

Solid Waste Task Force works toward long-term solutions for Pohnpei

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

January 3, 2025

Pohnpei—In terms of capacity, it is no secret that the Dekehtik landfill, popularly known as "the dump," has long been a source of concern in Pohnpei. Since the Pohnpei Legislature assigned the Pohnpei Transportation



Authority to manage the site after many years of private management under contract, the capacity issue appears only to have worsened. Further, two days after Governor Stevenson Joseph was inaugurated last year, he was forced to declare an emergency due to drought in Pohnpei. Two days after that, the landfill caught fire deep within the pile. Nearly a year later, that fire is still burning.

Approximately two years ago, Angela Sandoval of the United States Environmental Protection Agency visited the FSM by invitation to assess the solid waste situation in Pohnpei and Chuuk. The US EPA has no jurisdiction in Pohnpei and operates as a "circuit rider," but Sandoval was able to make observations that she shared with the two FSM state governments. In Pohnpei, one of the

particular concerns was the handling and storage of waste oil products both at the landfill area and at the Pohnpei Utilities Company power plant. USAID Country Coordinator Rodger

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Pohnpei Soccer Association holds Kids' Club Christmas Tournament

By Giulio Biddau
and Liz Terk

December 21, 2024

Pohnpei—December 21st was a usually warm and occasionally rainy Saturday morning in Kolonia. The streets buzzed with festive traffic, and luminaries awaited sunset to cast a Christmas glow over everyone. However, some may have noticed an unusual weekend flow of cars toward the Kolonia campus of the College of Micronesia FSM. At the CTEC gym, something shiny and Christmas-like was happening: the Pohnpei Soccer Association (PSA) was hosting its annual Christmas Tournament for its Under-14 programs.

Under the supervision and organization of Liz Terk and Kevin Mudong, the four-year-old soccer training program for children aged 5 to 14 held a small tournament to celebrate the holidays with the community and their families.

The event featured two tournaments: one for children aged 5 to 8 and another for those aged 8 to 14. Players began arriving at 8 a.m. Their excitement and eagerness to play were palpable as balls flew everywhere, COM staff lent a hand, and Christmas music filled the air. Parents, relatives, and friends took their seats as the crowd grew.

At 9:30 a.m., slightly later than scheduled, the first match kicked off.



[Click here for continuation on page 6](#)

Australia hosts first Pacific Policing Workshop for FSM and regional officers



Australian Embassy to the FSM
December 26, 2024
Brisbane, Australia—The Australian Embassy to the Federated States of Micronesia has announced a milestone in regional security cooperation with the

completion of the first Micronesian Investigations Module Workshop. The workshop, delivered under Australia’s new Pacific Policing Initiative, took place at the Pinkenba training hub in Brisbane, Australia, from December 9 to 12, 2024.
The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) was represented by the Chief of National Police, Cindy Ludrick, along with 10 participants from the nation’s

four states. The workshop provided participants with hands-on training and introduced a model aimed at providing ongoing support for police trainers in the Pacific region.

Discussions during the workshop addressed key issues affecting the Pacific, including the challenges posed by illicit drugs and alcohol. Each country’s representatives shared insights on their respective approaches to tackling these issues.

Representatives from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency were also in attendance, sharing valuable expertise and insights on regional security challenges.

The Australian Embassy said that this workshop reflects Australia’s continued commitment to enhancing security and law enforcement capabilities across the Pacific region. “This milestone highlights Australia’s ongoing commitment to building stronger security and law enforcement capabilities across the Pacific region, preparing us to face current and future challenges together,” the Embassy’s statement said.

The successful completion of the Micronesian Investigations Module Workshop is expected to strengthen collaboration between Pacific nations in addressing crime and security challenges, ensuring a safer and more resilient region.



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Monday, January 20, 2025

Key FSM appointments sworn in to serve before year's close

FSM Information Services

December 17, 2024

Palikir, Pohnpei—His Excellency Wesley W. Simina, President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), recently administered the oath of office to several officials nominated and confirmed by Congress to key positions in the Simina-Palik administration. The ceremonies were held on November 25, 2024, in Pohnpei and December 6, 2024, in Chuuk.

On November 25, 2024, in Pohnpei, President Simina swore in Mr. Sohs John as the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Finance and Administration, Ms. Shallea Yoriko Nanpei as the Deputy Chief of Mission to the FSM Embassy in Japan, and Ms. Lynn Sonden as a member of the College of Micronesia-FSM Board of Regents. During the ceremony, President Simina highlighted the significance of these appointments, emphasizing the critical importance of fiscal management, diplomacy, and education to the Nation's progress both at home and abroad.

On December 6, 2024, in Chuuk, the President administered the oath of office to Ms. Myjolene Kim as the Deputy Chief of Mission to the FSM Embassy in Australia, Ms. Cindy Siren Mori as a board member of FSM PetroCorp, and Mr. Skenson Erwin as a member of the FSM Banking Board. He also swore in Ms. Frita Irons as the National Election Commissioner for Chuuk State, Mr. John Akapito as a member of the FSM Scholarship Board, and Ms. Yolanda Mori as a fellow member of the FSM Scholarship Board. Speaking at the ceremony, President Simina reiterated his administration's dedication to inclusivity, accountability, and ensuring that capable individuals serve in positions critical to the Nation's advancement.

President Simina expressed his confidence in the qualifications and dedication of all the appointees, noting

their vital roles in advancing the FSM's priorities and representing the Nation both domestically and internationally. He urged the officials to uphold integrity and excellence in their respective positions, ensuring the values of the Federated States of Micronesia are reflected in their service.

The Simina-Palik Administration thanks the 23rd Congress of the FSM for confirming all of the above nominees, and congratulates each of them as they begin to serve in their respective roles.



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...Solid Waste

Continued from front page

Garner said the principal concern was that the oil could leach into the soil, contaminating the site for generations and leaking into the ocean. "Until the fire, we didn't think about the danger of fire from the oil," he said.

Several months ago, JICA donated 10 gallons of firefighting foam concentrate to the Pohnpei Department of Public Safety. That concentrated foam mixes at a rate of one part concentrate to 100 parts water. It should be sufficient to extinguish the flames at the Pohnpei dump but has not yet been put to use. Apparently, the fire tanker is sometimes used for potable water, and officials have said they don't want to contaminate the tanker for that purpose. The concentrate is biodegradable, but the concern remains valid. However, a proportioner could be purchased to utilize the foam without mixing it inside the tanker, but it has not yet been purchased. It's unclear if any plans have been made to do so. The proportioner hooks inline to the fire hoses and mixes the concentrate at the proper proportion at that point rather than in a tank. The foam is specifically designed to cut off oxygen supply to the fire, which water alone cannot do, particularly if it is an oil-based fire.

The solid waste problem in Pohnpei is not at all new. The Pohnpei government has been searching for a suitable, safe site to relocate the landfill for well over a decade, so far without success.

During former Governor Reed Oliver's term, Pohnpei State signed a memorandum of agreement with Tetra Tech and the USAID Clean Cities, Blue Ocean (CCBO) program to work toward developing more solutions to the problem of safely ridding Pohnpei of its consumer-based solid waste. Last year saw the implementation of a plastics recycling program subcontracted by Tetra Tech and USAID to be managed by Catholic Relief Services. That project is still in the process of ramping up but is actively collecting plastics, some of which can be recycled into building products locally, while some that cannot be locally recycled can be ground up for ease of exportation to markets where it can be put to use.



Meanwhile, they will be stored.

Early in his term, Governor Joseph issued an executive directive establishing a Pohnpei Solid Waste Management Task Force. He also signed off to extend the MOU with Tetra Tech and the USAID CCBO program. Representatives from those groups are actively coordinating with Pohnpei's task force to develop workable and safe options for Pohnpei's landfill. In September 2024, USAID funded an educational tour for task force members of the Los Angeles County, California landfill to learn about responsible ways of safely and productively handling solid waste. According to Herman Semes Jr., USAID Project Management Specialist, the participants came back with eyes fully open as to what good waste management looks like and with some ideas of how the techniques could work in Pohnpei.

Consultants with CCBO have told the Solid Waste Task Force that if changes in management of the landfill are implemented, the current landfill can continue to be used for up to five years. They have said that what would need to happen is that every day, fill dirt and exhaust pipes should be laid on each successive new layer of solid waste, continuing in a pyramid-like structure in that manner for up to five years during which time the state should continue to search for a suitable and safe new landfill site. Additionally, recyclables should be sorted from biodegradable solid waste, as is done in modern landfills.

But before anything can happen, the still-burning fire needs to be put out.

Garner said USAID's role in the process is not to usurp that of the government but to help develop and

safely implement a plan that works for Pohnpei. He said he has been told that any new dumpsite would need to be completely lined with concrete or another material to seal it off from potentially leaching into the land and contaminating the water table. "Whatever solution is developed needs to be absolutely safe," he said.

He also said that while the CCBO program is a USAID initiative, it has no interest in being the sole source of funding or support. So far, funds and supplies have come from other US government resources such as the U.S. Department of the Interior and from Japan. He said he hopes coordination will be done with JEMCO to allow some of the Compact funding to bolster the project. USAID is also open to coordinating with other outside donors, including JICA of Japan.

In the coming months, \$600,000 worth of US-funded equipment, including large oil storage units, will arrive in Pohnpei to be put to use at the landfill and the power plant. However, it won't be enough to cover everything that is needed. For instance, a large crusher for automobiles, plasma or acetylene cutters, and other equipment still need to be sourced. The US government, whether through USAID or other sources, will also provide extensive training as waste management rehabilitation plans take shape.

