35 years of diplomatic relations between the FSM and Japan.

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last El Niño caused significant coral bleaching, they found some pockets of coral in Sapwuahfik that seemed to be unaffected by the warm seas that occur in the North Pacific during El Niño. "We'll never 'solve' the problem of coral bleaching," he said, "but maybe we can get ahead of it a little bit."

scientists will use the footage to count every single fish that appears and to take measurements of the wildlife.

Though the "Argo" can take samples, their research in the FSM is entirely observational.

The "Argo" is also studying the effects of climate change and recurring weather phenomena, such as El Niño, on coral health. A coral expert said that while the



Safety is paramount while the "Argo" crew conducts its research. The crew includes a physician, and a hyperbaric

chamber is available on board, a vital piece of safety equipment whenever s c u b a diving is involved.

The captain of the vessel said that the "Argo" could travel 4000 miles without refueling. Unlike the "Resolution," which is equipped for polar expeditions, the "Argo" is not suited for those regions. He said that it can handle near equatorial conditions within a "belt" of approximately 30 degrees north and south. The vessel is not owned by National Geographic. The captain said



that National Geographic contracted his vessel for five years. It was originally used as a live-aboard dive operation.

The "Argo" began its exploratory journey in the FSM in Kosrae. Before Pohnpei, it stopped in Sapwuahfik and Pingelap. From here, they will travel to Chuuk and Yap and their outer islands.

UNFPA Pacific Director reaffirms the agency's support to the FSM under a new 5-Year Program

UNFPA

October 18, 2023

Pohnpei--Iori Kato, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Director for the Pacific Sub-Regional Office (PRSO) and Representative in Fiji, presented his introductory letter from the UNFPA Executive Director to the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), through Hon. Secretary of Foreign Affairs Mr. Lorin S. Robert, during his recent first visit to the country. UNFPA Pacific Director reiterated the agency's commitment to accelerating its assistance to the national government and four states of FSM, throughout the course of the implementation of UNFPA's new 7th five-year Multi-Country Programme for 14 Pacific countries and territories, including FSM, for 2023-2027 (MCP7).

Following the meeting with the Foreign Secretary, UNFPA Pacific Director Kato had an audience with His Excellency the President Mr. Wesley Simina and Honourable Vice President Mr. Aren Palik on 4 October 2023 at the Office of the President in Palikir, Pohnpei. He was accompanied by Head of UNFPA Micronesia Multi-Country Office in Pohnpei, Ms. Evelyn Adolph, and UNFPA Pacific Chief of Health, Dr. Titiola Duro-Aina.

During the courtesy call, Director Kato shared that UNFPA's assistance to FSM under MCP7 will continue focusing on ending 'unmet need for family planning' with a view to reducing teenage pregnancies, including through supporting the roll-out



of Family Life Education (comprehensive sexuality education) in- and out-of-schools. These interventions will be augmented by funding support from the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to UNFPA's multi-country, multi-year family planning programme entitled the Transformative Agenda, which has newly included FSM as one of its programme countries in its Phase II that is starting this year till 2027.

Director Kato also underscored UNFPA's readiness to intensify its support to other priorities, such as eradicating preventable maternal deaths, reducing cervical cancer cases, and also towards strengthening the health sector's response to gender-based violence (GBV) and mental health and psycho-social support, at all times, including during emergencies such as climate-crisis and health pandemics. UNFPA will also continue its technical support to FSM

in enriching the amount and quality of data related to population dynamics and 'demographic dividend' including for the follow-up to the Population Census, by closely working with other relevant UN agencies such as UNICEF.

His Excellency President Simina told the UNFPA Pacific Director that the FSM government is appreciative of UNFPA Pacific's past support to the country. The President and Honourable Vice President Palik both welcomed UNFPA's continued support in the years to come under the new Programme, especially for empowerment of adolescents and youth, given the increasing mobility of young people and working-age population. They agreed on the need for further strengthening the country's health systems for sexual, reproductive and maternal health services, particularly in remote outer islands, especially to reduce teen pregnancy, maternal deaths, and

cervical cancer. They also expressed interest in the continued partnership between FSM and UNFPA in strengthening community resilience against disasters and health pandemics.

During his first stay in Pohnpei from 2-6 October, UNFPA Pacific Director Kato also undertook consultations with Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management, Mr. Andrew Yatilman, Honourable Secretary of Resources and Development, Ms Elina P. Akinaga, Honourable Acting Secretary of Health and Social Affairs, Mr. Moses Pretrick, Honourable Acting Secretary of Education, Mr Wayne Mendiola, and other officials.

Director Kato also formally handed over IT equipment and furniture to the Pohnpei State Government, to make the clinic at Pohnpei Island Central School more friendly and accessible for adolescents and youth. He also visited the Kolonia Elementary School in Pohnpei, and interacted with students and teachers as to how they are benefitting from the Family Life Education that has been rolled out in the school with UNFPA assistance. He also visited Pohnpei State Hospital and consulted on potential UNFPA support especially to eliminate preventable maternal deaths, even in remotest outer islands.

UNFPA Pacific Director also visited and consulted with the resident Development Partners in FSM, including the Embassies of Australia, Japan and U.S.A.

CUYA and IOM unite to keep Kolonia's youth active and drug-free

CUYA Press release

October 18th 2023

Pohnpei—The Central Union for Young Adults (CUYA) has received a substantial donation of sports equipment from the International Office of Migration (IOM) Micronesia country office. The Executive Director of CUYA, Mr. Bill Edward, graciously accepted this extensive assortment of sports gear, which promises to make a significant impact on the organization's sports programs.

The donated sports equipment, much needed and long-awaited, is set to play a crucial role in enhancing CUYA's commitment to fostering youth engagement through sports activities. This donation will also serve to complement the ongoing sporting initiatives of the Kolonia Town Government, marking a collaborative

effort to keep the town's young population actively involved in positive pursuits.

The partnership between IOM, CUYA, and the Kolonia Town Government underscores their shared mission to provide opportunities for the town's youth and young adults to channel their energy and enthusiasm into sports, steering them away from drugs and towards becoming productive, responsible citizens. This commitment to youth welfare is a testament to the power of community collaboration and the profound impact that well-supported sports programs can have on a community.

In a show of gratitude, Mr. Bill Edward expressed his heartfelt appreciation, saying, "We wholeheartedly thank the USA Government with its sensible programs and assistance through the USAID and IOM." This recognition



serves as a tribute to the supportive initiatives undertaken by the United States Government and organizations like the IOM.

The generous donation of sports gear not only augments the resources available to CUYA but also exemplifies the positive change that can be achieved when organizations come together with a shared vision of empowering the youth and shaping the future of our communities. As the gear finds its way into the hands of eager young athletes, the entire town of Kolonia eagerly awaits the positive transformation it is set to bring to its youth and the community as a whole.

FSM's Correy Ariote Abraham selected for prestigious Australia Awards Fellowship



By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

October 18, 2023

FSM—The highly anticipated Australia Awards Fellowships Round 19 has officially launched, heralding a promising opportunity for professionals in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). A standout participant, Mr. Correy Ariote Abraham, has earned hearty congratulations and best wishes from the Embassy for securing an #AustraliaAwards Fellowships

grant. His journey will lead him to Australia this November to partake in a focused program under the banner of "Advancing Climate, Health, and Equity Outcomes through Local Action in the Indo-Pacific," in collaboration with #SPREP (the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme).

Australia Awards Fellowships, which are now open for application, offer a unique prospect for FSM professionals. These Fellowships are

designed to enable individuals to engage in short-term courses and professional development, all hosted by Australian organizations. The program holds particular appeal for those who aspire to advance their careers, gain expertise, and contribute more effectively to their home country.

It is noteworthy that applications for these Fellowships should be channeled through an Australian organization. This requirement underscores the significance of forging connections between FSM entities and Australian partners to maximize the potential benefits of this opportunity.

Australia Awards Fellowships play a vital role in complementing Australia's ongoing bilateral aid programs and long-term scholarships. They are specifically structured to offer short-term, adaptable Fellowship placements that are laser-

focused on addressing contemporary and emerging issues in development and foreign affairs. By taking this approach, Australia reaffirms its commitment to fostering strong relationships and providing practical support to its Pacific neighbors.

For professionals in FSM who wish to explore this distinctive opportunity, the pathway begins by reaching out to their Australian counterparts. Detailed information and the application portal can be accessed at Australia Awards Fellowships Application Portal.

The availability of these Fellowships represents a significant milestone for FSM professionals, presenting them with the prospect of acquiring valuable skills and knowledge. This growth not only benefits their own development but also holds great potential to contribute positively to their nation and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

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FSM Ambassador to Fiji takes Oath of Office

FSM Information Services

October 19, 2023

Palikir, Pohnpei - The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is pleased to announce that H.E. Carson Sigrah, the newly appointed Ambassador to Fiji, has officially taken the oath of office in a ceremony held at the Office of the President today. This momentous occasion marks a significant step in strengthening diplomatic ties between the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Fiji.



Prior to this appointment, Ambassador Sigrah served as the Governor of Kosrae State. His commitment to diplomacy, nation-building, and appreciation of the unique dynamics in the Pacific region make him an exemplary representative of FSM in Fiji.

In his acceptance speech, Ambassador Sigrah

expressed his gratitude for the trust placed in him and highlighted the importance of building upon the ties that bind the FSM and Fiji. In Vice President Palik's toast, he emphasized the need for cooperation and collaboration on regional and global issues to ensure peace and prosperity for all.

The Ambassador's role will be instrumental in advancing cooperation in various fields, including economic development, trade, climate change, and regional security. As neighbors in the Pacific, the FSM and Fiji share a common commitment to sustainable development and the preservation of the region's natural resources in the face of climate change.

