JOINT COMMUNIQUE

The 16th Micronesian Presidents’ Summit in Palau on 22 February 2016 reaffirmed the strong commitment to fostering friendly and mutually beneficial relations among the three countries and provided an opportunity for the Presidents to come together in solidarity on national, regional and international issues of mutual importance. President Christian and President Heine expressed their appreciation to President Remengesau, Jr. and the people of the Republic of Palau for the warm hospitality accorded to their respective delegations.

ON-GOING ISSUES

Telecommunications (FSM/Palau Submarine Fiber Optic Cable; RUS Loan Restructuring)

The joint effort by FSM and Palau (MicroPal) to work together to establish fiber optic connectivity for Palau and Yap continues to make significant progress and the project is nearing completion. In light of the potential benefits from cooperation evidenced by this project, which include concentrating negotiating power, maximizing the efficacy of advisory resources and achieving economies of scale for pricing and contracts with external vendors, the Presidents encouraged the consideration of potential further opportunities for regional telecommunications cooperation, including sharing spare parts, introducing a sub-regional regulator for telecommunications and applying the knowledge and experience gained through the MicroPal venture to other fiber optic cable projects.

The Presidents also recognized the need to continue pursuing RUS loan restructuring through a concerted joint effort and requested the preparation of a letter to the U.S. Government on this issue to be signed by the Presidents at a later date. The Presidents also directed the relevant officials to work together to identify funding sources to gain technical assistance in developing a restructuring strategy.

United Nations System in the Pacific (Presentation by Ms. Osnat Lubrani, UN Resident Coordinator and UN Development Programme Resident Representative)

The Presidents were briefed by Ms. Osnat Lubrani on the UN-affiliated programs, agreements and activities in the region and the world that are relevant to the interests and development of small island states as well as the effort to bring a greater UN presence to the Northern Pacific sub-region. The issue of an expanded presence within the Micronesian sub-region, and the location of such presence, was discussed.

The Presidents extended an invitation to the UN Secretary General to visit Palau, the FSM and the RMI during his upcoming trip to the Pacific region.
Climate Change

The Presidents acknowledged the seriousness of the challenges posed by climate change, particularly in this El Nino year, which has already caused the FSM, the RMI and the State of Peleliu in Palau to declare a state of emergency.

The RMI briefed the Presidents on the significance of the Paris Climate Change Agreement. The Presidents expressed support for the UN Secretary General’s initiative to host a high-level signing ceremony on April 22, 2016, and agreed to work with their respective legislatures to ratify the Paris Agreement as soon as practicable. It was recommended that a resolution be drafted calling on countries to ratify the Paris Agreement. The Presidents directed their Ambassadors to coordinate this signing.

The Presidents were also briefed on the climate change funds available for Small Island Developing States (“SIDS”). The Presidents directed that a resolution be drafted for their signature that calls on appropriate Climate Change officials responsible for the dissemination of these funds to: 1) expeditiously update and amend the criteria used to evaluate applications for climate funds to take into consideration the special circumstances and vulnerabilities of SIDS, in order to enhance access to and the immediate utilization of these funds; and 2) take immediate action to create a simplified application process and set of criteria unique to project proposals by SIDS.

Palau National Marine Sanctuary (PNMS)

Palau reported on the establishment of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary and the key aspects of its effective implementation, including funding, enforcement, and increased public education and awareness. The Presidents agreed to continue exploring potential areas for cooperation in the areas of surveillance and enforcement, such as combined training of enforcement officers, sharing hardware and surveillance technology, and expanding joint surveillance operations.

Central Payment Program

The Presidents were briefed on how U.S. regulatory requirements continue to pose solvency problems and otherwise unduly burden the financial sectors of all three countries. The RMI and Palau are both pursuing initiatives to respond to this challenge and reported on these efforts. The Presidents agreed to sign a joint letter to the U.S. Government concerning the establishment of a central payment system, either for each individual country or for the Micronesian sub-region, to resolve this problem.
Smaller Island States ("SIS") Meeting in Palau

The Presidents acknowledged the SIS Leaders’ Meeting scheduled in Palau at a date yet to be determined in May of this year. Palau and RMI supported FSM’s desire to participate in the Meeting and seek membership in the SIS. The Presidents directed their officials to work with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat on the criteria for admittance to the SIS.

Micronesian Center for Sustainable Future

The Presidents, in a closed luncheon session, discussed the grant of funds for the Micronesia Center for a Sustainable Future ("MCSF"). Within this context, the Presidents expressed a need to change the names of the Micronesian Chief Executives’ Summit ("MCES") and the MPS in order to better reflect the two bodies’ long-term on-going functions of identifying regional issues and jointly moving forward with regional solutions. The Presidents agreed to recommend to the MCES that the two bodies be joined into a single forum, wherein the MPS issues of the three US compact associated jurisdictions would continue to meet preliminary to the larger meeting of the Chief Executives.

The Presidents expressed their gratitude to the Republic of China for its generous grant to the MCSF. The Presidents agreed that other funding was needed to establish an effective secretariat function for the forum and agreed in principle to the annual contribution of $15,000 by each of the current MCES jurisdictions to the MCSF. The Presidents further agreed to use these funding sources to leverage other funding opportunities with their regional and international partners.

The Presidents endorsed Palau as the appropriate location for the MCSF Office and their desire that an effective secretariat be established to better move the region’s initiatives forward.

Joint Procurement of Fuel

The Presidents noted FSM’s report on its successful use of a joint procurement program for obtaining fuel, which has both reduced the cost of fuel and increased fuel security.

OTHER BUSINESS

Regional Events

The Presidents recognized and expressed their support for a number of regional events scheduled to take place in the coming year, including the Festival of Pacific Arts in Guam, the Pacific Media Summit in Palau, the Micronesian Games in Yap, and the 47th Pacific Islands Leaders’ Forum in FSM. The Presidents agreed to provide all available support for these events. The Presidents also
called upon the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and all other regional partners to provide increased technical and financial support for these important regional events.

**Harmonization of Labor and Immigration Laws**

RMI reminded FSM and Palau that their citizens can enter and work in RMI without first obtaining a visa and work visa. RMI expressed a desire for reciprocal treatment from FSM and Palau.

FSM advised RMI and Palau of changes to FSM immigration regulations, which are already in place, that remove the requirement that, upon entry to FSM, the passports of citizens of RMI and Palau must not expire in less than 120 days from the date of entry and directed the FSM Department of Justice to ensure proper implementation across all four States.

**Cooperation on Illegal Immigrants Entering the MPS Country Boundaries**

The FSM reported on the concerns of the illegal immigrants entering the MPS country jurisdictions. The Presidents agreed to continue joint cooperation and efforts in securing and monitoring their respective jurisdictions.

**Next MPS**

The Presidents agreed to hold the next MPS in FSM.

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President
Republic of Palau

H.E. Peter M. Christian
President
Federated States of Micronesia

H.E. Hilda C. Heine, Ed. D
President
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