Semes said that participants in the tour of the Los Angeles County landfill were astounded by the education level of the employees there, with many holding master's degrees in engineering. That observation pointed to the need for extensive training and the enhancement of landfill management employee qualifications. It cannot be left to chance or unskilled labor, although that will still be necessary.

Micronesian student joins U.S. Coast Guard Academy

U.S. Embassy to the FSM

January 3, 2025

FSM—Stasia Fugog from the beautiful island of Yap in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) joined the United States Coast Guard Academy on June 13 following her high school graduation in May.

Ms. Fugog flew out to New London, Connecticut, on June 23 to report to her new position as the sixth FSM student to be accepted into the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. She said she chose the academy for its incredible opportunity to receive a free education and to grow into an exemplary leader.

Learning from diverse perspectives and norms has created an environment of endless growth and connection for Stasia, and her favorite part of the academy is the people. While she misses her family and the warmth of her home island, Stasia is embracing every challenge she encounters out there.

Her advice to new international cadets is to seize the opportunity. "It's not easy – you'll be challenged physically and mentally – but keep your eyes on the bigger picture: returning home and making a difference in your country."

Let's celebrate Stasia and her inspiring journey!



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...Soccer

Continued from front page

The results were as follows:

First place for the older kids went to the Red Team. Playing for the Red team was Deshone Sebastain, Heron Gallen, Bernard Suliol, Latiffa Pelep and Mark Jano. Second place was the Blue Team. Playing for the Blue Team was Jacob Tamanitoakula, Ali Silbanuz, Tatiana Kilafaken, Isaiah Duff and Ethan Wise.

We would like to recognize Deshone Sebastain for the most goals scored, Ali Silbanuz as MVP of the tournament, Florian Yatilman for best save in goal, Bernard Suliol for outstanding goal keeping, Jacob Tamanitoakula, Amaya Silbanuz and Kaitani Ehsa for their team work and passing skills, and Elijah Mudog for best goal scored, delivering an absolute banger from midcourt.

For the younger kids, the Blue Team got first place. On the Blue Team was Emma Haigh, Marco Dadius, Henry Preston, Elijah Johnson, Yaya Laurdine, and Deandre Yatilman.

We would like to recognize Emma Haigh for scoring the most goals. Laurstin (Dindin) Laurdine the MVP of the tournament, Marco Dadius for his enthusiasm, and Mayana Dadius for her teamwork.

By 1 p.m., or thereabouts, the matches were over. The children, though exhausted, were clearly satisfied. Then came lunch, prizes, and presents. Since it wouldn't be Christmas without Santa Claus, he arrived right on time. With his deep voice, he announced the winners, shook hands, and spread joy to the little ones.

It was a memorable day. If you have missed it, don't worry, many more events are programmed and remember to come for training every Tuesday and Thursday at 5:30 at the Kolonia track and field (PICS) and at the nearby gym when it rains. It does not matter what your nationality is, the language you speak, your age, your gender, or your skill. Everyone can join, and it is free. Remember, Pohnpei is the gold medallist for soccer at the MicroGames, we need to nurture the next generation of champions as soon as possible!

The PSA is deeply grateful for the



invaluable contributions from all donors and volunteers who made this memorable day possible. Special thanks go to Palm Terrace for the smiles on the children's faces as they got fruit juice from the coolers after their matches and for those on the younger ones who happily indulged in chocolate and candies. We would also like to thank Steven Laurdine, Diego Valadares, and Wai Mun (Jasmine) Hong for refereeing the matches.

We won't forget the generosity of CoM President Dr. Theresa Koroivulaono, who allowed the tournament to take

place at the CTEC facility, or the support from the Sports Office, led by Ramsie Joab, and the National Olympic Committee, headed by Senator Aurelio Joab, for their assistance, prizes, and the incredible cake. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you. We know you were overwhelmed by hungry children, but we hope you enjoyed it as much as they did.

We'd also like to thank the Kolonia Library, especially Mrs. Trueleen Albert, for donating a lot of books, which became the most cherished presents. The children timidly asked if they could take one, and when they learned they could take as many as they wanted, their joy was heartwarming.

Additional thanks go to Brdfitco. for t-shirts for outstanding players, Image Salon for offering a free haircut to the best player and to Napa, ACE, the Tennis Club, and the Fishing Club for their prizes and contributions to lunch. Simon's Market provided fresh tuna sandwiches that were devoured quickly, along with other volunteers who contributed to the success of the event.





College of Micronesia-FSM

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College Announces New Regent

Ran annim. Lwen wo. Kaselehlie. Mogethin.

On behalf of the Board of Regents, students, faculty, staff and administrators, we are excited to share that the new member representing the FSM National Government has been appointed to our College Board of Regents! Regent Lynn Sonden brings a wealth of experience and a strong commitment to advancing our College's mission. Please join us in extending a warm welcome to Regent Sonden as she begins her journey with the COMFSM family. Stay tuned for more details about our new regent and her vision for the future of our College.



COM-FSM Regent Lynn Sonden

Together, we look forward to enhancing the cycle of continuous improvement with innovative and resilient best practices to enable increased access to education for all!



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Under the Director to the Learning Resources Center (LRC), the person in this position will perform the following responsibilities:

- Maintain, and preserve historical and eventual records of the college.
- Provide library instruction.

Provide general public services and academic services

Program Coordinator (Pohnpei)

Coordinate the activities of the 3y-TYP and BS-Elementary Education college wide which include: assessment of students learning outcomes; collection and review of admission applications; administration of entrance essay; site visits; submission of reports including program review; scheduling of program courses; and oversight of curricula development.

Agronomy Researcher (Chuuk)

The Agronomy Researcher/Extension directly reports to the Coordinator of Cooperative Research and Extension (CRE), Chuuk Campus with management support from the College of Micronesia-FSM (COM-FSM) Campus Dean and the VPCRE. The position is based in and primarily responsible for agriculture/horticulture-related activities in the State of Pohnpei but will also serve and share responsibilities across the FSM.

Serious inquiries can be made to the Human Resources Office at email address hro@comfsm.fm and telephone number (691) 320-2482 extension numbers 179, 180, 181

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Fuel price changes effective December 2024

Vital FSM Petroleum Corporation

The Vital FSM Petroleum Corporation ("Vital FSMPC") wishes to announce new prices of unleaded gasoline (ULP), diesel (ULSD), and kerosene (DPK) which are effective since December 30, 2024. These adjustments were established based on an extensive review of global trends, domestic and regional prices. FSM continues to be directly impacted by the world market prices for refined oils and as such, any changes to the world market prices will eventually be reflected in fuel prices in FSM.

The new fuel prices for ARP and Wholesale prices are as follows:

- ULP – decrease of \$0.15 per gallon;
- ULSD – decrease of \$0.15 per gallon; and
- DPK – decrease of \$0.15 per gallon.

For most of 2024, we observed MOPS averaging at \$100 per barrel for all three products of ULP, ULSD and DPK. However, Vital FSMPC maintains a pricing strategy that adjusts slower than international movements to help customers from drastic market fluctuation rates.

U.S. Coast Guard assists Republic of Palau in search for 8 missing divers

By Chief Warrant Officer Sara Muir
U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia / Sector Guam

December 31, 2024

SANTA RITA, Guam—Eight divers reported missing on Dec. 26, 2024, near Peleliu Corner, a renowned dive site off Peleliu Island in Palau, were found alive by a good Samaritan on Dec. 27. The discovery came during a collaborative search effort led by Republic of Palau authorities with support from the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Joint Rescue Sub-Center (JRSC) Guam assumed Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator responsibilities when the search area expanded beyond Palau's territorial seas into the U.S. Coast Guard's search and rescue region. Initial search efforts focused southwest of Peleliu based on local observations, but updated U.S. Coast Guard drift modeling suggested the group likely drifted northwest.

The JRSC discussed the updated drift

International Price Movement

As per trends, the direction of future oil prices is unclear and while OPEC plus member countries continually cut oil production to increase prices, on the contrary, the U.S. has increased its oil production, thus keeping oil prices lower than anticipated.

Regional Price Comparison – ADO (diesel) and ULP

As of November 30th, 2024, the variance for ULSD pump prices between Guam and Pohnpei stands at \$0.92 (Guam = \$5.129/usg and Pohnpei = \$ 6.05/usg). Guam ULSD pump prices decreased by \$0.10 on the 16th of October 2024.

ULP/GASOLINE

As of November 30th, 2024, variance for ULP pump prices between Guam and Pohnpei stands at \$0.50 (Guam = \$4.899/usg and Pohnpei = \$ 5.40/usg). Guam ULP pump prices dropped by \$0.10 on the 16th of October 2024.

Vital FSMPC has monitored and evaluated the global and regional market trends for oil products throughout the year and despite the fluctuation of rates in markets and increasing logistics and

shipment costs, the domestic level prices have remained steady over the past few months.

The methodology which Vital FSMPC continues to utilize focusses on price stabilization over a period before it eventually rises or falls. Our Policy Framework allows us to stabilize domestic prices against international volatility and benchmark prices against neighboring countries pump prices.

The Chairman of Vital FSMPC Mr. Faustino Yangmog stated that "Vital FSMPC's approach towards fuel pricing allows customers to plan their spending and budget related to fuel products." He added that "customer welfare is important when considering pricing as Vital tries to maintain customer confidence whilst also managing the fluctuations globally."