The Simina-Palik administration is confident that Ambassador Sigrah will excel in his new role and further cement the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two nations and with the wider Pacific region.



Federated States of Micronesia unites with FAO to celebrate World Food Day 2023

UNFAO

16 October 2023

Pohnpei—The Department of Resources and Development of the Federated States of Micronesia, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), joined hands to observe World Food Day 2023 in Pohnpei, Micronesia. The event placed significant emphasis on the critical role of efficient water management in improving the food security situation in FSM while striving for a sustainable and inclusive future for all.

The day-long commemoration began with opening remarks by Menoleen Jacob, Assistant Secretary, Division of Agriculture, Department of Resources and Development. Followed by a series of panel presentations and discussions that shed light on the initiatives undertaken by FSM in line with this year's World Food Day theme. These discussions brought to light the pivotal connection between water management and food security, highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts.

Approximately one-fifth of the world's available freshwater has been lost, and in some regions, these losses have been even more significant. Despite being considered both renewable and non-renewable, water is becoming

increasingly scarce and is anticipated to reach a critical point by 2040.

FSM, along with other Small Island Developing States, faces substantial challenges. This pertains not only to low-lying islands but also those with more varied terrain, such as Pohnpei and Kosrae. Despite abundant precipitation, runoff is occurring at a comparable rate, resulting in suboptimal replenishment of water lenses, particularly in erosion-prone areas. Saline intrusion's impact on low-lying areas and islands, exacerbated by rising sea levels, affects staple crops like taro and breadfruit, which rely on freshwater. Even on islands blessed with ample freshwater resources, community well-being suffers due to the absence of effective waste management systems and limited access to clean drinking water. FAO and various UN entities, including UNDP and UNICEF, are collaborating with the Micronesian government and other stakeholders to advance this cause in alignment with identified priorities.

Jaap Van Hierden, UN Resident Coordinator for Micronesia, emphasized during the event the significance of scientific innovation and urged the exploration of unconventional methods for cultivating



locally relevant food. He advocated for the adoption of non-traditional agricultural practices such as aeroponics, hydroponics, and aquaponics, as well as floating solutions for low-lying atoll islands affected by saltwater intrusion.

A public exhibition was also held as part of the celebration, encouraging the local community to exchange perspectives with representatives of IOM, UNICEF, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and civil society groups. FAO's exhibit was a hub of activity, offering local crop and vegetable seedlings to promote community-driven food production and encourage healthier dietary choices.

Courtesy Call: UNICEF Representative Jonathan Veitch engages with FSM Leadership

FSM Information Services

October 6, 2023

Palikir, Pohnpei—On October 6, 2023, Mr. Jonathan Veitch, the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Funds (UNICEF) Representative for the Pacific Island Countries paid a courtesy call on His Excellency Wesley W. Simina and the Honorable Aren B. Palik. The courtesy call marked his first in-person courtesy call on the new administration in his capacity as the UNICEF Representative for the Pacific Islands Countries. Mr. Veitch is a citizen of the United Kingdom and was appointed to the position of UNICEF Pacific Representative in August 2021 and is based in Suva, Fiji. As the UNICEF Representative, he oversees UNICEF’s programs and operations in Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Mashall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, including the Federated States of Micronesia.

The courtesy call began with President Simina welcoming Mr. Veitch to the nation’s capital and thanked him for making the time visit the FSM. President Simina then thank Mr. Veitch for all the grants/project assistance UNICEF has provided, particular in Health and Education sectors.

Mr. Veitch briefly outlined the work of UNICEF in the FSM, particularly under its new Multi-Country Program which aligns with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Starting with the simplest way to protect against range of diseases, the global handwashing event that was held at PICS High School that helps integrate handwashing into other existing programs like health, education and nutrition.

With UNICEF’s commitment toward supporting education in the FSM amplified with its recent selections as the Grant Agent for the Global Partnership for Education’s System



Capacity Grant, UNICEF is also supporting the NDOE in preparing the ground work for the new Education Partnership Agreement in preparation for the “repositioning indigenous knowledge and learning approaches in education delivery”, reflecting and addressing the country’s concerns around quality of learning and loss of indigenous knowledge and traditional practices.

At the end of the courtesy call, Mr. Veitch confirmed that UNICEF is trying to scale up their assistance toward nutrition by advocating for the government’s endorsement of the Nutrition Action Plan that will help the government combat the increasing rate of NCD and obesity. This policy will be shared upon completion and UNICEF is working closely with the Department of Health and Social Affairs to see it through.



Chuuk Extends Kinisou to Ambassador Johnson for inaugural island visit

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

October 19, 2023

Chuuk—The people of Chuuk extended a gracious "Kinisou" to Ambassador Johnson as she embarked on her first visit to the FSM State. The warm welcome set the tone for a productive morning as she engaged with key members of Chuuk's government.

Ambassador Johnson's itinerary included meetings with officials from the Office of the Governor, the Chuuk State Legislature, and the Attorney General's Office. These discussions were aimed at reaffirming the strong partnership between the United States and Chuuk and exploring avenues for continued collaboration.

The talks revolved around several vital areas, primarily focusing on development, climate change, and security. The United States and Chuuk share common objectives in these domains, and this visit provided an opportunity to strengthen their efforts.

Development was a key theme during the discussions, emphasizing the importance of



fostering growth and prosperity in Chuuk. The United States is committed to supporting Chuuk's development goals, and both parties sought ways to enhance this collaboration.

Climate change, a pressing concern for the region, was also on the agenda. Ambassador Johnson and Chuuk officials deliberated on strategies to address the challenges posed by climate change, emphasizing resilience and sustainability.

Security goals, another shared priority, featured prominently in the conversations. Chuuk, like many Pacific Island nations, faces unique security challenges, and the United States stands as a steadfast partner in addressing these concerns.



TUNE IN TO POHNPEI'S #1 RADIO

PARADISE RADIO

FM 89.5 V6WI

“TB+Leprosy” free Chuuk campaign screens over 12,000 people

U.S. Embassy to the FSM

October 20, 2023

Chuuk—Screening teams from Chuuk Health Service, the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC), U.S. National Tuberculosis Controllers Association, the Pacific Islands Health Officers Association and the World Health Organization completed six months of mass screening for active tuberculosis (TB), latent TB, Hansen’s disease (leprosy) and diabetes for citizens from Weno and across the Chuuk lagoon.

Funded primarily by a Compact of Free Association Health Sector Grant in the amount of \$1.08 million, Public Health Nursing teams visited and registered 15,288 people and completed screening for 12,194 persons. A total of 176 persons have been referred for treatment of active TB disease. Nearly all have started treatment already and will be cured when they finish their medicine. For most people, treatment for active TB is six months. Another 2,170 persons (18%) were found to have Latent TB. Most have started treatment

and local Community Health Outreach Workers will continue to deliver the next 11 doses.

Medical professionals gave 7,969 people medication to prevent leprosy and more than 10,000 residents completed leprosy prevention measures during this campaign.

Over 1000 individuals tested positive for diabetes. Of these, nearly 400 were newly diagnosed cases who were referred for treatment at their clinic. The TB+Leprosy Free Chuuk Teams continue to work together to complete screening across Chuuk State. TB screening will be especially effective when the entire community is evaluated! Planning is underway to provide the same screenings in the Chuuk outer islands.

The Public Health Screening Center will continue to have limited hours for Chuuk State workers and businesses who have not completed their screening. All residents are encouraged to come for screening.



In the field, TB+Leprosy Free Chuuk teams are led by Chuuk Public Health Staff. Above, Dr Fred carefully reviews a chest x-ray taken at the new health center in Kuchua.

The teams appreciate the strong support from the Chuuk State Government and the National Government of Federated States of Micronesia, and also thank the external partners at the United Nations Development Programme, Government of Japan (Grassroots Grant), Pacific Islands Health Officers Association, U.S. Department of the Interior, Hawaii TB Program, WHO, WPRO, and CDC. We will continue to work collaboratively with the goal of creating a TB and Leprosy-Free Chuuk for today and for the next generation.



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Australian Embassy joins Pohnpei in celebrating Global Handwashing Day 2023

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

October 13, 2023

Pohnpei—The Australian Embassy joined the Pohnpei Department of Education, UNICEF Pacific, other members of the Diplomatic Corps, and the local community, as they came together to celebrate the 2023 Global Handwashing Day in Pohnpei. This vibrant event carried the theme "Clean hands are within reach."

The occasion witnessed the active participation of students from various schools, each taking center stage to

present informative demonstrations that emphasized the importance of handwashing. Not only did they highlight the significance of clean hands, but they also showcased the proper techniques for effective handwashing. Remarkably, the students even demonstrated their knowledge and skills by administering first aid to injured individuals.

Global Handwashing Day is a global advocacy initiative dedicated to raising awareness and understanding of the critical role that handwashing with soap plays in preventing diseases and saving lives. It serves as a platform to

promote the adoption of this simple yet effective practice, which can have a profound impact on public health. By emphasizing the significance of handwashing, the day encourages creative approaches to instill this habit in children, making it a routine at critical moments.

The event was not solely educational; it also encompassed fun and engaging activities. Participants were excited to partake in various games, share prizes, and enjoy a host of activities with the students. It was a day of learning, interaction, and celebration, as the community came together to reinforce

the importance of maintaining good hand hygiene.

By fostering awareness and active participation in activities that promote handwashing, Pohnpei, along with the Australian Embassy and its partners, aim to instill lifelong habits that contribute to public health, well-being, and disease prevention. This annual observance stands as a testament to the collective efforts to empower individuals, especially children, to take charge of their health by embracing the simple yet powerful act of handwashing.



