

Statement by the Federated States of Micronesia
On the Occasion of the
23rd Session of the Working Group
Of the Universal Periodic Review

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To the United Nations

Mr. President
Members of the UPR Working Group
Distinguished Delegates
Observers
Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank for the opportunity to appear before the Universal Periodic Review Working Group to share our progress and challenges in improving the livelihoods of our people, and in so doing addressing the many recommendations offered by the Working Group 5 years ago. Much has happened since then, and I am happy to be part of the exercise this second time around.

In preparation for the Second UPR Report, the new administration created an inter-departmental Task Force this year that included civil society, to take up the review and analysis of the recommendations and pledges made in the first periodic review. The Task Force undertook wide consultations in the development of the second Universal Periodic Report. A number of national and state consultations preceded the establishment of the Task Force this year, and laid the ground work for the Task Force. A matrix was developed to assess the work done and work needed to move the country towards our commitments. On this note, I want to thank our development partners, regional agencies and the UN entities that provided public awareness activities, guidance, advice and funding support in the drafting and completion of the second report.

Mr. President

The Federated States of Micronesia is a Federation comprised of four autonomous States namely Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei and Yap. Pohnpei State is the seat of the Government.

The National Constitution is the supreme law of the land. It guarantees the right to life, liberty, equal protection, and due process of the law. It guarantees non-discrimination, especially on

the basis of sex, race, ancestry, national origin, language, or social status. It guarantees the right to property. It provides for the freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, petition, non-establishment of religion and its free exercise. It protects the rights of the disabled, the rights of defendants through the presumption of innocence, and the right against self-incrimination and double jeopardy. It prohibits capital punishment.

The Federated States of Micronesia is a young nation with a population estimated to be 102,000. There are 607 islands, 76 inhabited islands and 531 uninhabited islands spread over a longitudinal distance of approximately 1,549 nautical miles just north of the equator. The widely dispersed islands presents a unique challenge to governance and service delivery.

Since the last UPR, the government has made every effort to review the remaining core human rights treaties. The treaty ratification and implementation process continues to be a challenge for my government, not only with Human Rights Treaties but with any Treaty deemed important to the nation. Our reporting and financial obligations will continue to command our attention. We have learned from experience about the importance of a bottoms-up approach. This approach is naturally slow but it ensures that our work will be comprehensive and inclusive.

Mr. President

Just this month we completed our ratification process for the Optional Protocol on the involvement of Children in armed Conflict;

We finally submitted our CEDAW report;

We have been able to address part of the reservation placed on maternity leave thru Public Law 16-15, where the national government grants paid maternity leave up to six weeks.

We completed the Family Health and Safety Study;

We launched the Child Protection Baseline Report;

Chuuk State passed its Age of Consent Law;

We adopted a Nation-wide Integrated Disaster Risk Management and Climate Policy;

We enacted the Trafficking in Persons Act;

FSM signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Mr. President

The role of Women in our society continues to evolve. We have seen a number of women in the highest positions under the public service and thus involved in decision making. Women continue to be prominent in the private sector. Women are more visible at the State and Municipal level where the direct impacts of their positive influence is felt at the grass roots level.

This year we have seen a number of women contest seats in our National Congress. The Temporary Special Measures have become topics of discussion in the biannual Women's Conferences amongst ourselves and also with the members of our National Congress in public hearings when the resolution was first introduced and also taken up in subsequent years. The issue continues to be a topic of much debate among the Micronesian women. Public awareness campaigns about the importance of women's participation and contribution to decision making positions in all branches and levels of government and society is an ongoing activity.

Mr. President

In September of this year, the international community adopted the 2030 Agenda envisioned to be transformative and leaves no one behind. Our National Strategic Development Plan(SDP) continues to guide our social and economic development efforts. We are of the view that Human Rights is central to any effort to achieve sustainable development. We are working towards building on the unfinished work of the MDGs and updating, mainstreaming and harmonizing our SDP - the number of national policies that expires this year and next such as the Youth Policy and Disability Policy.

We believe that this approach will ensure ownership and accountability and we look to our international development partners for their technical and financial assistance in our effort to collect and analyze data, our advocacy work on human rights and appropriate policy and legislative reforms.

Mr. President

The Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC confirms that climate change is a result of human induced activities.

Climate change has created frequent and intensified typhoons in our region. Early this year typhoons Maysak and Dolphin hit three out of four states in our Federation - Chuuk State, Yap State and Pohnpei State in late March, early April 1 and May respectively. The typhoons affected 30,000 people, threatened food and water security, and destroyed infrastructure. There were a number of casualties, and families had to be relocated so students can finish their education during the school year. This has set back the government's efforts to continue to improve the livelihood of its people. For a small island country like Micronesia, it is difficult to talk about Human Rights without touching on the link between the adverse impacts of climate change and our right to develop, live and exist as a nation.

Thank you.