According to the Chief Risk and Compliance Officer, Mr. Johnny Adolph "there will continue to be price volatility periods, and the Vital FSMPC remains dedicated to monitoring closely the trends in international fuel markets to ensure our customers receive consistent pricing that reflects market realities while mitigating price volatility risks."

available information."

The divers, including seven tourists and one guide, were last seen diving at Peleliu Corner, a popular but challenging site known for its strong currents. The incident underscores the importance of collaborative efforts and advanced tools in search and rescue operations.

The U.S. Coast Guard worked with Palau's Marine Law Enforcement Division, state rangers, and Pacific Mission Aviation during the search. JRSC Guam also coordinated the deployment of a U.S. Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules aircraft from Air Station Barber's Point in Hawaii to assist, though the case was resolved before its arrival.

The weather forecast for Palau's coastal waters was an east wind of 10 to 15 knots with wind waves up to 3 feet and northeast swells of 5 to 7 feet. Responders observed locally heavy showers and isolated thunderstorm activity.

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U.S. declares a National Day of Mourning for former President Carter

U.S. Embassy to the FSM

January 6, 2024

FSM—Nobel Prize-winning former U.S. President Jimmy Carter died on December 29 at the age of 100, making him the longest living president in U.S. history. Following his passing, President Biden issued an executive order to officially announce January 9 as a National Day of Mourning to pay homage to his memory.

Jimmy Carter served as the 39th President of the United States from 1977 to 1981. He will always be remembered as a leader whose commitment to world peace, democracy, and human rights resonated in the Pacific islands including Micronesia – not just during his presidency but during the years afterward. His achievements have influenced U.S. presence, foreign policy and humanitarian efforts in the islands.

One of his notable contributions to the

Pacific was propelled by his belief in independence. His administration brought discussions with the Trust Territories of the Pacific to the forefront in Washington, D.C, the initialing of the Compact of Free Association with Marshall Islands, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). Even before the first compact was signed in the 1980s, Carter's son and daughter-in-law visited some of the islands. This is proof that Carter was always present in the islands' journey in determining their political status.

The compact initialing advanced Carter's goal of terminating in 1981 the United Nations Trusteeship Agreement under which the United States administered the Trust Territory of the Pacific islands since 1947. The islands, once ruled by Spain and Germany, became a Japanese League of Nations mandate because of World War I and were captured by the United States during World War II. President Carter was an extraordinary leader who dedicated his years in and out of office to promoting peace, democracy, and human rights. May his soul rest eternally in peace!

U.S. Embassy Kolonia will be closed on Thursday, January 9, to pay tribute to the memory of James Earl Carter Jr., the 39th President of the United States of America.

Read the presidential proclamation here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2024/12/29/proclamation-announcing-the-death-of-james-earl-carter-jr/>



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President Simina receives credentials from Ambassadors of Fiji, the Czech Republic and the European Union

FSM Information Services

December 17, 2024

PALIKIR, POHNPEI—During the month of November, 2024, the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), under the leadership of His Excellency Wesley W. Simina, President of the FSM, recently hosted three formal Presentation of Credentials ceremonies for newly appointed ambassadors from the Republic of Fiji, the Czech Republic, and the European Union.

On November 27, 2024, President Simina received the Letter of Credence from His Excellency Karel Hejc, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Czech Republic to the FSM.

Ambassador Hejc emphasized the Czech Republic's shared interests with FSM, particularly in addressing climate change. President Simina highlighted the strong diplomatic ties between the two nations, established on October 6, 2004, and expressed appreciation for the Czech Republic's ambitious Climate Protection Policy. Adopted in 2017, the policy targets a 45% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

As a small island developing state, the FSM remains vulnerable to climate change, and President Simina conveyed his deep gratitude for the Czech Republic's global leadership in sustainability. He also expressed FSM's readiness to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation on shared priorities, including peace, security, and sustainable development.

On November 28, 2024, President Wesley W. Simina received the credentials of His Excellency William Brown Toganivalu, Fiji's Roving Ambassador to Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

President Simina warmly welcomed Ambassador Toganivalu and highlighted the historic and enduring relationship between FSM and Fiji, established in 1988. Fiji continues to play a critical role in hosting the FSM Embassy in Suva and supporting FSM students studying in Fijian institutions. The President praised Fiji's leadership

in fostering Pacific unity, particularly through the Suva Agreement and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Ambassador Toganivalu reaffirmed Fiji's commitment to advancing mutual priorities, including discussions to renew the 2012 Memorandum of Understanding on Development Cooperation. Both leaders underscored the importance of addressing shared challenges such as climate change, regional security, and educational development.

On November 29, 2024, President Simina welcomed Her Excellency Barbara Plinkert, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the European Union to the FSM.

During the ceremony, Ambassador

Plinkert emphasized the urgency of addressing the global impacts of climate change and reaffirmed the EU's alignment with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. She underscored the EU's steadfast commitment to FSM in areas such as climate resilience, biodiversity, environmental protection, ocean governance, human rights, and shared values.

President Simina expressed appreciation for the EU's longstanding partnership, from the Cotonou Agreement to the new Samoa Agreement, which prioritizes cooperation on trade, investment, sustainable development, and regionalization. The President reiterated FSM's interest in hosting an EU Delegation presence in the FSM, which would significantly enhance mutual efforts toward regional

integration and development.

At the regional and global levels, President Simina highlighted the EU's invaluable support for implementing frameworks like the 2025 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and advancing climate action. The FSM looks forward to continued collaboration with the EU to address the shared challenges faced by vulnerable small island nations.

The FSM remains committed to deepening its relationships with Fiji, the Czech Republic, and the European Union. Each Presentation of Credentials ceremony marks another significant step in the FSM's diplomatic engagements, reflecting shared values, mutual respect, and a collective commitment to tackling global challenges.



Governor Joseph attends Legislative hearing on recycling and PTA Payroll

Pohnpei Public Information

December 24, 2024

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph attended a legislative hearing by the Committee of the Whole to address funding for recycling initiatives and the Pohnpei Transportation Authority (PTA) payroll. Joined by PTA Commissioner Hon. Welsin Helgenberger, EPA Executive Officer Francisco Celestine, and Acting Director of Treasury and Administration Meryda Inos.

The Governor participated in discussions resulting in the proposed appropriation of \$200,000 for recycling and \$350,000 for PTA payroll, sourced from carryover funds from FY 2023. Governor Joseph commended the Legislature for their collaboration and reaffirmed the Administration's commitment to sustainable public services and environmental stewardship.



Official handover of the Yap Day Care Center

FSM Information Services

December 19, 2024

COLONIA, Yap—The Yap Day Care Center recently celebrated its official handover on November 26, 2024, marking a milestone in advancing early childhood education and empowering women in the Yap community. The event, coordinated by Ms. Takiko Ifamilik, Digital Gender Coordinator from the FSM Department of Health, represented a collaborative effort to address the needs of Yap’s children and working mothers. Ms. Ifamilik attended on behalf of Secretary Marcus Samo and facilitated the handover ceremony.

In her remarks, Ms. Ifamilik emphasized the government’s role in creating a nurturing environment for children. “The Simina-Palik Administration strives to seize every opportunity to ensure children can learn, thrive, and reach their potential,” she stated. She recalled President Simina’s visit to the facility earlier this year when the Yap Women’s Association, represented by its President, Ms. Maria Law, requested assistance. That visit set in motion the collaboration that culminated in the center’s successful handover.

The ceremony underscored the center’s broader significance for the community. “This center is not just a building; it stands as a symbol of hope, progress, and empowerment for our community,” Ms. Ifamilik said. She also reaffirmed the commitment to ongoing collaboration: “We will continue working with the Yap State Government and the Yap Women’s Association to ensure our support does not stop here. Where there is demand and we have the means, we will deliver.”

Director Alex Gilfiley delivered welcoming remarks on behalf of the Yap State Governor, commending the collaborative efforts that brought the day care center to life. Joining the celebration were Mr. Kevin J. Petrini, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative and Country Manager for the Pacific Office in FSM, along with his team, Yap State Government representatives, and the officers of the Yap Women’s Association.

Ms. Maria Law, President of the Yap Women’s Association, expressed heartfelt gratitude for the establishment of the center, noting its dual role as a safe space for children and a source of hope for working mothers. “Knowing



their children are safe gives mothers the confidence to pursue opportunities for their families and themselves,” she said.

The handover of the Yap Day Care Center represents a significant investment in the future of Yap’s children and women. The FSM Department of Health & Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Yap State Government, is also supporting the Yap Women’s Association in creating an online business to market locally made crafts and achieve self-reliance. Furthermore, plans are underway to establish a counseling or crisis center for women, children, and other vulnerable groups, underscoring the

collective commitment to gender equality, inclusivity, and empowerment.

This initiative would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the Government of the Republic of India through the India-UN Development Partnership Fund-South-South Cooperation under the FSM Strengthening Gender Machinery Project. Their contributions enabled the renovation of the Yap Day Care Center, and the FSM government commends their dedication to fostering partnerships that drive sustainable development.



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Biosecurity Facility officially handed over to Yap State Government, strengthening the FSM's efforts to safeguarding biodiversity from invasive alien species

FSM Information Services

December 22, 2024

COLONIA, Yap—The Yap Biosecurity Facility was officially handed over from the National Government to the Yap State Government on December 17, 2024, marking a significant step in strengthening the Federated States of Micronesia's biosecurity efforts. The facility serves as a critical infrastructure in managing invasive species and safeguarding local ecosystems. Its completion is an important milestone in building the country's biosecurity capacity.