Pacific Trade Invest Network Independent Advisory Board commemorates key milestones

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

October 19, 2023

Auckland, New Zealand—The Pacific Trade Invest (PTI) Network Independent Advisory Board met for its fifth meeting this week in Auckland, New Zealand.

The meeting was chaired by the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Henry Puna. Key on the agenda was the Implementation plan for the 2050 Strategy, Trade and Investment opportunities for the Pacific region, and the recently endorsed PTI Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026 by the Forum Trade Ministers at its meeting earlier this month.

“Since its inception in 2021, the PTI Network Independent Advisory Board has been instrumental in providing strategic advice and guidance from a private sector perspective on emerging trade and investment opportunities,

as well as challenges confronting Pacific businesses. The Board plays a critical role in ensuring regional policy decisions affecting the private sector is not made in isolation but takes onboard the views and concerns of private sector practitioners,” said Puna.

Secretary General Puna emphasized the importance of working as a collective amidst the complexities of new and emerging challenges that come with the advancement of digital economy and technology, geopolitical maneuverings, and economic headwinds.

“The 2050 Strategy represents our collective vision for the future that we want to create for our children and grandchildren. It is a strategy that will require the support, investment, and partnership of all stakeholders – governments, private sector, development partners and non-governmental organisations, he said.

The meeting highlighted the substantial



progress made in fostering economic growth, trade, and investment opportunities for the Pacific Island nations. The board members reiterated its commitment to advancing the economic interests of the region.

The Independent Advisory Board will continue in its role, providing strategic oversight and guidance to the PIF Secretary General to ensure that the Pacific’s economic interests are at the forefront of decision-making.

Furthering collaboration with the private sector, the network welcomed

insights from the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organization (PIPSO). Their invaluable input and partnership will be pivotal in strengthening the foundation of the PTI network.

The PTI Board continues to play a pivotal role in driving initiatives that stimulate economic growth and development across the Pacific. Current PTI Network Board members are Ms. Michelle Macdonald (Samoa), Ms. Vani Nades (PNG), Mr. Fletcher Melvin (Cook Is.) and Mr. Ian Clarke (Aus.).



Pohnpei's stakeholders unite with Ambassador Johnson to tackle plastic pollution

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

October 10, 2023

Pohnpei—Today, Ambassador Johnson reiterated the unwavering commitment of the U.S. Government to tackle the pressing issue of ocean plastic pollution. In collaboration with USAID's Clean Cities Blue Ocean program, key stakeholders in Pohnpei State convened for a workshop aimed at crafting a social and behavior change communication plan.



to chart out an effective strategy that promotes responsible waste management.

The primary objective of this plan is to guide and encourage community members and institutions in practicing the 3Rs - reduce, reuse, and recycle. By fostering these practices, the ultimate goal is to significantly curtail waste leakage into waterways, thereby combating ocean plastic pollution.

The workshop, which brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, marked a significant stride toward a cleaner and healthier marine environment. The participants engaged in comprehensive discussions and brainstorming sessions

The 3Rs approach - reducing waste, reusing materials, and recycling resources - serves as the cornerstone of this initiative. It not only seeks to mitigate the environmental impact of plastic pollution but also aligns with global efforts to protect the world's oceans.

Ambassador Johnson's presence at the workshop underscored the United States' dedication to fostering sustainable practices that combat plastic pollution. The collaboration between the U.S. Government and USAID's program showcases the nation's commitment to being at the forefront of the fight against ocean plastic pollution.

By developing a social and behavior change communication plan, Pohnpei State is poised to instill lasting habits and consciousness about responsible waste management. Through community engagement, education, and practical steps, the initiative aspires to make significant strides in reducing waste leakage and safeguarding the region's waterways.

For those interested in learning more about the #CleanCitiesBlueOcean program, additional information is available at <https://urban-links.org/project/ccbo/>

Yap's betel nut trade at risk due to new tax bill, says Sablan

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press
From article in *Marianas Variety*

October 19, 2023

Saipan—In a stance against the potential implications of House Bill 23-41, Sablan Betel Nut Distributor owner, Cris M. Sablan, is gearing up to launch a petition against the proposed legislation, which seeks to tax imported betel nut and lime, as reported by the Marianas Variety.

Sablan, a wholesale distributor of betel nut, known as Pugua locally, hailing from Saipan, Guam, Yap, and Pohnpei, also imports lime, referred to as afuk in local vernacular, from Yap.

The bill in question, H.B. 23-41, authored by Representative Marissa Flores, has successfully passed through the House of Representatives and currently awaits Senate deliberation.

Should it be enacted, H.B. 23-41 would

impose an excise tax of \$5 per pound on imported betel nut, or a fractional equivalent, along with a charge of 5 cents per ounce, or a fractional equivalent, on imported lime mix.

Sablan has expressed his concerns regarding the bill, emphasizing its far-reaching effects on both the Marianas and Yap, from which he primarily sources his Pugua.

According to the Marianas Variety, a cursory look at the minimum wage structure reveals stark disparities, with the minimum wage for state government employees in Yap being \$1.60 per hour, while employees of the national government in the Federated States of Micronesia earn \$2.65. The private sector in Yap currently does not have a stipulated minimum wage.

Sablan revealed that his Yap-based employees receive \$3.50 per hour. He emphasized that his Yap office plays a pivotal role in purchasing betel nut from local farmers and subsequently

shipping it to Saipan for distribution. The imposition of the proposed tax could significantly impact the amount of betel nut purchased from local Yap farmers, whom Sablan described as “living in poverty.”

He underscored that if such taxes are levied on his imports, he would be compelled to raise the prices of these goods, a move that would inevitably affect his sales. Currently, he offers betel nut at the price of one dollar per bag.

Sablan further asserted that the situation would have an adverse effect on consumers, as he would be compelled to pass on the additional cost to them. He questioned the rationale of consumers accepting such an increase in prices when it can be avoided.

Moreover, Sablan contended that it was “unfair” and “unethical” to single out betel nut users who purchase imported Pugua, while

he is already contributing to business gross revenue taxes.

He acknowledged the negative image associated with betel nut but clarified that much of the damage attributed to its consumption results from the addition of tobacco and pepper leaf or pupulu. He maintained that betel nut, in and of itself, is not a contentious issue.

Sablan expressed his intention to present his customers with a petition opposing H.B. 23-41, seeking their support in the fight against this proposed tax.

In conclusion, Sablan suggested that lawmakers explore alternative avenues for revenue generation. He highlighted the importance of pursuing overdue payments from entities such as Imperial Pacific International and attracting new investors as potential measures to address the financial challenges at hand, as per the Marianas Variety.



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

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

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) 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. PIF 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.

TEAM LEADER - PROPERTY SERVICES

The Team Leader Property Services is to manage the services related to provision of efficient property management for the Forum, including facilitating preparations for meetings, conferences and events held within the Forum. The incumbent also manages and maintains PIF properties and assets that are safe for Members, their Forum staff, and key stakeholders & partners usage. S/he will report to the Director Operations and will be responsible for successfully driving the following critical outcomes for the Forum:

- **Effective and strategic management of property and assets**
 - Design, develop, implement, monitor and reporting on an annual maintenance work plans including the proper management of the Forum offices and facilities to ensure they are safe, secure, clean and well maintained.
 - Implement a systematic approach to maintenance that is proactive, scheduled, and consistent. In addition, adopt best-practice approaches, aligned to ISO standards, concerning property management.
 - Implement risk management in all aspects to minimise risk and provide mitigation measures in all aspects of properties work.
- **Robust asset management.**
 - Effective budgeting through practicing of responsible budget management by creating, implementing, and evaluating budgets and cost projections.
 - Ensure a safe and pleasant environment for meeting, working, and living.
- **Effective landlord responsibilities through the management of all financial processes, maintenance of residences and annual review of rental rates against the market rates.**
- **Effective Human Capital Management and OHS**

The person we seek will have a minimum 7 years' including 5 years in a leadership role, demonstrated experience in a similar role with a Bachelor degree in facility/asset management or similar. The applicant must possess the following:

- **A wide-ranging knowledge of all facets of property management, maintenance and development.**
- **A working knowledge of relevant legislation and best practices for property and asset management, building codes and standards, fleet management, safety hazards, OHS, Contract management.**
- **Sound financial management and business acumen, to conduct negotiations and manage vendor / contractor relationships in line with organisational values, policies and procedures**

PROGRAMME AND PROJECTS OFFICER

The Programme & Projects Officer is to coordinate, monitor and analyse progress and outcomes of the Forum's internal and extra budget funded projects and programmes. The role will also provide support to and oversight of all the internal projects within the Forum. S/he reports to the Senior Adviser – Strategic Planning & Coordination Unit (SPCU) and the successful applicant will be responsible for successfully driving the following critical outcomes for the Pacific Islands Forum:

- **Effective support to extra budget programmes / projects**
 - Support the review and evaluation of new and existing program proposals to ensure alignment to the strategic plan and the 2050 Implementation Plan.
 - Providing technical advice on dialogue and development partner processes, auditing requirements and reporting.
 - Monitoring and overseeing extra budget funding agreements and identify areas for improvement.
- **Oversight of internal special projects**
 - Support project teams with proposals to ensure alignment to organizational standards and policies not limited to donor agreements / variation documents and assisting teams to identify risks and associated mitigation measures.
 - Support coordination with internal and external stakeholders to ensure program objectives are met.
 - Conduct research and analysis to support program development and decision-making.
- **Support strategic planning and coordination activities**
 - Assisting in strategic planning & coordination through organisational reform, organisational review, organisational development, and change management.
 - Design and develop a Forum tracking mechanism for all internal, extra budget and external projects in which the organization is engaged.
 - Prepare reports, presentations, and other materials for management, stakeholders and partners.

