**Palau Universal Periodic Review**

**General Session**

**UPR Opening Statement Report**

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**By:**

**Mrs. J. Uduch Sengebau Senior**

**Vice President and Minster of State**

**Office of the Vice President and Ministry of State**

**Republic of Palau**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Alii,

Or as we say in English Greetings, to the distinguished Members of Troika and other Representatives gathered here to review Palau’s Universal Periodic Review Report.

I am honored to represent Palau, the Government the Republic of Palau, in presenting its 3rd National UPR Report.

As you may know, our young nation of Palau gained independence in 1994 and has a population of less than 20,000 people.

We remain Covid free. It was recently announced by our President His Excellency Surangel Whipps Jr. that 90 percent of the adult population of Palau has been vaccinated, as such, we are now ready to slowly open our country to welcome visitors.

It is unfortunate that due to this COVID19 pandemic that we are not able to travel to the headquarters in Geneva to present this report.

In our UPR, this 3rd National UPR Report, we are happy to note that we have established a National Gender Mainstreaming Policy that was adopted in 2018. The aim of the National Gender Mainstreaming Policy is to achieve gender equality so that all women and men can enjoy their fundamental human rights and have equal opportunities and responsibilities in all aspects of political, economic, social, and cultural development to contribution to the well-being of their families, the resilience of their communities in the development of our country in accordance with our cultural values.

It is important to point out that in Palau’s cultural context women are leaders in the community, they are well respected in the communities in terms of traditional leadership, we’d like to see that in our political offices as well. In the most recent national election in 2020, I was elected by the people as Vice President of Palau. The first woman Vice President of Palau was 20 years ago in 2000, with the election of Mrs. Sandra Sumang Pierantozzi. A woman was also elected to the Senate, so 1 woman out of 13 members of the Senate and 1 woman out of 16 members of the House of Delegates. But I’m happy to announce that although we still struggle to raise the number of women representations in our National Legislature, a recent election in the State Legislature saw a woman elected to the State Legislature for the first time in 40 years. So that itself, is a big victory for that State Legislature to have seen the first woman elected to that State Legislature.

There has been concerns as well regarding the overcrowding of the prison in Koror which is a main downtown area. I’m happy to report that a new jail facility is being constructed outside the main city of Koror and it will cost USD $4 million to provide this better prison environment to the prisoners in rehabilitation programs in a more spacious prison facility.

Recently with regards to human trafficking, His Excellency President Surangel Whipps Jr. signed executive number 444 signed in March 2021, that created a division of transnational crime within the Bureau of Public Safety. This division included an anti-human trafficking unit and this unit will focus on aggressive and proactive action to identify and eliminate human trafficking within the Republic of Palau.

One of the recommendations coming out of the second UPR report was the need for the government of Palau to be able to ratify some of the human rights treaties that have not been ratified by the Palau National Congress. And reporting on these treaties became clear that there must be outreach and education awareness about these human rights treaties. It needs to be proactively promoted at the congressional level in order to make sure that they are understood and that members of the Palau National Congress are able to engage in the discussion about these treaties prior to their ratification.

Following the second UPR report it was noted that there are human rights, core human rights treaties, that remain unratified by the Palau National Congress. It has become clear that in ordered to be able to provide an opportunity to review these document that we conduct outreach, that the Ministry of State/ Office of the Vice President as the lead agency on the UPR report must provide that education awareness to the National Congress of Palau.

The remaining treaties that need to be ratified include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Convention on the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, and International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforce Disappearance.

I’m happy to report that the National Human Rights Committee with its supporting working group here in Palau has made an effort to provide education on these core treaties and will be actively endorsing for its ratification this year.

I hope to report at the next, the fourth UPR, report that we have successfully ratified at least half of those treaties. Palau is a peaceful and stabled island nation however like other countries who are faced with various challenges especially with the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw our tourism industry come to a screeching halt and with that we would need assistance from our international partners to be able to work to fulfill our obligations and to protect the human rights of all who live in Palau.

Thank you for your attention!

And now the Director of the Bureau of Foreign Affairs in the Ministry of State of the Republic of Palau will deliver the Universal Periodic Review of the 3rd cycle report to this honorable body.