The handover ceremony, which took place at the Yap International Airport was attended by key government officials, biosecurity officers, UNDP representatives and the GEF6 FSM Invasive Alien Species Steering Committee members and staff. The ceremony underscored the continued commitment to safeguarding the FSM's unique biodiversity and addressing the threats posed by invasive species, pests and diseases of concern. While there is a need for ongoing investment to equip the facility with modern technology, the facility's establishment marks a commitment to long-term solutions and environmental stewardship.

Assistant Secretary for the Agriculture Division of the FSM Department of Resources and Development, Ms. Menoleen Jacob-Oswalt, delivered her remarks on behalf of the FSM National

Government, emphasizing that the facility will serve as a crucial resource in the efforts of effectively monitoring, managing, and responding to biosecurity risks.

"I am confident that, with ongoing investment and collaboration, we can build upon this foundation to ensure our biosecurity systems are resilient and responsive to future challenges. This handover marks the beginning of a new chapter in our shared responsibility to protect our nation. The FSM Department of R&D will continue to support the state governments as we advance together, and I eagerly anticipate the positive impact this facility will have in strengthening our biosecurity initiatives."

Aquila Van Keuk, UNDP Programme Analyst, added by explaining that dedicated biosecurity facilities at FSM's key ports is an initiative of the GEF6 FSM Invasive Alien Species Project, a project under the Agriculture Division of FSM R&D, funded by Global Environment Facilities through United Nations Development Programme.

"Excitingly, the facility here in Yap is the first in FSM to be completed under the GEF6 FSM IAS project. This new facility will not only strengthen the ability of Yap to protect its borders against invasive alien species but will also support the broader goal of institutionalizing biosecurity across all sectors and levels of government.



By ensuring that biosecurity measures are better enforced and understood, we are taking a critical step toward safeguarding our natural ecosystems, agricultural systems, and marine resources."

The Governor of Yap, the Honorable Charles Chieng, conveyed his gratitude on behalf of the people of Yap. "I thank the FSM Government for working to secure the funding for this facility, as well as the United Nations Development Programme for availing such funding. I also want to especially thank the FSM Department of Resources and Development and the FSM Department of Transportation Communications and Infrastructure, all the Program Managers and Project Engineers and Inspectors, and also the

Waab Transportation Company and their workers for everyone's tireless efforts in the construction of this facility. I share with you all my gratitude, and that of the people of Yap, for making this facility a reality, knowing that there is at least in part a line of defense against harmful agents."

The FSM National Government, through the GEF6 FSM Invasive Alien Species Project, looks forward to further strengthening the partnership with local stakeholders to enhance the facility's capabilities, ensuring that it can fulfill its important role in biosecurity protection for years to come.

The FSM and United States sign extension of humanitarian assistance annex to MUORA

FSM Information Services

December 22, 2024

WASHINGTON, DC--Representatives of the Federated States of Micronesia and the United States recently signed an extension of the Humanitarian Assistance – FSM (HAFSM) Annex to the U.S.-FSM Military Use and Operating Rights Agreement (MUORA) during a brief ceremony at the U.S. State Department on December 18, 2024.

Ambassador Jackson Soram signed for the FSM with Ambassador Karen Stewart signing for the United States. Staff from the FSM Embassy and the State Department were on hand to

witness the signing of an agreement that will serve to extend the Annex through September 30, 2043.

The MUORA was signed in 1982 and entered into force with the Compact in 1986. The Annex provides the conditions under which the Government of the United States can make available certain humanitarian assistance to the Government of the FSM. The Annex being extended was first developed during the negotiations for the 2003 Amended U.S.-FSM Compact to facilitate this assistance. While the MUORA itself remains in force indefinitely, the HAFSM Annex to MUORA needed to be extended in a new agreement between the two

governments to cover the full new period of economic assistance under the Compact, through the end of Fiscal Year 2043.

The FSM looks forward to bringing the extension of the duration of the HAFSM Annex into force through a future formal exchange of notes in the near future.



Ambassador Chigiyal presents credentials as FSM's first Ambassador to Australia, establishing mutual diplomatic presence



FSM Information Services

December 17, 2024

CANBERRA, Australia—On December 4, 2024, her Excellency Jane J. Chigiyal presented her Letter of Credence to Her Excellency the Honorable Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, officially assuming her role as the first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) to Australia. The historic ceremony was held at Government House in Yarralumla,

Canberra. Ambassador Chigiyal was accompanied by Mr. Brendy H. Carl, First Secretary of the FSM Embassy in Canberra.

This milestone marks a significant advancement in the Simina-Palik Administration's commitment to strengthening the long-standing relationship between FSM and Australia, which has spanned thirty-seven years. With the establishment of the new Embassy in Canberra, the FSM now concludes a circle of mutual diplomatic presence, complementing

the FSM's resident embassies in the United States, Japan, China, and now Australia.

Following the credentials ceremony, Ambassador Chigiyal and Governor-General Mostyn exchanged views on shared priorities, including gender equality and empowerment, climate change, and private sector partnerships, among other areas of mutual interest.

As part of the accreditation program, the Governor-General hosted a formal lunch for participating Heads of

Mission and their spouses. Diplomats from Spain, Colombia, FSM, Angola, and the Philippines were welcomed with a traditional Welcome to Country smoking ceremony performed by local Elders, celebrating Australia's Indigenous cultural heritage.

With the opening of its diplomatic mission in Canberra, the FSM joins over 100 resident embassies in Australia, underscoring its commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation and expanding its global diplomatic footprint.

Vice President Palik welcomes Major General Lance Okamura of U.S. Army Pacific Command to the FSM

FSM Information Services

December 19, 2024

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—On December 12, 2024 the Honorable Vice President Aren B. Palik welcomed Major General Lance Okamura, Deputy Commander for U.S. Army Pacific Command, and his delegation to the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). The delegation included U.S. Ambassador Jennifer L. Johnson and Defense Attaché Jason Neal. Vice President Palik was joined by Secretary of the Department of Justice, the Honorable Leonito Bacalando Jr., and Deputy Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Honorable Ricky F. Cantero.

Vice President Palik extended his warm appreciation to Major General Okamura and his delegation for their visit and

acknowledged the constructive role of the U.S. Department of Defense in advancing shared interests under the Compact of Free Association. He highlighted the importance of the Joint Committee Meeting (JCM) in facilitating the coordination and implementation of these shared priorities, referencing the recent JCM held in Chuuk from October 13–14, 2024.

During the courtesy call, Major General Okamura expressed gratitude to the FSM, which boasts one of the highest per capita enlistment rates in the U.S. Armed Forces. He noted that, annually, at least 70 young men and women from the FSM enlist in the U.S. military. Major General Okamura also shared U.S. Army Pacific's intent to enhance its presence

in the FSM through community support initiatives, including deploying Army medical practitioners for healthcare engagements, providing Army engineers for construction projects, and offering cybersecurity assistance.

Vice President Palik thanked Major General Okamura for recognizing FSM citizens serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, noting the many who have made the ultimate sacrifice. He emphasized the importance of honoring their valor. He also welcomed the proposed U.S. Army Pacific initiatives and reiterated the FSM's request for the return of Civic Action Teams (CAT) to the FSM, a topic consistently raised at Joint Committee Meetings. The Vice President expressed hope for progress at the next JCM, scheduled to be held in Guam.

Additionally, Vice President Palik expressed gratitude for the recent Pacific Partnership missions in Kosrae and Yap, which delivered critical health services and infrastructure improvements. He eagerly anticipates the next Pacific Partnership missions, proposed to be held in Pohnpei and Chuuk from June to September 2025, where similar support will be provided. Most importantly, Vice President Palik reaffirmed the FSM's steadfast commitment to its obligations under Title III of the Compact of Free Association.

Vice President Palik concluded the meeting by thanking Major General Okamura for his visit and expressed his desire for continued collaboration with U.S. Army Pacific in future exercises and initiatives planned for the FSM.

The FSM and Philippines enter into MOU to strengthen health workforce with focus on reducing maternal and infant mortality

FSM Information Services

December 19, 2024

MAKATI, Philippines—While attending the Conference on Philippine-Pacific Partnership on Sustainable Health Workforce for Health Security, held from November 27–29, 2024, in Makati, Philippines, Secretary Marcus Samo of the FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs met with his counterpart, Secretary Dr. Teodoro J. Herbosa of the Philippine Department of Health. The two leaders discussed health issues of mutual concern, culminating in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to enhance collaboration between the two nations.

The MOU outlines a partnership in which the Philippine government will deploy specialized visiting medical teams to the FSM, starting with obstetrics and gynecology specialists. These teams will provide training to FSM medical staff, with the FSM covering transportation and accommodation costs. This initiative is expected to help reduce infant and maternal

mortality rates in the FSM. As part of the agreement, the FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs will identify the areas of medical specialization needed, while the Philippine Department of Health will source and dispatch the appropriate medical teams.

The MOU was officially initialed by Undersecretary Dr. Kenneth G. Ronguillo from the Philippine Department of Health and Assistant Attorney General Robert Nakasone Jr. from the FSM Department of Justice, who acted as witnesses to the agreement.

The conference, co-convened by Secretary Herbosa and the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for the Western Pacific Region, brought together 17 Pacific Island Ministers of Health and donor partners to address the critical need for a sustainable health workforce in the region. The Philippines, with its central location, robust presence



of UN agencies, and renowned reputation for producing and exporting skilled health professionals, was an ideal host for the event.