The person we seek will have a minimum 3-5 years' demonstrated experience in a similar role with an undergraduate Degree in Management, Business Administration, Commerce or similar. The applicant must possess the following:

- Sound knowledge of donor financial and administrative policies, procedures, and standards
- Good understanding and demonstrated experience in the project cycle i.e. project identification and design, resource mobilization, management and monitoring
- Ability to work with a small team of professional staff in a multicultural environment.

How to Apply: Application must be submitted online by accessing the following URL: <https://jobs.hrmonise.com/> with your letter addressing the critical outcomes and CV which must include details of 3 recent professional referees. Any emailed applications will **NOT** be accepted.

For more information: **Contact: Ravuama Buadromo:** +679 773 3137, ravu@maxumise.com



Contact: Ravuama Buadromo:

Closing Date: 06 November 2023

Australian ADV Reliant's brief visit enhances Pacific Security and Safety

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

October 15, 2023

FSM—In a display of ongoing regional support, Australia's Pacific Support Vessel, the ADV Reliant, made a brief but significant visit to the islands of Chuuk and Pohnpei this week. The purpose of the visit was to deliver immigration x-ray machines generously donated by the Australian Border Force.

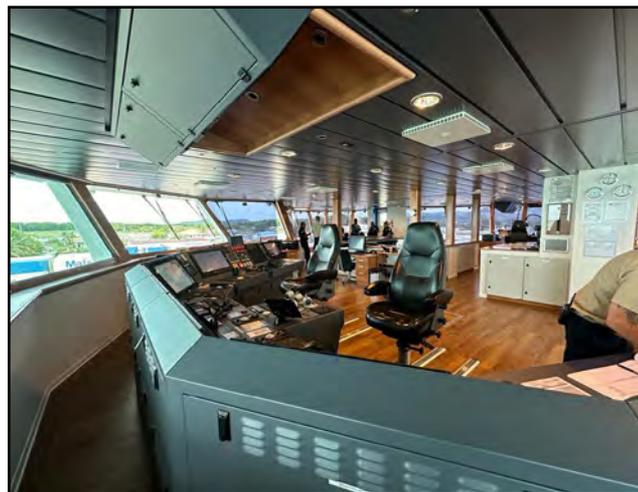
The ADV Reliant stands as a prominent asset of the Australian Government, dedicated to serving the interests and priorities of the Pacific family and regional partners. Its versatile roles encompass a wide spectrum of activities, all aimed at strengthening the region and promoting mutual cooperation.

Among its pivotal functions, the ADV Reliant engages in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. It also plays a crucial role in providing training, capability development, and mentoring for Pacific security personnel. Furthermore, the vessel actively participates in regional engagement, capacity building, and health initiatives. It stands as a steadfast support in search and rescue missions and maritime surveillance, thereby contributing to the safety and security of the region.

The brief visit of ADV Reliant to Chuuk and Pohnpei served as a testament to Australia's unwavering commitment to its Pacific neighbors. The delivery of immigration x-ray machines not only addresses immediate needs but also reflects a collaborative approach to addressing shared challenges.

The goodwill and support extended through such initiatives demonstrate the strength of the bond between Australia and the Pacific region. The anticipation of a more extended visit by the ADV Reliant in the coming year underscores the enduring commitment to regional cooperation and solidarity.

As the Pacific family and Australia continue to work together, the ADV Reliant stands as a tangible symbol of support and partnership, further strengthening the resilience and capabilities of the region.





- **Pohnpei-based position**
- **Join the principal development organisation in the region**

The Pacific Community (SPC) invites applications for the position of **Finance and Procurement Assistant** within its Micronesia Regional Office (MRO). This position will be located at its regional office in Pohnpei, Micronesia.

Description

The **Pacific Community** (SPC) is the principal scientific and technical organisation in the Pacific region, supporting development since 1947. We are an international development organisation owned and governed by our 27 country and territory members. In pursuit of sustainable development to benefit Pacific people, our unique organisation works across more than 25 sectors. We are known for our knowledge and innovation in such areas as fisheries science, public health surveillance, geoscience, and conservation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

The **Micronesia Regional Office (MRO)** situated in Kolonia, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), is the main hub for SPC's projects and partnerships with the Micronesian members of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), the Republic of Palau, and the United States territories of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and Guam. The MRO opened in January 2006.

The role – the **Finance and Procurement Assistant** within the Project Management Team (PMT) will assist with the overall financial accounting, acquittals, preparation of procurement and contracting documents, and compilation of all supporting documentation.

The key responsibilities of the role include the following:

1. **Financial and procurement support services**
2. **Travel, Logistics, Administration, and Operation oversight**
3. **Capacity support and training**

For a more detailed account of the key responsibilities, please **refer to the online job description**.

Qualifications

- Degree in a relevant field such as accounting, financial management or business administration.

Essential experience and skills

- At least 3 years' experience in administration and accounting in a similar organization including experience with project management, information systems and financial management.
- Experience with procurement procedures.
- Understanding of project budgeting, financial reporting, donor reporting, audit requirements.
- Knowledge of budgetary and administrative processes in PICTs and working directly with PICTs in project environments.
- Sound coordination, administrative, networking, and collaborative skills.
- Fluency in English (written and verbal).
- Excellent oral and written communications skills and demonstrated ability to articulate and communicate complex issues.
- Strong people skills and ability to work in a multicultural and gender sensitive environment.
- Valid driver's license.

Remuneration – the **Finance and Procurement Assistant** is a Band 4 position in SPC's 2023 salary scale, with a starting taxable salary range of USD 21,164 –26,454 per year, plus local staff benefits.

Benefits – SPC provides medical and life insurance for eligible employees and their eligible dependents. Employees are entitled to 25 days of annual leave. Provident Fund and/or Social Security will be according to FSM's local legislation.

Closing date: 13 November 2023 – 11:00 pm Pohnpei time

Job Reference: CR000121

Applicants must apply online at <http://careers.spc.int/>

For your application to be considered, you must provide us with:

- an updated resume with contact details for three professional referees
- a cover letter detailing your skills, experience and interest in this position
- responses to all screening questions

Please answer all of the screening questions, if you do not answer these questions your application will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed at shortlisting stage.

Screening questions:

1. Please list what you consider are the necessary attributes of a Finance and Procurement Assistant and explain how you fulfil each trait. Please list and describe at least 3-5 necessary traits.
2. Please describe your experience in financial administration and procurement.
3. What approaches would you take in your daily work to ensure you are well organised to address priorities on time?

25th Governing Board Meeting of PIC Tokyo Strengthens Regional Ties with PIF Secretariat

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

October 24, 2023

Suva, Fiji-The Governing Board Meeting of Pacific Island Centre in Tokyo marked its 25th convening with a high-level meeting at the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Secretariat.

Co-chaired by Esala Nayasi, PIF Deputy Secretary General, and Satoshi Jimbo, Director of the Oceania Bureau for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, the meeting focused on key initiatives aligned with the 2050 Strategy and emphasised the importance of strengthened regional engagement

“Your presence here today serves as a reminder of the robust and enduring relationship between the Secretariat and Japan. This is evident in the convening of over two decades of board meetings, which reaffirm the pivotal role of the Governing Board in offering strategic oversight and direction to the operations and management of the Pacific Islands Centre in Tokyo,” said Nayasi.

Over the years, the Governing Board has played a critical role in directing and overseeing the activities of the PIC in Tokyo, ensuring that it continues to be a hub of Pacific engagement and collaboration.

The governing Board was attended by Deputy Director of the Oceania Bureau for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Director of PIC Tokyo, First Secretary, Embassy of Japan in Fiji, Director of Programmes & Initiatives and PIFS staff.

Blue Prosperity Micronesia and National Geographic Pristine Seas launch marine science expedition in FSM

Blue Prosperity Micronesia

October 18, 2023

FSM—Blue Prosperity Micronesia and National Geographic Pristine Seas launched an exciting marine science expedition to study the FSM's ocean in Kosrae. The two-month expedition is a government-led initiative, conducted by Blue Prosperity Micronesia (BPM) and National Geographic Pristine Seas, in close collaboration with Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap states. The expedition began with a launch event on Oct. 14 in Kosrae and will conclude on Nov. 22 in Yap.

Hon. Tulensa W. Palik, Governor of Kosrae, welcomed the expedition to Kosrae. "As islanders, the ocean has always been, and it will always be a part of our lives. We are excited to welcome the expedition team to Kosrae State and the FSM. This expedition is a monumental international collaboration for the nation; now is our opportunity to show the world that FSM is a leader in marine protection and sustainable ocean management."

The M/V Argo will serve as the expedition vessel, traveling to Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk and finally concluding in Yap. The expedition will collect underwater footage and information about fish and coral populations and key habitats across all four states.

Planning for this expedition commenced in 2019 with the launch of the BPM program but was delayed several years as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Hon. Lieutenant Governor Arthy G. Nena provided opening remarks at the expedition launch event and reflected on the program's history. "One of the highlights I remember from a [2019] meeting was this expedition. I am very glad that I am still living to see that it's happening... On behalf of the people of Kosrae, Governor Palik, Speaker Phillip, and members of the communities here, state municipalities would like to say how thankful we are that we are at this stage."

Kosraeans gathered at Awane Marine Park in Lelu to celebrate the launch of the expedition, meet with the scientists, and learn about the expedition's research plans. During the expedition, each State will host events where community members will have the

opportunity to hear about what scientists have observed in FSM's underwater environments. Additionally, local students and teachers are invited to join virtual Explorer Classroom events on Oct. 19 and Nov. 17 to connect with scientists aboard the M/V Argo and learn about marine science in the FSM.

