



*The President*  
*Palikir, Pohnpei*  
*Federated States of Micronesia*

February 15, 2021

The Honorable Wesley W. Simina  
Speaker  
Twenty-First Congress of the  
Federated States of Micronesia  
Palikir, Pohnpei FM 96941

Dear Speaker Simina:

I write this letter to thank you for our recent consultation regarding the status and role of the Micronesian Presidents Summit ("MPS") in light of the failure of the Pacific Island Forum ("PIF") to demonstrate fairness and respect to our North Pacific/Micronesian sub-region during the recent selection process to appoint the Secretary General ("SG") of the PIF Secretariat.

The FSM has assumed an important leading role in solidarity with RMI, Palau, Nauru and Kiribati that strengthened the MPS offer of an SG candidate from the Micronesian sub-region on the premise that pursuant to the unwritten Gentlemen's Agreement among the PIF membership, the important SG position would be considered, extensively vetted, and appointed on a rotational basis between the recognized Pacific sub regions of Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia. The MPS, in its promulgation of the Mekreos Communique of 2020, clearly voiced its strong support of the Gentlemen's Agreement, and its expectation that the next PIFS SG would be appointed from the Micronesian sub-region. Needless to say, myself and my fellow Micronesian Presidents were extremely disappointed that our sub-region's unanimous support and nomination of Ambassador Gerald Zachios was not respected.

Although the selection result was disappointing, the Micronesian Leaders respect and acknowledge the decision of our fellow PIF Leaders, and congratulate the new SG and former Prime Minister Henry Puna on his appointment.

Mr. Speaker, the last time that there was an SG from the Micronesian sub-region was over 20 years ago; and despite the active and collaborative efforts of the MPS to unanimously put forth and stand behind a single candidate, there is no indication that this practice of 'exclusion' will be rectified anytime soon. I must emphasize that our disappointment is not simply that our nomination was not favorably acted upon; rather, the critical and overriding concern is that it has planted the seeds of mistrust, and a noticeable "erosion" of honoring the Pacific Way of making important decisions through inclusion, respect and consensus. The Micronesian sub-region of the PIF has continued to play a positive, critical, and contributing role in the geostrategic and geopolitical posture of our Pacific Region; this must be recognized in concept, in practice, in fair share resourcing, and in regional and political Leadership opportunities within our PIF family.

Taking into consideration the prevailing atmosphere in the PIF, it is unlikely that the Micronesian sub-region will have a fair opportunity in the near future to lead the PIF Secretariat in a harmonious way given the continuing dominance and influence of the membership from the South Pacific. This dominance is not serving the interest of the FSM and not favoring the priorities of the MPS.



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The interests of the FSM and our collective interests and solidarity with our Micronesian brothers and sisters make it necessary to join the MPS in the decision to withdraw from the PIF. The Republic of Palau has already taken necessary actions for withdrawal. Other MPS members are preparing themselves through their respective domestic processes for withdrawal.

Mr. Speaker, I write to inform you and our Honorable Members of Congress that I have directed the Department of Foreign Affairs to finalize the notification for our FSM withdrawal and lodge it with the depository as soon as practicable. Upon depositing our notification, our PIF membership will officially terminate one year thereafter. It should be noted that our membership and engagement in the CROP Agencies remain unaffected.

I am seeking the full support of the FSM Congress on this urgent matter. As we have realized incremental gains from our international relations, as exemplified by our hosting of the MCO, to be fully successful, we need to continue guarding our interests from being marginalized by the emerging unfairness in the PIF institutional processes.

In emphasizing that this decision is made in the interest of the FSM, a Working Group is conducting a detailed study that will recommend national options on our way forward post-PIF. Based on preliminary outreach to our bilateral partners, the prevailing sentiment expressed so far is supporting the solidarity of the Pacific Region, but at the same time, our partners have expressed respect for our political affairs in the Region through non-interference.

While leveraging the solidarity of the Pacific Region remains our national goal as a regional bloc in international politics and in the United Nations, it shall be regional solidarity according to acceptable, reasonable and inclusiveness with the essential elements of mutual respect and equality among Member States. The FSM is able to pursue this goal from a position of strength, by institutionalizing the MPS and by amplifying its recognition, clout, and influence in the Pacific Region. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David W. Panuelo".

David W. Panuelo  
President

cc: Chief Justice, FSM Supreme Court.  
All FSM State Governors.