The outcome statement from the conference underscored the shared commitment to addressing the shortage of skilled health workers in the region. Participants recognized that without an adequate number of health professionals equipped with the right skills, competence, and morale, the Pacific region would



continue to face significant health security challenges.

This newly signed MOU reflects the FSM's dedication to strengthening its health systems and addressing critical gaps, ensuring a healthier and more secure future for its people.

President Simina and Governor Joseph Sign commitment to endorse Blue Prosperity Micronesia and 30% Marine Protection Commitment

FSM Information Services

December 22, 2024

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—In a landmark step toward sustainable ocean management, H.E. President Wesley Simina, T.H. Governor Stevenson Joseph, and Mr. Ted Waitt have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the State of Pohnpei to support the Blue Prosperity Micronesia program. The signing took place on the margins of the recent State and National Leadership Conference (SNLC) on December 11, 2024.

This new MOU initiates the development of a legally-binding Marine Spatial Plan for Pohnpei's waters from 0–12 nautical miles. The plan will leverage scientific data and local input to create strategies for sustainable ocean management. The process will be led by Pohnpei State, with technical support from the Waitt Institute, and will include extensive consultations with local communities to ensure the plan reflects the needs of the people of Pohnpei. The agreement underscores a shared commitment to Marine Spatial Planning, advancing FSM's Blue Economy, strengthening sustainable fisheries, and protecting 30% of the nation's

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The Blue Prosperity Micronesia program will align with and complement Pohnpei's history of ocean stewardship and existing sustainable ocean management efforts. The program also builds upon FSM's existing marine protection commitments, including supporting the regional goals of the Micronesia Challenge.

President Simina emphasized the importance of collaboration, stating, "The Simina-Palik Administration is deeply committed to meeting the aims of Blue Prosperity Micronesia. We are extremely pleased that Pohnpei State is also dedicated to meeting BPM's objectives. National and state-level collaboration is essential to achieve a better future for all of FSM, and we look forward to achieving these goals together."

Pohnpei joins Kosrae, Yap and Chuuk states, who have also signed MOUs to endorse and implement the BPM program. Governor Stevenson Joseph said, "The State of Pohnpei is proud to honor our shared commitments to protect the FSM's marine resources, both at the state and the national level. The development of a Marine Spatial

Plan that takes into account Pohnpei's unique features will allow our government and our people to sustainably manage our resources for generations to come."

In 2019, the Government of the FSM signed an MOU to create Blue Prosperity Micronesia (BPM), a government-led partnership with the Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT) and the Blue Prosperity Coalition to support the sustainable growth of marine resources in the FSM, optimize ocean uses, protect 30% of FSM's waters, strengthen fisheries management, and support the development of marine industries.

Ted Waitt, Founder & Chairman of the Waitt Institute and Waitt Foundation, praised FSM's leadership. "The FSM's dedication to sustainable ocean management at both the national and state level is inspiring. The Blue Prosperity Coalition is honored to support Pohnpei in achieving its ocean management goals and preserving its cultural heritage."

About Blue Prosperity Micronesia: Blue Prosperity Micronesia (BPM) is a program to support the sustainable growth



of marine resources in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). This program is government-led, with the goal to optimize ocean uses, protect 30% of FSM's waters, strengthen fisheries management, and support the development of marine industries.

BPM brings a holistic approach based on best available science and stakeholder participation to build a healthier marine environment that will benefit future generations. Since launching in July 2019, BPM has made significant strides towards better management of FSM's ocean for increased ocean health, food security, economic opportunity and climate change resilience. To learn more about Blue Prosperity Micronesia, please visit <https://www.blueprosperitymicronesia.org/>.

FSM receives first contribution in ongoing fundraising efforts for One UN House Micronesia

FSM Information Services

December 20, 2024

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—The Government of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is pleased to announce that it has received its first contribution toward the construction of the One UN House Micronesia Complex, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at strengthening the presence and accessibility of the United Nations (UN) in the region. This initial contribution of USD 5 million, generously provided by the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, marks a major milestone in the FSM's fundraising efforts for this project.

The One UN House Micronesia Complex will serve as a centralized hub for UN agencies operating across the Micronesian region. Strategically located in the FSM, it is designed to facilitate improved coordination, communication, and delivery of essential services to the people of Micronesia and the Pacific. The project highlights the FSM's commitment to fostering international partnerships and enhancing regional development through sustainable and people-centered initiatives.

This monumental project will transform the presence of the United Nations in Micronesia by providing a centralized office complex for 18 specialized agencies of the United Nations equipped with an estimated 120 professional personnel.



The project conceptual design consists of Offices and a Conference Center with a design that is inspired by the history and culture of the five Micronesian countries, namely the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Kiribati and the Republic of Nauru, as primary clientele, including cultural representation of the four FSM states.

The Federated States of Micronesia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia established formal diplomatic relations on November

7, 2023. President H.E. Wesley W. Simina expressed his profound gratitude to the Government of Saudi Arabia for its generous support. “This donation represents a vote of confidence in the vision of the One UN House Micronesia Complex and the FSM’s leadership in advancing collaborative regional initiatives,” President Simina said. “We are deeply grateful to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for championing this effort to bring UN resources closer to the communities they serve.”

Its strategic location within the FSM ensures that critical UN programs, including those focused on sustainable development, climate resilience, and humanitarian support, can be effectively delivered to Micronesian communities.

The FSM calls upon other international partners to join in supporting this cause to bring the One UN House Micronesia Complex into reality, which aligns with shared goals of fostering sustainable development and improving lives in Micronesia and the broader Pacific.

The FSM Government commends UN Resident Coordinator Jaap van Hierden for a remarkable tenure

FSM Information Services

December 20, 2024

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—His Excellency President Wesley W. Simina welcomed Mr. Jaap van Hierden, United Nations Resident Coordinator for the Multi-Country Office (UNMCO) in Micronesia, for a courtesy call and exit meeting to mark the conclusion of his highly successful tenure. The meeting was an opportunity to celebrate Mr. van Hierden’s remarkable contributions to the FSM and the broader Micronesian region during his leadership.

President Simina extended heartfelt congratulations to Mr. van Hierden, highlighting the transformative achievements accomplished under his stewardship.

Mr. van Hierden was instrumental in strengthening the operational capacity of the UNMCO office in Kolonia, Pohnpei. His leadership enabled a more visible and

effective UN presence, including efforts to expand office facilities and centralize operations under a cohesive coordinating authority. This reorganization enhanced the delivery of UN programs across Micronesia, ensuring greater efficiency and impact.

Under his tenure, several new UN agencies established a presence in Pohnpei, bringing the total number of UN agencies in FSM to 17, with more expected to follow. This expansion has not only improved access to UN programs but also created additional employment opportunities for FSM citizens within the UN system.

Mr. van Hierden also played a critical role in advancing the vision for the UN One Micronesia House, a centralized hub for UN agencies in the region. His engagement with local leadership facilitated the allocation of land for the project, while his advocacy efforts helped with its ongoing fundraising efforts. The proposed complex,

which has progressed to the concept design phase, is expected to move forward in the coming years, further solidifying the UN’s commitment to Micronesia.

Beyond FSM, Mr. van Hierden’s efforts elevated the profile of the UN system across the Micronesian region. His outreach to regional leaders enhanced appreciation for the UN’s vital role in supporting national development goals and fostering regional collaboration.

As the first-ever Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Micronesia, Mr. van Hierden leaves a lasting legacy. His leadership has set a strong foundation for future UN engagement in the region, and his contributions will be remembered as a cornerstone of FSM’s partnership with the UN.

On behalf of the Government and the people of the Federated States of Micronesia,

President Simina conveyed sincere gratitude to Mr. van Hierden for his outstanding service and dedication. “Your tenure has been an enriching chapter in the history of the FSM, and your legacy as a champion of sustainable development and cooperation will continue to be remembered.” President Simina remarked.

The President also wished Mr. van Hierden and his family the very best in their future endeavors, hoping that their time in Micronesia had been both meaningful and memorable.



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



The Pacific Community (SPC) invites applications for the position of Finance Officer within its Micronesia Regional Office (MRO) 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 Officer** will be responsible for the provision of financial services to the Regional Office's activities and the technical divisions' programs and projects housed within the Regional Office.

The key responsibilities of the role include the following:

1. **Financial administration**
2. **Compliance, risk management and business processes**
3. **Procurement and grant services**
4. **Coordination and office administration**

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

Qualifications

- Degree in accounting, finance, business administration or public administration or equivalent bodies of knowledge and experience.

Essential experience and skills

- At least 5 years' experience and demonstrated competence in same field.
- Demonstrated experience in the use of financial management information systems (FMIS).
- Experience in coordination and delivery of financial services to large projects with multiple donor and agency/division participation.
- Excellent working knowledge in Microsoft Office tools specifically Excel.
- Ability to work under minimal supervision.
- Fluency in English.
- Knowledge of Pacific Island countries and territories is an advantage.

Remuneration – the **Finance Officer** is a Band 9 position in SPC's 2024 salary scale, with a starting salary range of 2,918–3,582 SDR (special drawing rights) per month, which currently converts to approximately USD 3,881–4,764. An offer of appointment for an initial contract will be made in the lower half of this range, with due consideration being given to experience and qualifications. Progression within the salary scale will be based on annual performance reviews. Remuneration of expatriate SPC staff members is not subject to income tax in Federated States of Micronesia; Federated States of Micronesia Nationals employed by SPC in Pohnpei will be subject to income tax.