Members of the community are invited to expedition events on the following dates:

- Pohnpei: Oct. 25, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. at Kolonia Gym
- Chuuk: Nov. 2, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. at Tranco Dock
- Yap: Nov. 21, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. at Yap Living History Museum

All dates are subject to change due to weather or other delays. All times listed are local times.

Bond Segal, Kosrae BPM/PAN Coordinator, will join the expedition's first leg from Kosrae to Pohnpei. "This effort will not only deepen our understanding of our marine resources, but will also celebrate and spotlight our community's deep connection with the ocean on the global stage. I am immensely proud to be a part of this initiative."

Dr. Peter Houk, the chief scientist for the expedition, explains how the research will bridge critical knowledge gaps. "This research will build upon the extensive Micronesia coral reef monitoring network which has been studying reef management for over a decade. We are excited to research how traditional knowledge and reef tenure across outer atolls has facilitated sustainable resource use for centuries. We are blessed to have the opportunity to learn from these remote communities and support them in addressing modern challenges like climate change."

The expedition's discoveries will shape future ocean management and protection strategies through the development of Marine Spatial Plans. The data collected will also contribute to the Micronesia Challenge, reinforcing the region's dedication to preserving the ecosystems on which people and cultures depend upon.

"This is National Geographic Pristine Seas' first expedition to the Federated States of Micronesia and we are



Students from Kosrae high school toured the expedition vessel.



*Bond Segal (far left) joins the first expedition leg from Kosrae to Pohnpei.
Photo by Dr. Peter Houk*



humbled to be part of this collaborative effort to study the marine environment," said Paul Rose, National Geographic Pristine Seas expedition leader.

Community members are encouraged to follow @BlueProsperityMicronesia and @NatGeoPristineSeas on Facebook and Instagram to receive updates on when the expedition will visit their community.

U.S. Embassy to the FSM supports APIL's vision for improved Blue Continent Transportation and Healthcare

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

October 19, 2023

Chuuk—The 40th General Assembly of the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures (APIL) witnessed the active participation of Ambassador Johnson and a distinguished American delegation, marking one of the highlights of her visit to Chuuk. Rear Admiral Gregory Huffman, alongside delegations from American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, and the Northern Mariana Islands, represented the United States as a Pacific nation with a significant population of Pacific Island citizens and nationals.

The presence of Ambassador Johnson and the U.S. delegation underscored the nation's commitment to the

Pacific region, recognizing the strong connections between the United States and the Pacific Island communities.

U.S. Embassy Kolonia, with its continued support for APIL, aligns itself with the organization's goals of enhancing transportation and healthcare options across the vast expanse of the Blue Continent. This partnership reflects the U.S. Embassy's dedication to the well-being and development of the Pacific Island nations.

The APIL General Assembly serves as a platform for legislators from various Pacific Island nations to come together, exchange ideas, and address shared challenges. The event enables the sharing of experiences and strategies to enhance the transportation and healthcare sectors across the Blue

Continent.

The United States' participation in this assembly highlights the nation's ongoing efforts to strengthen its relationship with Pacific Island nations and reinforce its commitment to the prosperity of the region.

Ambassador Johnson's presence at the 40th APIL General Assembly is not only a testament to the enduring bonds between the United States and the Pacific but also a significant step toward fostering cooperation, partnership, and mutual growth in the Pacific Island region. This engagement serves as a promising sign of continued collaboration and shared endeavors for a brighter future across the Blue Continent.



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JETHARAM NEMARAM GEHLOT

Global Handwashing Day making clean hands within reach

UNICEF Pacific

October 15, 2023

Suva, Fiji— On the occasion of this year's Global Handwashing Day UNICEF Pacific is calling on partners to ensure "clean hands are within reach."

Marked on the 15th October, global handwashing day underpins the importance of good hand hygiene in controlling the start and spread of diseases and virus.

The theme for the year "Clean hands are within reach" underscores the importance of accessibility to hand hygiene facilities including soap and water in all settings such as home, schools, health care facilities, workplaces and other community settings.

Handwashing plays an important role in reducing the spread of diseases such as diarrhoea, respiratory infection, cholera, Ebola, COVID 19 and other Neglected Tropical diseases.

UNICEF Pacific also reflects on the

further consequences of poor hand hygiene. When viruses and diseases spread, children are often unable to attend school, which also results in a loss of valuable teaching and learning.

UNICEF Pacific Representative Jonathan Veitch, says that hand hygiene is not a stand-alone initiative, it is a complex issue that requires collaboration and coordination at all levels.

"Hand-washing with soap is such an effective method of hygiene control and disease prevention. Understanding that multiple actors can play a part and take on different roles will ensure that clean hands are within reach."

Global Handwashing Day is observed every year, mostly in schools, communities and health care facilities to create awareness on the importance of good hand hygiene.

The impacts on COVID-19 have boosted the effort of hand hygiene promotion in most countries including Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, FSM and Solomon Islands.

Pacific Islands Forum Deputy Secretary General Emphasizes Technology's Vital Role in Regional Development

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

October 17, 2023

Suva, Fiji - In a compelling keynote address at the Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association Strategy Forum on October 17, 2023, Mr. Esala Nayasi, the Deputy Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, shed light on the pivotal role of technology and connectivity in shaping the future of the Pacific region.

Addressing a gathering that included Mr. Phillip Henderson, the Chair of the Pacific Islands Telecommunication Association Executive Committee, distinguished guests, colleagues, and friends, Nayasi began by extending a warm "Bula vinaka" to all attendees



and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share insights on the regional context and political direction concerning technology and connectivity.

Nayasi highlighted the transformative power of digital technology, driving innovation and productivity across various sectors while creating a framework

for businesses and services to thrive. Stressing the significance of technology and connectivity, he referred to the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, a visionary document launched by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in July 2022, which encapsulates their ambitions for the next three decades.

Amid the enthusiasm for technology's potential, Nayasi acknowledged the challenges the region faces in developing, using, and securing information and communication technology (ICT). Nevertheless, he emphasized that the ICT sector remains integral to the region's development, particularly in light of its demonstrated value during the pandemic. ICT kept

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Pacific Islands Forum Deputy Secretary General Highlights E-commerce Opportunities in Regional Workshop

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

October 18, 2023

Suva, Fiji - In a recent address at the Workshop on Effective Legal Frameworks for Building the Digital Economy held on October 18, 2023, Esala Nayasi, the Deputy Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, emphasized the critical role of technology and connectivity in advancing the Pacific region's digital economy.

Addressing an audience comprising Excellencies and Senior Officials from Forum Member Countries, representatives of Technical Agencies, and Development Partners, Nayasi extended a warm "Bula vinaka" and welcomed attendees to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

Nayasi recalled a recent gathering of Trade Officials and Ministers who convened to discuss essential trade matters, with a particular focus on Electronic Commerce (E-commerce). He highlighted the significant influence that technology and connectivity could have on improving lives through E-commerce development.

E-commerce, Nayasi explained, introduces a transformative dynamic to global trade and, particularly

in the Pacific region characterized by dispersed islands across vast geographic spaces, holds the potential to empower businesses in the digital era, facilitate trade, and connect the islands. However, he stressed that it is vital to approach E-commerce development thoughtfully and responsibly.

To support Member Countries in developing their capacity in this area, Nayasi mentioned the existence of the Regional E-Commerce Strategy. The implementation of this strategy is coordinated through the Pacific E-Commerce Committee.

Nayasi expressed his satisfaction by reporting that by the end of 2022, 43% of the 54 measures recommended in the strategy were actively being implemented, an achievement considering the strategy was just over a year old at that time.

The workshop served as an opportunity to further discussions on a crucial priority outlined in the Regional E-Commerce Strategy, which is the advancement of legal and regulatory frameworks at the national level. Nayasi expressed hope that the participants would use the workshop to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to craft legislation that encourages innovation, safeguards consumers and the private sector, and fosters trust in



online marketplaces. Additionally, he encouraged participants to establish networks with their peers from across the region to facilitate knowledge exchange.

Nayasi emphasized the role of partnerships in achieving the region's development goals, citing the establishment of the Pacific Regional E-commerce Alliance through the Pacific E-Commerce Committee. This alliance aims to enhance coordination, awareness, promotion of E-commerce activities, and resource mobilization. He announced that the Commonwealth Secretariat would be the first partner to formally sign on to the alliance, marking a significant step forward in advancing E-commerce in the Pacific region. He also encouraged other partners to

consider joining the alliance.

In closing, Nayasi expressed his gratitude and acknowledged the Commonwealth Secretariat, Asian Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) for their contributions to organizing the event. He looked forward to their continued support and collaboration in fulfilling the Pacific region's development aspirations.

Nayasi concluded by thanking all the participants and wished them a productive and enriching experience during the workshop and their stay in Fiji.

...Tech

continued from previous page

communities connected, enabled business transactions, and sustained livelihoods under unprecedented circumstances.

Nayasi underscored the need for collaborative efforts to develop ICT across the Pacific. While the Pacific Islands Forum acknowledges its limited technical expertise in this domain, they are committed to partnering with organizations like the Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association (PITA) for guidance and advice.

He also highlighted the recent momentum in the region, particularly following the Ministerial meeting on ICT in Papua New Guinea, which resulted in the Lagatoi Declaration. This declaration outlines key objectives related to digital transformation, innovation, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, security, trust, and regional cooperation.

Regarding e-commerce, Nayasi praised PITA's participation in the newly established Pacific Regional E-Commerce alliance, which aims to boost coordination, awareness, and resource mobilization to integrate local markets and access global

opportunities. Given the region's geographical constraints and the size of its economies, Nayasi stressed the importance of exploring economies of scale through coordinated regional structures and mechanisms.

The Deputy Secretary General acknowledged the commitment of governments, the private sector, and civil society to ICT development but emphasized the need for collective action. He commended PITA and all participants for their commitment to break down barriers and collaborate toward a better Pacific region.

In conclusion, Nayasi emphasized the

vital role of partnerships at all levels in advancing priorities and encouraged the forum's participants to be ambitious in their vision and expectations of government and regional organizations like the Pacific Islands Forum. He highlighted the shared responsibility of working together to bring transformational change to the Pacific region.

Nayasi concluded by expressing gratitude for the warm welcome and the Pacific Islands Forum's participation in the forum, leaving attendees with the resonating message that cooperation and shared vision will shape the Pacific's technological future.

Winners of the Social Media Correspondent Campaign Announced

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

October 17, 2023

Suva, Fiji—The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is proud to announce the three winners of the #MyBluePacific2050 Social Media Campaign. These young people will travel to the 52nd Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting (PIFLM52) in the Cook Islands as Social Media Youth Correspondents.

Pacific Youth embraced the power of storytelling in the social media video competition that invited them to share their vision for the Blue Pacific region in 2050.

PIF Secretary General Henry Puna commended the quality of the entries from participating youth.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed watching all the entries and thank those who took part in this call, for sharing their views on what matters most for the world. The digital world is one our Pacific Youth already lead, and this initiative resonates in its own way with the protect, promote, and prosper values of this year’s Forum theme, making every single entry a winning one!”

Entries were received from across the Pacific region covering all the three sub regions, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

As the Forum’s social media Youth Correspondents at the PIFLM52 from 6 to 10 November, the winners will provide context to the priorities of



Ciccone Hakaraia-Turner, New Zealand

Pita Loloma, Fiji

Gerdi Raimon, Kiribati.

young people in line with the 2050 Strategy.

The judging panel comprised PIF Secretary General Henry Puna; Joshua Baker, Cook Islands Government Communications; Claret Chong Gum; Millicent Barty; USP Students Association President Lepani Naqarase and Tarita Bartley, SPC Social Inclusion Officer.

The winners are:

Micronesia: Gerdi Raimon, Kiribati.

Gerdi is 25 years old and a garbologist for the Kiribati Ministry of Environment. “I believe in today’s generation; we are change makers of today and tomorrow. To a bluer Pacific Continent, we are small islands, but we’ve got great potential. My vision for 2050 is for us to live, prosper and thrive in a place, in a community, that is resilient to the impacts of climate change.”

Melanesia: Pita Loloma, Fiji

Pita is 29 years old and interning with the Pacific Community (SPC) Aquaculture Division after graduating from Fiji National University. “My vision for our Blue Continent is the preservation and restoration of our marine resources that we are relying on for food, economic opportunities and that hold such an important place in our culture.”

Polynesia: Ciccone Hakaraia-Turner, New Zealand

Ciccone is 20 years old and a Business student at the Auckland University of Technology. “I believe it’s important to make sure we’re doing our part to look after Papatūānuku (Mother Earth) so our tamariki (children) and mokopuna (grandchildren) can also feel the beauty that we all have felt growing up.

The #MyBluePacific2023 Social Media Campaign was an online campaign that ran for two months. Youth Ambassadors from across the Pacific also shared their visions and promoted the competition, these were Nicole Yamase, Federated States of Micronesia; George William, Vanuatu; Luther Berg, Cook Islands; Moemoana Schwenke, Samoa; Millicent Barty, Solomon Islands; Ioane Hawaii, Tuvalu; and Claret Chong Gum, Republic of Marshall Islands.



**World Health
Organization**

*WHO Country Liaison Office for Northern Micronesia
Pohnpei, FSM*

Position Announcement

Emergency Medical Team (EMT) Project Manager/Coordinator

TYPE OF CONTRACT: Special Service Agreement (SSA)
APPLICATION DEADLINE: 06 November 2023
STARTING DATE: 01 December 2023
DURATION OF CONTRACT: One year with possibility for extension

1. BACKGROUND

The Emergency Medical Team (EMT) Initiative focuses on building national capacity to respond to health emergencies by reducing morbidity, mortality, and disability. The purpose of FSM EMT is to strengthen clinical and public health response to disasters and outbreaks in the country, with the ability to deploy quickly and provide high-quality medical care – even in the most remote locations and austere post-disaster conditions.

2. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES TO BE CARRIED OUT

The incumbent will provide planning and operational support to the Government of FSM in the context of the EMT Initiative. The incumbent will:

- Facilitate the operations of national and state-level EMT technical working groups and other structures.
- Build and maintain a roster of trained emergency response personnel for EMT deployment, in close coordination with national and state-level counterparts.
- Provide support to the Department of Health and Social Affairs and other relevant government agencies in developing EMT-related guidelines, plans, strategies, tools and materials, including updating and operationalizing national health emergency preparedness and response plans and SOPs. Develop/adapt training materials for national EMT volunteers and relevant DHSA staff involved in emergency coordination at the national and/or State levels.
- Support coordination of incoming international EMTs, when requested, and on-site monitoring in line with the WHO guidance on EMT Classification and Minimum Standards for Emergency Medical Teams.
- Provide monthly progress updates and written status reports

on the national EMT capacity strengthening and development to the DHSA, WHO CLO and the WHO Regional EMT Focal Point.

- Facilitate the organization of trainings, workshops, meetings and simulation exercises for health and disaster management officials.
- Share expertise and knowledge as a resource person within and outside FSM if necessary.

3. QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

Essential:

- Bachelor's degree in business, public administration, project management, medicine, nursing, health, emergency management, or a relevant social science field.
- At least 2 years of professional experience in project management, emergency preparedness and response, medicine/nursing, or a related field.
- Good English language skills

Desirable:

- Experience in formulating SOPs, organizing trainings/meetings and planning/implementation of projects. Familiarity with emergency management, government and/or NGO programming.
- Writing skills in English, and confident public speaking and presentation skills;
- Ability to work with and coordinate groups of diverse stakeholders toward a common objective;
- Familiarity with Disaster Risk Reduction/Disaster Risk Management policies and the Humanitarian System;
- Ability to work harmoniously as a member of a team and adapt to diverse educational and cultural backgrounds;
- Ability to work under tight deadlines with self-initiative

Vacancy is open only to FSM nationals or residents with authorization to work in FSM.

*Applicants should submit a letter of interest along with personal WHO personal history form/resume/ CV in-person, by mail, or via email by close of business **06 November 2023** to:*

**Department of Health and Social Affairs
1/F Mogethin Building, 1st floor
National Capital Complex
PO BOX PS70
Palikir, FM 96941**

Email: wpfsmclo@who.int

Fall of a Fijian trafficker exposes previous government's blind eye to meth

The imprisonment of a prominent Fijian businessman on drug charges is just one sign of the Pacific Island country's increasing role as an international trafficking hub

By Aubrey Belford, Stevan Dojcinovic, Jared Savage, and Kelvin Anthony
OCCRP

Until recently, Aiyaz Mohammed Musa Umarji was — in public at least — a pillar of Fiji's business community.

With ownership of a Pacific-wide pharmacy network, Umarji and his family were significant donors to the party that repressively ruled the country until it lost power in elections last December. He was also a major figure in sports, serving as a vice president of the Fiji Football Association and as a committee member in soccer's global governing body, FIFA.

And he did it all as an internationally wanted drug trafficker.

Umarji's fall finally came in August this year, after he ended a period of self-imposed exile in India and surrendered himself to authorities in New Zealand to face years-old charges. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to four years in prison for importing at least 5-6 million New Zealand dollars' (\$2.9-3.5 million) worth of pseudoephedrine — a precursor for methamphetamine — into the country.

His sentencing was hailed by Fijian police as a blow against a "mastermind" whose operations stretched across the region.

But behind the conviction of Umarji, 47, lies a far murkier story of impunity, a joint investigation by OCCRP, the Fiji Times, the New Zealand Herald, and Radio New Zealand has found.

Umarji was able to thrive for years amid a failure by senior officials of Fiji's previous authoritarian government to confront a rise in meth and cocaine trafficking through the Pacific Island country.

And when New Zealand authorities finally issued an international warrant for his arrest, Umarji was able to flee Fiji under suspicious circumstances.

Reporters found that Umarji and his family donated at least 70,000 Fijian dollars (\$31,000) to the country's former ruling party, FijiFirst, in the years after he was first put under investigation. This included 20,000 Fijian dollars (\$8,700) given to the party ahead of last December's election — roughly three years after he was first charged. The party's general secretary, Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, was Fiji's long-serving attorney general and justice minister at the time.

Reporters also found that the Umarji family's business network has continued to expand despite his legal troubles, and currently operates in three Pacific countries. The newest of these pharmacy companies, in Vanuatu, was founded just last year.