Benefits – SPC provides a housing allowance of USD 1,000 USD – 2,000 USD. Establishment and relocation grant, removal expenses, airfares, home leave, medical and life insurance, and education allowance are available for eligible employees and their recognised dependents. Employees are entitled to 25 days of annual leave and access to SPC's Provident Fund (contributing 8% of salary, to which SPC adds a 10% contribution).

Closing date: 26 January 2025 – 11:00 pm (Noumea time)

Job Reference: CR000339

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

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

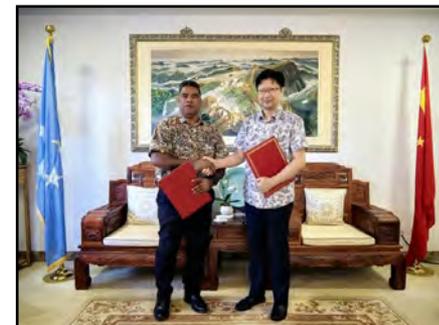
- an updated resume with contact details for three professional referees
- a cover letter detailing your skills, experience and interest in this position
- responses to all screening questions

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 (maximum of 2,000 characters per question):

1. What is a common financial risk in a donor-funded, multi-year project, and how can it be mitigated?
2. Provide us with the challenges/issues you have faced when trying to obtain financial documents for grants/acquittals in a timely manner.
3. Briefly describe your experience in reporting on all financial transactions in an approved format and meeting reporting deadlines.

China funds Utwe FSM-China Friendship Gym in Kosrae



Embassy of the PRC to the FSM

December 25, 2024

FSM—On December 12, the Chinese Embassy in the FSM held a handover ceremony for the funding for the supporting facilities of the Utwe FSM-China Friendship Gymnasium of Kosrae State. Ambassador Wu Wei attended the ceremony and handed over the cash payment voucher to Dr. Tulensru Waguk, the Kosrae State Director of Education, who was on behalf of the Governor of Kosrae State.

Ambassador Wu said that China's funding for the construction of toilets, lights, basketball hoops and stripping paints project at the Utwe FSM-China Friendship Gymnasium is another vivid manifestation of China-FSM friendship. He hoped that the Kosrae State make good use of the funding to further improve the gym and bring more convenience to the local people. China is willing to continue to deepen practical cooperation with the FSM in various fields, and provide assistance within its capacity to help the economic and social development of Kosrae State, so as to promote the building of a global community of a shared future.

On behalf of Governor Tulensa Palik, Waguk extended the gratitude to China for its long-term sincere and selfless assistance to Kosrae State, and said that Kosrae State will make efficient use of the funding to enable the Utwe FSM-China Friendship Gymnasium to play a greater role and better benefit the local people.

The FSM Participates in the 5th Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5) on Plastics Pollution

FSM Information Services

December 20, 2024

Busan, Republic of Korea—The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) reinforced its leadership in global environmental efforts by participating in the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5), held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from November 25 to December 1, 2024.

The United Nations Environment Assembly, in Resolution 5/14, requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Program to convene an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, comprised of delegates from member states and civil society observers, to develop and adopt an international legally binding instrument on plastics pollution, including in the marine environment, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastic. The work was to be completed at the end of 2024.

The contentious issues were on: a) whether to include production, which the FSM and many other ambitious countries see as the heart of the treaty and the source of more than 90% of the rising greenhouse gas emissions from plastics; b) whether to address chemicals

of concern, which are what make plastics so dangerous to the health of people and so threatening to FSM’s fisheries-based economy; and, c) how to support developing countries’ implementation of the treaty, including whether to establish a dedicated fund that the FSM has been calling for since before INC-2 in Paris.

The long hours of difficult negotiations to streamline ideas and bridge gap between countries’ positions lasted until the early morning of December 1, 2024 without reaching agreement on a new treaty to end plastic pollution. Delegates agreed to suspend the negotiation session and reconvene in 2025. While the original goal of finalizing a treaty at this session was not achieved, several significant advancements were made, including:

1. Proposals by over 100 countries to adopt “a global target to reduce the production of primary plastic polymers to sustainable levels,” as called for in the Bridge to Busan: Declaration on Primary Plastic Polymers, launched by the Federated States of Micronesia at INC-4 in Ottawa in April.
2. A Declaration on Plastic Products and Chemicals of Concern, developed and read by Mexico in the closing plenary, on behalf of 99 supporting countries, including the FSM.

3. The “Stand Up for Ambition” statement read by Rwanda in the closing plenary. This was supported in advance by 85 countries, including the FSM, and later by many more who joined in a standing ovation for the statement during the closing plenary.

These are all now available on the Bridge to Busan website: www.bridgetobusan.com



The FSM delegation was led by Honorable Andrew Yatilman, Secretary of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management. Additionally, Secretary Yatilman undertook important bilateral ministerial level engagements with France and the Republic of Korea, as well as participated in high-level meetings of the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution, of which the FSM is a member, and which helped to coordinate the three highlights noted above. Secretary Yatilman was also widely quoted on the international press (see, e.g., <https://www.barrons.com/.../showdown-looms-on-plastic...>), having highlighted the climate, food security, public health and economic threats that plastic pollution and the greenhouse gases emitted from producing plastics impose on the FSM.



The FSM delegation included T.H. Andrew Yatilman, Secretary of the Department of Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Management; Mrs. Cynthia Ehmes, Assistant Secretary for Environment; Mr. Iven Yaropiy, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Multilateral Affairs; Ms. Darla Yatilman, Program Manager; and legal advisors Mr. Clement Mulalap and Mr. Dennis Clare.

Handover ceremony of solar water purification systems in Chuuk State

FSM Information Services

December 19, 2024

WENO, Chuuk—The handover of 15 solar water purification systems for the outer islands of Chuuk state was recently celebrated on November 27, 2024, a crucial step towards improving access to clean and safe water. The ceremony was attended by Acting Assistant Secretary Augustine Sue, representing FSM Secretary of Health Marcus Samo; representatives from the Chuuk State Government; Kevin J. Petrini, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative; and Dr. Dorina Fred of the Chuuk State Department of Health Services.

Ms. Myjoleen Kim, speaking on behalf of the Chuuk State Government, described the initiative as a “game changer” for the health and well-being of underserved communities. Mr. Petrini highlighted the importance of partnerships in delivering practical solutions and praised the collaboration between the UNDP, Chuuk State Government, and public health agencies.

Acting Assistant Secretary Sue reaffirmed the FSM



National Government’s commitment to clean water access, stating, “These systems will significantly improve health outcomes and empower women who often bear the responsibility of water collection.” The Acting Assistant Secretary also extended gratitude to the Government of India for its support through the India-UN Development Partnership Fund under the FSM Strengthening Gender Machinery Project.



This initiative demonstrates the value of sustainable solutions in addressing basic needs. The solar water purification systems will make a lasting impact by tackling long-standing water challenges and enhancing quality of life for Chuuk State’s outer island communities.

Governor Stevenson A. Joseph attends First International Day for Migrants in Pohnpei

Pohnpei Public Information

December 23, 2024

Kolonia, Pohnpei—On December 21, 2024, the Pohnpei State Government joined the global celebration of the International Day for Migrants, marking the first time the event was observed in Pohnpei. Held at the Kolonia China Friendship Gym, the event brought together people from diverse nationalities, including those from Fiji, Afghanistan, Nepal, Brazil, Cuba, Ethiopia, and Australia, highlighting the richness of Pohnpei's growing multicultural community.

Governor Stevenson A. Joseph attended the event as a special guest and delivered remarks emphasizing the importance of inclusivity and support for all who call Pohnpei home. He highlighted migration as a universal experience, drawing parallels to the experiences of FSM citizens who have become migrants in countries like the United States.

“Migration is a part of the modern world,” said Governor Joseph. “Pohnpei is committed to welcoming and supporting everyone who chooses to make our island their home.”

The event, organized in collaboration with the International Organization



for Migration (IOM), featured Chief of Mission Salvatore Sortino, who opened the program with remarks that celebrated the contributions of migrants to host societies. “Migrants enrich and strengthen communities,” he stated.

Attendees were treated to vibrant cultural performances, exotic dishes and dances, showcasing the traditions of the various communities represented in Pohnpei. A highlight of the event was a panel discussion on migration, exploring topics such as cultural integration, shared experiences, and the opportunities and challenges faced by migrants.

The Pohnpei State Government extends its gratitude to IOM and all participants for making the inaugural International Day for Migrants a success. This celebration underscores Pohnpei’s commitment to fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for all.



Governor Joseph expresses gratitude for the return of a sacred stone from Nan Madol

Pohnpei Public Information

December 26, 2024

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph received a heartfelt and unexpected package this week in the mail, accompanied by a letter that speaks volumes about the enduring allure and sacredness of Pohnpei’s cultural heritage.

The package contained a stone taken from the world-renowned historical site of Nan Madol in 2002. The accompanying letter was penned by a woman, Mrs. Linda Gentile, who visited Pohnpei with her husband over twenty years ago. In her moving note, she confessed to her husband’s act of taking the stone during their visit and expressed her lingering guilt for not preventing the act.

“I should have objected more strenuously, but I didn’t and always felt guilty that I didn’t insist he not, or at the very least, just returned it,” she wrote. Alongside her sincere apology, the sender enclosed a \$500 check payable to the Pohnpei State Government, requesting that it be used to assist with the preservation and maintenance of Nan Madol.

Governor Joseph was visibly moved by this act of accountability and goodwill. “Nan Madol is not just a symbol of Pohnpei’s history but a testament to the ingenuity and spirit of our ancestors. Its sacredness must always be respected. I appreciate the courage and thoughtfulness it took for this individual to make amends and return the stone to its rightful place,” said Governor Joseph.