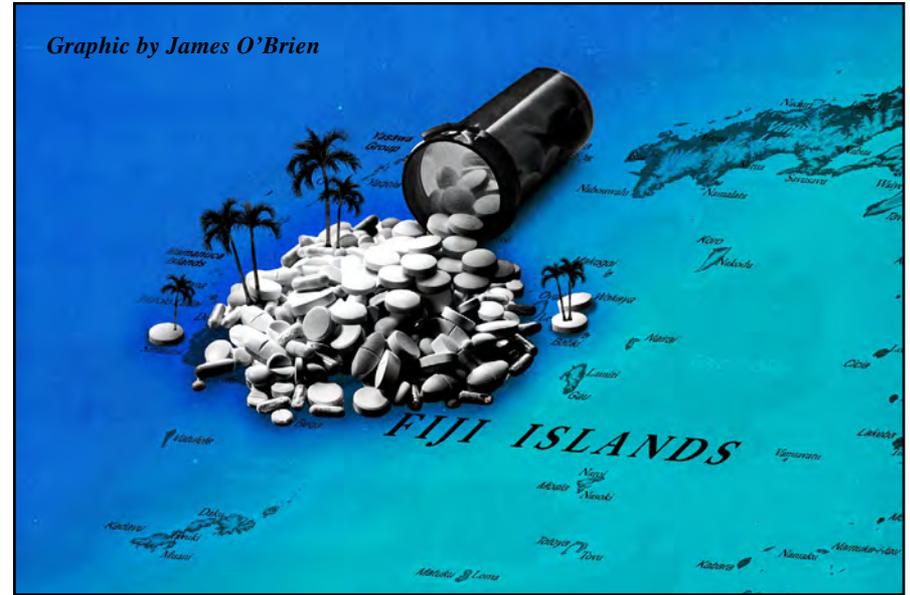
Fiji's minister for immigration and home affairs, Pio Tikoduadua, told OCCRP an investigation has been opened into how Umarji was able to flee the country.

He said authorities are also investigating donations Umarji and his family made to FijiFirst, and any "potential connections" he may have had to top officials in the former government, including Sayed-Khaiyum and the now-suspended police commissioner, Sitiveni Qiliho.

"Certainly, I am deeply concerned

about the potential influence of drug traffickers in Fiji, especially over officials and law enforcement," Tikoduadua said. "The infiltration of these criminal elements poses a significant risk to our society and institutions."

Umarji declined a request for an interview and did not respond to follow-up questions. His Auckland lawyer, David PH Jones, said a request from reporters contained "numerous



loaded questions which contain unsubstantiated assertions, a number of which have little or nothing to do with Mr Umarji's prosecution."

Sayed-Khaiyum and Qiliho did not respond to written questions.

'A Hub of the Pacific'

The rise in drug trafficking through Fiji is just one part of a booming trans-Pacific trade that experts and law enforcement say has become one of the world's most profitable.

In Australia, the most recent data shows that drug seizures have more than

quadrupled over the last decade, and Australians now consume 4.7 tons of cocaine and 8.8 tons of meth a year. In much smaller New Zealand, drug users strongly prefer meth to cocaine, consuming roughly 720 kilograms a year.

Consumers in both countries pay some of the highest prices on earth for cocaine and meth, much of it exported from the Americas. Lying in the vast blue expanse between the two points are the Pacific Islands.

"Fiji is a hub of the Pacific. You've got the ports, you've got the infrastructure, and you've got the ability to come in and out either by [water] craft or by airplane," said Glyn Rowland, the New

Zealand Police senior liaison officer for the Pacific. "So that really leaves Fiji quite vulnerable to be in that transit route off to New Zealand and off to Australia."

Fiji has long been eyed by international organized crime for its strategic location close to Australia and New Zealand's multi-billion-dollar drug markets. In the early 2000s, for example, an international police operation took apart a "super lab" in Fiji's capital, Suva, run by Chinese gangsters with enough precursor chemicals to produce a tonne of meth.

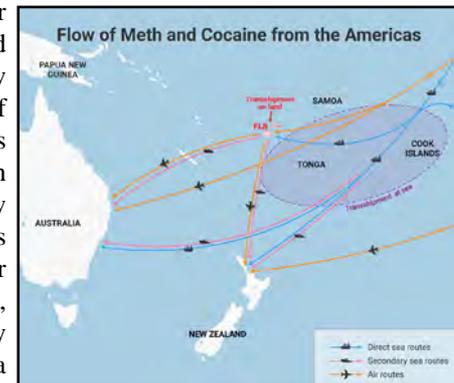
But after early successes, Fiji in recent years went cold on the fight against hard drugs.

The previous government of Frank Bainimarama, who first took power in a 2006 coup, showed

little interest in tackling meth and cocaine trafficking, according to current and former law enforcement officers from Fiji and the U.S. Despite recent signs that trafficking was increasing, the police force under Bainimarama's hand-picked commissioner, Qiliho, seemed to overlook the problem, the officers



Aiyaz Mohammed Musa Umarji, on right, shakes hands with Fiji Football Association President Rajesh Patel. Photo by: Baljeet Singh / Fiji Times



Edin Pasovic / OCCRP

...Meth

Continued from previous page

told OCCRP.

Bainimarama did not respond to questions.

Ernie Verina, the Oceania attaché for U.S. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), said his agency had become worried about trafficking through Fiji.

In mid-2022, HSI assigned an agent to be based in the country. But when the agent raised the issue of meth with top officials from Bainimarama's government, he was met with total pushback, Verina said.



*Umarji's hometown of Lautoka, Fiji.
CREDIT: Aubrey Belford / OCCRP*

"Categorically, like, 'There is no meth'," Verina said of the Fijian response. "That's what they told the agent."

'A Lot of Influence'

Despite high-level denials, Fiji's narcotics police were very much aware of the country's drug trafficking crisis. In fact, they had long had Umarji in their sights. But he was a difficult target.

As far back as 2017, Umarji was identified as "one of the tier one" suspected traffickers in the country, said Serupepeli Neiko, the head of the Fiji Police's Narcotics Bureau.

While the drug trade through Fiji is also the domain of transnational organized crime groups, Umarji was suspected of having carved out a niche for himself by using his network of pharmacies, Hyperchem, to legally import pseudoephedrine and divert it onto the black market, Neiko said.

In early 2017, Umarji and one of his colleagues were charged with weapons possession after scores of rifle bullets were found on his yacht, moored in his hometown of Lautoka. But the charges were "squashed in court," Neiko said.

"So that gave a red flag to us that a [drug trafficking] case against Umarji would have been challenging as well."

A former senior Fijian officer, who declined to be identified because he is not authorized to speak to the media, put it more bluntly: "Umarji had a lot of influence with the previous government."

Reporters found no evidence that any senior Fijian officials intervened against investigations into Umarji. But the perception that he had influence was powerful, current and former police officers said.

Indeed, since the fall of Bainimarama's government last year, multiple senior officials have faced charges that they abused their positions, but none have been convicted. The suspended police commissioner,

Qiliho, and the former prime minister, Bainimarama, were both acquitted by a court on October 12 of charges that they had illegally interfered in a separate police investigation. Former Attorney General Sayed-Khaiyum is also currently facing prosecution in another unrelated abuse of office case.

Despite becoming a top-level police target, Umarji continued to expand his influence in Fiji. Company records show that, in 2015, he and his wife, Zaheera Cassim, opened Hyperchem companies in Fiji, Solomon Islands, and a now-defunct branch in Samoa. In May 2017, Umarji opened a new company, Bio Pharma, in New Zealand.

Ahead of elections the following year, Umarji and his relatives donated a total of at least 50,000 Fijian dollars to the FijiFirst party, declarations from the Fiji Elections Office show.

Umarji also made a name for himself in soccer, getting elected a vice president of the Fiji Football Association in December 2019.

Pills and Cash

By 2019, it was clear that avenues for a Fijian investigation were closed. So police in New Zealand stepped in instead. Reporters were able to reconstruct what happened next via court records and interviews.

While seconded that year to Fiji's Transnational Crime Unit, New Zealand detective Peter Reynolds heard whispers about Umarji's alleged criminal activity from his local colleagues. On returning to New Zealand, he decided to take things into his own hands.

Digging through police files, Reynolds found a lucky break in a case from nearly two years prior.

In late 2017, an anonymous member of the public had reached out to an anti-crime hotline with a tip that a businessman, Firdos "Freddie" Dalal, had a suspicious amount of money in his home in suburban Auckland. Acting on a warrant, police made their way inside and found 726,190 New Zealand dollars in cash and 4,000 boxes of Actifed, a cold and flu medicine that contains pseudoephedrine.

Known as Operation Duet, the investigation that led to Dalal's conviction provided the information that Reynolds needed to go after Umarji. It turned out that Dalal, who owned an Auckland-based freight forwarding company, was also listed as the director of Umarji's New Zealand company, Bio Pharma.

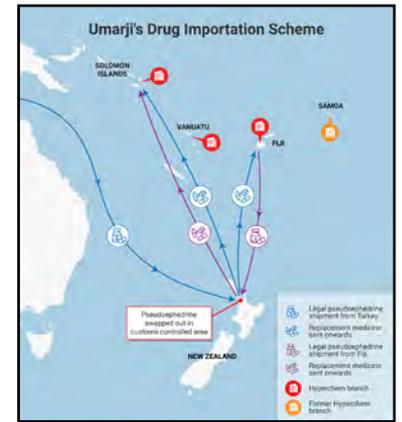
Reynolds soon figured out how it all worked. Using his Pacific-wide Hyperchem network, Umarji ordered Actifed pills to be delivered from



*Hyperchem's warehouse and office in Lautoka.
Aubrey Belford / OCCRP*

abroad to his pharmacies in Fiji and Solomon Islands. The shipments were set to transit through New Zealand, where Dalal's forwarding company was responsible for the cargo.

While the drugs sat in a restricted customs holding area, Dalal simply went inside and swapped them out for



*Edin Pasovic,
James O'Brien / OCCRP*

other other medicine, such as anti-fungal cream, which was then sent on to their island destinations. The purloined pseudoephedrine was sold on New Zealand's black market.

Dalal did not respond to questions.

In just three shipments between January and October 2017, Umarji's operation brought in an estimated 678,000 Actifed pills containing about 40.7 kilograms of pseudoephedrine, Auckland District Court would later find.

But if deciphering Umarji's operation was straightforward, arresting him would prove anything but.

New Zealand Police filed charges against Umarji in December 2019, but Reynolds told the Auckland court that

he believed they faced little chance of getting Umarji to voluntarily fly to Auckland and show up in court.

"If the summons were to be served it would likely result in Umarji fleeing [Fiji] to a country that has no extradition arrangements with New Zealand," the detective said in an affidavit.

So New Zealand authorities decided to go through the arduous

process of requesting extradition. In November 2021, a Fijian court agreed to the request, and New Zealand police issued an Interpol red notice.

Despite all the effort, within days Fiji Police had to contact their New Zealand counterparts with an embarrassing

Continued on next page

Opinion Editorial

UN Priorities and Sustainable Development in Micronesia

Today, 24 October 2023, we mark the 78th Anniversary of the entry into force in 1945 of the UN Charter. With the ratification of this founding document by the majority of its signatories, including the five permanent members of the Security Council, the United Nations officially came into being. There is no other global organization with the legitimacy, convening power and normative impact of the United Nations. No other global organization gives hope to so many people for a better world and can deliver the future we want. Today, the urgency for all countries to come together, to fulfil the promise of the nations united, has rarely been greater.

UN Day, celebrated every year, offers the opportunity to amplify our common agenda and reaffirm the purposes and principles of the UN Charter that have guided us for the past 78 years. A common agenda that until 2030 is guided by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015. A 2030 Common Agenda that provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. An urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. These 17 SDGs recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth - all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. The UN and its

partners in Micronesia are working towards achieving these Sustainable Development Goals.

Following my appointment by the UN Secretary General on 1 October 2021 as the first Resident Coordinator of the new UN Multi Country Office (MCO) for the North Pacific, significant progress has been made in enhancing and diversifying the engagement of the UN in each of the five Micronesian countries. In Pohnpei/FSM, which is the hub of the new UN MCO Micronesia, the UN expanded its on-the-ground presence from 5 in 2021 to 13 UN Organisations in 2023 with more planning to join soon. A One UN Micronesia House concept has been designed, awaiting final allocation of land and resources. A House that will host at least 18 UN Organisations and more than 100 staff. A House that will be carbon neutral (or close to it) with a modern design that is infused with the history and culture of Micronesia.

To ensure a strategic and coordinated approach that is aligned with local and regional priorities, a UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for the Pacific covering 5 years from 2023 to 2027 has been rolled-out following extensive consultations. A Cooperation Framework that has been translated in two-year Country Implementation Plans for each of the 14 Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (PICTs) covered. A Cooperation Framework that aspires to contribute to a Pacific region

where “All people, leaving no place behind, are equal and free to exercise their fundamental rights, enjoying gender equality and peace, resilient to the existential threats and living in harmony with the blue continent.” A Cooperation Framework that includes four pillars (planet, people, prosperity, peace) and two cross cutting themes (gender, human rights). A Cooperation Framework that requires effective partnerships with all key stakeholders in the Pacific.

However, we do not work in isolation and are part of larger UN family. A family that together with its member states and development partners has recently concluded a SDG Summit in New York. A summit that emphasized the importance of six major transitions in driving progress towards the SDGs by 2030. Key transitions that can have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs. These include (1) food systems; (2) energy access and affordability; (3) digital connectivity; (4) education; (5) jobs and social protection; and (6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

The next big Summit will be the Summit of the Future in 2024. This summit will present a once-in-a-generation opportunity to enhance cooperation on critical challenges and address gaps in global governance, reaffirm existing commitments including to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the United Nations Charter, and move towards a



Jaap van Hierden
The author is the Resident Coordinator for United Nations in Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Kiribati. As the designated Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Micronesia, the UN Resident Coordinator guides UN's engagement in development, humanitarian and peacebuilding activities in five Micronesian countries.

reinvigorated multilateral system that is better positioned to positively impact people's lives.

Last but not least, we are also celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights this year, on 10 December 2023. This important occasion reminds us of the importance of fundamental human rights, which underpin international human rights law and provide a global standard for human rights. In Micronesia, we reaffirm our commitment to these principles and to our shared priorities in helping to build a better future for all.

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admission: Umarji had fled the country, and was in India.

New Focus

With Umarji now in prison, Fijian authorities say they are continuing to investigate his operations.

Umarji's pharmaceutical business continues to run with his wife, Cassim, at its head. Cassim has for years been a significant public face for the businesses, including publicizing its charitable work. She declined to respond to



Ships at anchor in the harbor of Fiji's capital, Suva
Aubrey Belford / OCCRP

Additional reporting by Lydia Lewis (RNZ) and George Block (New Zealand Herald)

reporters' questions.

OCCRP visited Umarji's companies in Lautoka in late June, during the period in which he was allowed by the New Zealand court to briefly return to Fiji. Reporters found a bustling network of businesses, including a well-staffed warehouse and office on the edge of town for Hyperchem.

Reporters contacted Umarji by phone from the warehouse's reception area, but he declined to come out for an interview and referred reporters to his lawyer.

Homeland Security Investigations' Verina said the new government of Fijian Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka has since removed roadblocks to investigating these sort of trafficking operations.

“We have started to see enforcement operations and arrests and holding individuals accountable for the methamphetamine smuggling,” Verina said.

Opinion Editorial

World Food Day 2023

We must not take water for granted: we must work together to manage a finite, precious resource

This year's World Food Day celebrates one of the planet's most precious resources: water. It's essential to life on Earth. It covers the majority of the planet's surface, makes up over 50 percent of our bodies, helps keep us fed, supports livelihoods and is central to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). So how should we approach the complex challenge of shielding our existing freshwater resources and aquatic food systems from pollution and the impacts of the climate crisis, while ensuring that people have equal access to water?

With about 70 percent of all freshwaters going to agriculture, changing the ways we produce our food, fiber, and other agricultural products is the most crucial task. It is also where failure to act will have the gravest consequences.

Freshwater is not infinite, and we need to stop taking it for granted.

Consider that over the last two decades, each of us on earth has lost approximately one-fifth of the freshwater available to us. For some people, the reality is much worse. In some regions, in fact, it runs closer to one-third.

Unless we act urgently, we are on course to increase our water use by more than a third by 2050 globally, given our planet's growing population. That means, collectively, we risk reaching a point of no return.

Rapid population growth, urbanization, industrialization, economic development, and the climate crisis have all taken a toll on our water resources. Combined with water pollution, over-extraction and lack of coordinated management, this creates a complex mix of overlapping challenges.

Increased extreme weather events, drought and flooding are stressing our ecosystems, with daunting

consequences for global food security. Smallholder farmers, particularly the poor, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, migrants, and refugees, are the most vulnerable.

Approaching a complex challenge

At the heart of the balancing act to address these combined challenges must be securing sufficient water for agriculture, while reconciling the competing water needs of other economic activities, especially as urbanization accelerates.

Good governance is crucial for sustainable and equitable water allocation, through an integrated and inclusive approach with all partners. Water governance and tenure, water pricing, regulations, and incentive measures, are needed to drive change and ensure equitable access to clean and safe water resources.

We need to implement integrated water resources management through coordinated development and management of water, land, and related resources to maximize human well-being, without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems. For this we need both national and regional designs.

Investment in innovative, efficient water management practices is vital, including in modern irrigation and storage technologies and science-based solutions to address water scarcity and harnessing flooding; so that we are building a water-saving and resilient society, including through managing more effectively the water-food-energy nexus.

Action on the ground

We can and are working to make these things happen.

For example, in the Sahel FAO is providing mechanization opportunities

to farmers to improve their water infrastructure and is supporting rural women and their households to access water.

Globally, irrigated land produces 40 percent of food from 20 percent of arable land – yet it remains an untapped potential.

To help deliver on this potential, FAO is developing a global irrigation needs and potential mapping methodology, and we look forward to working with countries to implement it.

Appropriate financing mechanisms and investments, at the right and big scale, are key to building and maintaining capital-intensive infrastructure.

Resilience-based solutions are key. Prioritizing green and blue infrastructure to promote agriculture and fisheries respectively can enhance water quality, maintain biodiversity and provide other benefits to agrifood systems and rural areas.

In Sri Lanka and Zambia, for example, FAO is piloting multifunctional paddy fields for fish and shrimp farming, in addition to rice production.

Such value-added infrastructure generates benefits by recharging groundwater, controlling floods and providing ecosystem services.

All actors must be on board

We can and must do more, together, with all the various actors making their distinct, yet inter-related contributions. Governments need to design science- and evidence-based policies that capitalize on data and innovation, and coordinate across sectors to plan and manage water better. Water, energy and food are inextricably linked, and for policies to be successful, it's important they manage often-competing interests without compromising the health of our ecosystems.



By Dr. QU Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Our farmers need to become agents of water management and be equipped with the right tools to perform that function sustainably. Farmers, forest-dependent people, livestock producers and those working in the blue economy of fisheries and aquaculture already manage water on a daily basis. Supporting and encouraging them to take leadership in finding and implementing water solutions is both the obvious and the smart thing to do.

Businesses need to become water stewards. That means making concrete commitments to improving water use efficiency and reducing pollution across the supply chain. This doesn't just benefit nature and society, but businesses too. Taking water governance seriously can boost their reputation and profits and help them avoid risks that water scarcity, floods and pollution could pose to operations in the future.

Let me underline again that all of us need to stop taking water for granted. Making informed decisions about the products we buy, wasting less water and preventing flooding disaster and pollution are easy ways for everybody to contribute to positive action for a future of prosperity for people and the planet. They are central to achieving what we at FAO refer to as the Four Betters: better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life – to ensure no one is left behind.