As Pohnpeians, we hold Nan Madol sacred, and to have a foreigner compelled to return a piece of our sacred history is a good reminder of its importance and sacredness. This act highlights how deeply the site’s significance resonates with all who visit it, emphasizing the universal value of preserving cultural heritage.

The Governor has committed to ensuring the stone is returned to its proper location within Nan Madol with the guidance of cultural preservation experts. Furthermore, the enclosed funds will be directed toward ongoing efforts to maintain and protect this UNESCO World Heritage Site, safeguarding it for

future generations.

“On behalf of the people of Pohnpei, I extend my gratitude to Mrs. Gentile and her husband for their honesty and desire to make things right. Their actions demonstrate the profound respect our visitors can develop for the cultural and historical treasures of Pohnpei,” Governor Joseph added.

Nan Madol, often referred to as the “Venice of the Pacific,” holds immense spiritual and historical significance. This incident serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of respecting cultural heritage and the positive impact of taking responsibility for past actions.

The Pohnpei State Government remains committed to protecting and celebrating the island’s rich history and cultural sites. Governor Joseph encourages all visitors to cherish and honor the sacred places they visit in Pohnpei and throughout the Federated States of Micronesia.

For more information, please contact the Pohnpei State Government’s Public Affairs Office.



Dear Governor Joseph:
In 2002 my husband and I lived in the Marshall Islands (Kwajalein) and visited your beautiful island before returning to our home in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. My husband stole a stone from Nan Madol. I should have objected more strenuously, but I didn't, and always felt guilty that I didn't insist he not, or at the very least, just returned it. There was then, and still is, no excuse for our ignorance and thoughtlessness. I hope you will use the included funds to help maintain Nan Madol, at least in some small way. I apologize for the theft. Linda Gentile

14th SNLC concludes with endorsement of FSM Strategic Development and Infrastructure Development Plans

FSM Information Services

December 18, 2024

Palikir, Pohnpei, FSM—On December 11, 2024, the 14th State and National Leadership Conference (SNLC) concluded successfully in Palikir, Pohnpei, with leaders of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) reaffirming their collective commitment to the nation’s progress through the unanimous endorsement of six key resolutions, including the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2024–2043 and the Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) 2025–2034.

The two-day conference, chaired by His Excellency Wesley W. Simina, President of the FSM, brought together national and state leaders, private sector representatives, civil society organizations, and regional partners. Discussions focused on critical areas such as economic resilience, infrastructure, cybersecurity, and equitable development across the nation.

In his opening statement, President Simina underscored the importance of the SDP and IDP as vital frameworks for FSM’s long-term development. The SDP, spanning 2024–2043, sets ambitious goals across thematic areas such as education, healthcare, economic

diversification, and environmental sustainability, while the IDP prioritizes strategic infrastructure investments to support socioeconomic growth.

“These plans are not just roadmaps but the collective vision of our nation’s leadership and its people,” stated President Simina. “They represent our shared responsibility to foster a sustainable, resilient, and prosperous FSM.”

Resolutions Endorsed at the 14th SNLC:

1. Resolution No. 1 – Expressing support for the adoption of the FSM Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2024–2043.
2. Resolution No. 2 – Respectfully requesting the 23rd FSM Congress to reconsider the approval of decentralized implementation of Compact infrastructure projects.
3. Resolution No. 3 – Calling on the FSM Congress to adopt the Arngel Formula for the equitable distribution of amended Compact funding, agreed upon during the 2nd Chief Executive Council.
4. Resolution No. 4 – Expressing support for the development and adoption of the FSM Cybersecurity Digital Legal Framework to enhance national cyber resilience.
5. Resolution No. 5 –



Supporting the adoption of the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Bill, aimed at sustainable ocean resource management.

6. Resolution No. 6 – Expressing support for the adoption of the FSM Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) 2025–2034.

The unanimous adoption of these resolutions reflects a strong consensus among FSM’s leadership to address these national priorities with unity and urgency. With the endorsement of the SDP and IDP, the plans are now prepared to be submitted to Congress for consideration and adoption in their upcoming regular session in January

2025 — a key step to meeting the March 2025 submission deadline to JEMCO.

The conference further highlighted FSM’s economic outlook, compact funding updates, and national cybersecurity efforts. Leaders emphasized the need for close collaboration across all levels of government, with active engagement from development partners, private sector stakeholders, and civil society organizations.

The 14th SNLC Communiqué and Resolutions can be found at: <https://drive.google.com/.../1I6S13RL6DQA.../view>

China hands over funds for Kosrae Airport VIP lounge

Embassy of the PRC to the FSM

December 25, 2024

FSM—On December 11, the Chinese Embassy in the FSM held a handover ceremony of the Funding by Shandong Province for Kosrae International Airport VIP lounge project. Ambassador Wu Wei attended the ceremony and handed over the cash payment voucher to T.H. Tulensa Palik, Governor of Kosrae State.

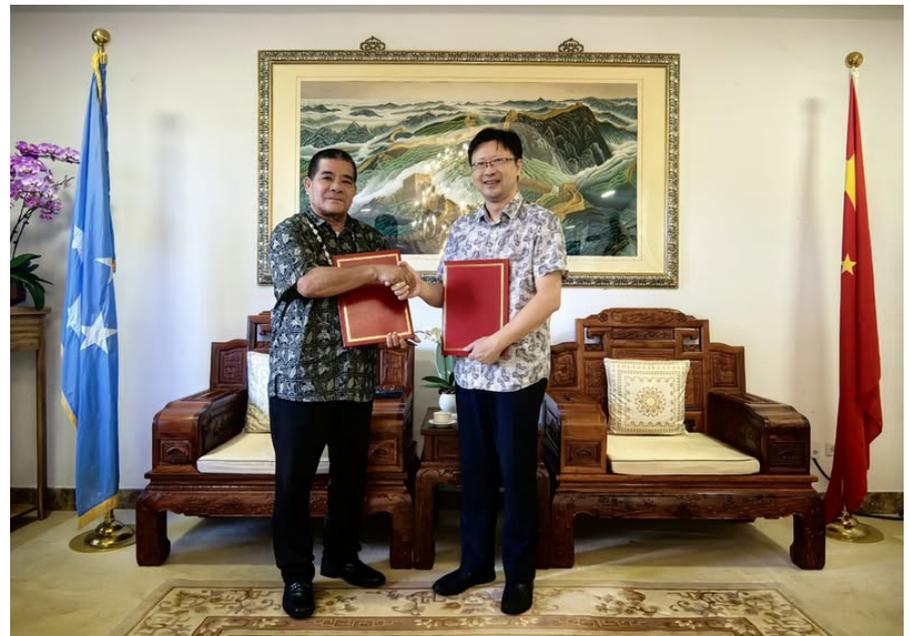
Ambassador Wu said that it is a concrete measure to implement the results of President Simina’s state visit to China and a vivid manifestation of the deepening of friendly provincial and state cooperation between the two sides that Shandong Province funded the construction of the Kosrae International Airport VIP lounge in

accordance with the development needs of Kosrae State. He hoped that the Kosrae State Government would make full use of this funding and build the airport VIP lounge with high quality. China is willing to continue to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with the FSM on the basis of the one-China principle, expand friendly provincial and state relations, and promote greater development of the China-FSM Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

On behalf of the Kosrae State Government and its people, Palik expressed deep gratitude for Shandong’s funding. He said that Kosrae State attaches great importance to its friendly relations with Shandong Province, and will firmly abide by the one-China principle, actively promote

practical cooperation in various fields between the two sides, so as to help

the continuous development of FSM-China relations.



‘I can tell the changes’: Grand master navigators on climate change and perpetuating traditions

Jasmine Stole Weiss
The Husk Newsletter
<https://thehusk.substack.com/>

December 14, 2024

Guam-- At the same moment thousands of people around the world were seated in theaters watching Disney’s Moana lead her crew across the ocean using the stars in “Moana 2,” a few dozen Guam residents were treated to an exclusive presentation by real-life esteemed wayfinders.

On Dec. 11, the stars aligned, and three of the Pacific’s most prominent living navigators – Grand Master Navigator Ali Haleyalur, Grand Master Navigator Sesario Sewralur, and Master Navigator Larry Raigetel – gathered at the Guam Museum.

Haleyalur, Sewralur and Raigetel have navigated the Pacific by reading the wind, the sea, and the sky for decades. It’s what they’ve done diligently, quietly, and humbly for many years, and now they each teach those sacred skills to students at colleges across Micronesia. They do this work without a Disney budget or a catchy soundtrack or a Hollywood red carpet. For them, wayfinding is their entire lives.

Donning T-shirts, shorts and handmade mwar mwar, the master navigators on Wednesday spoke of the importance of perpetuating island culture and traditions, unity as people of the ocean, and what they’ve seen of climate change from their view aboard their canoes.

In true Yapese fashion, Grand Master Navigator Haleyalur offered a humble “sirow” at the start of the talk-story event.

“It is paying my respect to all of you,” Haleyalur said.

Haleyalur, Raigetel, and Sewralur acknowledged and expressed their gratitude to the people of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands.

The islands of the Micronesian region have a long shared history, after all. Elders had spoken of great navigators from Guam, Rota, Tinian, and Saipan, according to Haleyalur.

“What I know,” Haleyalur said, “we have connections. All our islands. We are connected in a way because our great navigators way ahead of us, they were talking about it.”

The long-standing links between the islands of the region persist in legend and in language. For example, the best sail made of pandanus includes the word “Luta,” the Chamorro name for Rota, Master Navigator Raigetel said. “I guess you could guess where that came from,” he quipped. “Our people came here thousands of years ago and found that the best pandanus is from Rota.”

Raigetel also shared the cliff notes version of a tale of the mother of Weriyang and Fanur and her ties to the Mariana Trench.

The times that he’s crossed the Mariana Trench, Raigetel said its power could be felt.

“I had an eerie feeling just crossing that place. This is a very sacred place,” he said. “There is power, there is energy.”

Raigetel also spoke of words shared between Polowat and Guam and Lamotrek and Guam, words for fish trap and dog. Likewise, James Perez Viernes, who opened the event with an address about the resilience of the islanders in the region, spoke of his great-grandfather who also sailed to the islands and spoke the languages.

If we traded words, there’s no reason to say we didn’t trade navigation knowledge, Raigetel said.

‘Not as it was before’

The grand masters are like many Pacific Islanders on the front lines of climate change. Notably, they have an unparalleled perspective, having spent their entire lives studying the sea and the sun and the stars so closely. They notice things that many could not.

These days, there are storms during months that are typically not expected, according to Grand Master Navigator Sewralur, son of Pius “Mau” Pailug. Sewralur wore a T-shirt with his late



father’s image and name on Wednesday. now submerged in the sea.

Prediction methods are also skewed, according to Sewralur. “Weather predictions, with our ... stars that we look at, it either happens after your prediction or before,” he said. “So it’s been all the climate change.”

For Haleyalur, first thing in the morning, he’s scouring the sky. The color, the shapes, and the movement of the clouds tell him what he needs to know about the weather to come. At sunset, it’s the same. He scans the horizon looking for what the next day’s weather will bring. From his house in Yap, he pulls up a chair and looks to the clouds.

“So, I’m really interested in observing the weather; how the stars are coming up and how far they are up. Because that’s what you can tell, when there is bad weather and good weather,” Haleyalur said. “It’s like what I see this year, and then comes next year, it’s totally different. There is a change.”

He takes note and compares his notes to previous years and he said there’s been a gradual change.

And then there’s also the rising sea.

“It’s not just the change of the weather, but the sea level rise, yes, it’s really visible for us because the erosion is really becoming worse in our place,” he said. He doesn’t often make it out to his home islands, located beyond the bigger islands of Yap, but during one trip, he said he was surprised to see coconut trees that once lined the land

“There’s also changes that you see in the ocean: the flow of the current, the movement of the sea, the waves. And you can tell that it’s not as it was before,” Haleyalur said. “I can tell the changes.”

Keeping culture, connection alive

Just as their ancestors connected across miles thousands of years ago, so should the people of the islands maintain connections today, the navigators said.

“I think we’re too more focused on political ties than looking into our cultural ties to bring our people together and to help our region to continue our cultural navigation legacy that’s passed on from ancestors,” Sewralur said.

Sewralur spoke of his late father’s well-known efforts in guiding the Hokule’a in 1976 and how his father shared his celestial navigation knowledge with Hawaiians.

“That’s when my dad built a bridge with the Micronesian and Polynesian islands,” Sewralur said. While Pailug understood that navigation knowledge is tightly protected among families, he also knew that those skills could be lost forever.

“The skills of navigation wouldn’t be here anymore or we wouldn’t continue. And now it’s all over the Pacific that we gain our identity as Pacific Islanders, it is because it’s the Micronesians spread

See continuation on next page

OCD 24 concludes 73 years of bringing aid to Pacific islands

By Cpl. Bridgette Rodriguez, 374th Airlift Wing
U.S. Indo-Pacific Command

December 26, 2024

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam—Operation Christmas Drop 2024 concluded Dec. 14, marking 73 years of delivering aid to some of the most isolated communities in the world. Over two weeks, C-130J Super Hercules and C-130H Hercules aircrews from the United States, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and Canada came together to deliver 220 bundles totaling more than 77,000 pounds to over 58 remote islands in the Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of Palau, benefiting over 42,000 islanders.

Each bundle contained essential goods such as clothing, food, medical supplies, and fishing equipment donated by local organizations and international partners.

While OCD is the longest-running Department of Defense humanitarian aid mission, it also serves as an opportunity for participating aircrews to hone the coordination and execution skills needed to support future contingencies in the region. In completing 29 operational sorties, pilots and loadmasters alike acquired real-world experience in conducting low-cost, low-altitude airdrops to remote island communities.

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Michael DeMik, the operations superintendent for the 36th Airlift Squadron at Yokota Air Base, Japan, believes the experience gained during OCD 24 helps prepare aircrews for even more real-world operations in the future.

“This year’s OCD mission not only delivered vital supplies to the people of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau but also gave our crew members a unique opportunity to refine the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief skills they may need to deploy at a moment’s notice,” he said. “Delivering aid across the Indo-Pacific region is just one of the many critical tasks our highly versatile crews excel at.”

For the first time in the 374th Airlift Wing’s long-standing history of supporting OCD, forces deployed to Guam as part of the 374th Air Expeditionary Wing in order to test Agile Combat Employment capabilities in the Indo-Pacific theater. The wing’s shift to the ACE concept comes on the heels of a recent visit made by Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Allvin to Yokota Air Base, Japan, during which he emphasized the importance of ACE in addressing future challenges.

U.S. Air Force Col. Brett Cochran, the deputy commander for the 374th AW at Yokota Air Base, Japan, highlighted the significance of this transition and lauded the adaptability of OCD 24 aircrews.

“The advent of the 374th Air Expeditionary Wing is a reflection of our determination to learn how to quickly adapt our teams — both combined and joint — for effective operations within an increasingly diffuse national security environment,” he said. “Our AEW aircrews from five nations leveraged their training to conduct airdrops in a way that we don’t normally do. Within this dynamic operational environment, in an area of responsibility that spanned roughly the size of the U.S., we were able to flawlessly deliver 100% of the bundles.”

As the final bundle of OCD 24 landed, the impact of the mission could not only be seen in the smiles of the islanders, but also in the pride of the aircrews. For many Yokota Airmen who supported OCD, the operation is



more than a mission — it’s an annual opportunity to remember why they do what they do.

“This mission is a reminder of the impact and good we can do for the world,” said U.S. Air Force Capt. Jordan Paecht, OCD 24 deputy mission commander. “Seeing the islanders wave as we fly away and later watching videos of them celebrating the airdrops — it’s a reminder of how many people we’ve helped. Experiencing it firsthand makes me really proud to be a Herk pilot.”

For U.S. Air Force Capt. Miranda Bapty, OCD 24 mission commander, seeing videos of islanders opening dropped bundles were the gratifying moments that culminated months of preparation and planning.

“Some of the most rewarding moments for me and my team were seeing the videos of the islanders receiving their bundles,” she said. “It’s an amazing experience getting to see the reactions from the air, but hearing their joy in those videos will stay with us the rest of our lives. This was a life-changing experience for us all.”

...Navigators

Continued from previous page

into the Polynesians, and then we carry on today,” Sewralur said.

Haleyalur said he’d like to ask island leaders to promote traditions and culture. “Which is very important for us, I think, and if we are to let go of all these things, I think we will lose our identities,” Haleyalur said.

Raigetel offered the coconut husk as a symbol of solidarity. In his classes, he teaches his students to break down the husk to create pliable fibers. After soaking in the sea, the fibers are flimsy, but when woven together the humble coconut husk is transformed into sennit rope strong enough to lash a sail to a mast.

“You can see that when you put these two together, it’s strong. And then when we weave it with three, a bit more strong. Maybe that means we just need to weave ourselves together to make a solid and strong Micronesian identity, perhaps,” Raigetel said.

All three navigators spoke about the importance of passing down what they know to those who wish to learn. Sharing this knowledge was imperative to its survival hundreds of years ago and so it should continue to be shared.

Haleyalur teaches navigation at the College of Micronesia in Yap. Sewralur teaches navigation at Palau Community College. Raigetel teaches navigation at the University of Guam.

Aside from classroom instruction, there have been filmmakers who have documented the phenom that is celestial navigation. Four of those films were shown ahead of Wednesday’s talk

story.

Organized by Humanities Guåhan, Guampedia, the Guam Museum Foundation Inc., and the National Park Service, the event featured a speech by Viernes and screenings of “Carving the Canoe,” “Spirits of the Voyage,” “The Incredible Sail of Lamotrek,” and “Cultural Currents Routes Celebrating Lien Polowat.”

The event was also supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, United We Stand, The Mellon Foundation, and Pacific Asia Travel Association.

“We’re so excited about how we can talk about navigation and all of our stories as a way to connect and build those bridges,” said CJ Ochoco, Humanities Guåhan executive director.

As the grand masters spoke about protecting traditional knowledge and culture, Raigetel shared a story of what

may just be Pacific ancestors’ way of preserving the best of the islands forever.

As the story goes, there was a man centuries ago who sailed throughout Micronesia and he foresaw a change coming, a change that would destroy the islands. There’d be different people soon to make their way to these waters. So the navigator went to the islands, gathered all the knowledge and greatest assets from each place and brought it all to one island. Then he sunk the island and its assets thousands of feet under the surface, Raigetel said.

“We know, because there are waypoints to find this mysterious ghost island that exists between the Carolines and Guam,” Raigetel said.

An underwater island with ties to all of the people of the ocean? It’s a story with just enough intrigue that some might say it could be the plot of a multimillion-dollar movie.