

THIRD JOINT COMMUNIQUE
of the
THIRD WESTERN MICRONESIAN CHIEF EXECUTIVES'
SUMMIT

The Territory of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the State of Yap, within the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau

Introduction

The Chief Executives of the Government of the Territory of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the State of Yap, within the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau held the Third Western Micronesian Chief Executives' Summit to follow up on the Second Chief Executives' Summit, held in Palau in March of 2004. The Second Summit resulted in discussion on the numerous focus areas identified in the First Summit to prepare for the development of regional programs and actions. Each participant to the Summit was given the responsibility for specific areas of concern as 'Focus States'.

In order to better focus on issues identified in the first two Chief Executives' Summits, four preliminary regional summits were held in the areas of Tourism, Environment, Transportation and Health. These issue oriented summits reviewed prior Chief Executive recommendations in these key areas and developed reports and recommendations for future action at the regional level. The Chief Executives' reviewed these reports and recommendations and established a regional roadmap of future implementation strategies. Each strategy focuses on achievable goals and initiatives that stress improved communication between the four governments.

The Summit reaffirmed the commitment of each of the participants, on behalf of their people and their governments, to establish closer ties, expand future discussions and agree on beneficial initiatives for the benefit of the entire Western Micronesian Region.

Governor Juan Babauta of the CNMI, Governor Robert Ruecho of Yap and President Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr. conveyed their appreciation to Governor Felix P. Camacho and the people of Guam for the hospitality extended to them and their delegations during these very important regional meetings. Governor Camacho, the Governor of Guam, in turn, expressed his appreciation to the two Governors and the President for their attendance and active participation in the Third Western Micronesian Chief Executives' Summit.

Priority Issues

The following focus areas, which reflect the work efforts of the four preliminary summit groups (Tourism, Health, Environment and Transportation) were discussed by the Chief Executives, who then adopted an official regional program of action.

Environment

The Solid Waste Summit Committee reviewed the Second Joint Communiqué of the Second Western Micronesian Chief Executive's Summit and focused on developing practical and implementable recommendations. To this end, the Chief Executives agreed with the Committee's recommendation that they take a practical approach, limiting recommendations to achievable goals. In this light, the Chief Executive's reaffirmed their earlier recommendation to create the *Pacific Islands Regional Recycling Initiative Committee* (PIRRIC) and appointed its membership.

The Chief Executives also recommended the establishment of a schedule of preparatory meetings. These preparatory meetings were recommended by the Committee in order to review data compiled by each government and to identify resulting issues and to establish the parameters of a future regional action plan. The Chief Executives directed that these meetings and the resulting action plan be completed prior to the next Chief Executives' Summit.

The Chief Executives agreed with the Committee's recommendation that meetings be supplemented by the use of teleconferences and Internet communication. In this effort, Guam offered to host teleconference calls during the period of Guam's chairmanship. The four states also agreed that effort should be made to obtain funding for these conferences through the U.S. Department of Interior and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Recognizing that the Committee felt that recommendations must be focused and achievable, the Chief Executives agreed to:

1. Create a Comprehensive Regional Solid Waste Action Plan within nine months, with an initial emphasis on the removal of metallic waste;
2. Conduct a Regional Environmental Outreach Workshop within nine months, as coordinated by Guam, in conjunction with PIRRIC; and
3. Remove Regional Barriers - This issue focuses on establishing an international, regional and sub-regional environment that permits joint collaboration between the different types of governments with varying political standing. Governor Camacho recommended that each government have their legal counsels review the impact of the language on their various programs and funding sources.

The Chief Executives recommended that the PIRRIC use all available resources and mechanisms to assist in their efforts.

Invasive Species

In line with recommendations of the Environment Committee, the Chief Executives agreed to submit letters to the U.S. Congress and the President of the United States to review discussions regarding the Brown Tree Snake Act (H.R. 3479).

Governor Camacho highlighted a proposal to charter a Regional Invasive Species Council (RISC) to identify species that are invasive to the Micronesian Islands and to identify the resources necessary to address this growing environmental and ecological concern. The Chief Executives directed that an Invasive Species Council be established and that each country designate two representatives within 30 days. Governor Camacho asked Mr. Paul Bassler, Director of the Guam Department of Agriculture, to draft the charter to be sent to each jurisdiction. An initial member from each government was appointed in order to speed up the organizational process.

Renewable Energy

The Chief Executives created a Regional Committee and appointed members from each jurisdiction to review alternate energy options for Micronesia and to collect more detailed data on the renewable energy programs that can be made available to Guam, the CNMI, Yap State and the Republic of Palau. In line with recommendations, the Chief Executives directed that the committee develop a comprehensive plan of action prior to the next Chief Executives' meeting next summer.

Transportation

During the preliminary Transportation Summit, the states recommended a number of proposals in the areas of air and sea transportation service, as well as fisheries, in line with the Second Communiqué. To support this effort, The Territory of Guam reported on regional initiatives to further expand air and ocean shipping capacity in the Western Pacific.

The Chiefs Executives agreed that there exists a need to increase the participation of regional governments in both air and sea transportation. The Chief Executives also agreed that the governments of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands should be invited to participate in the transportation discussions at the next Summit. The Chief Executives further agreed that there is a need to develop relationships with federal entities in the areas of transportation and the fishing industry.

At the request of Guam, the Chief Executives endorsed the full representation of the CNMI and Guam in the Forum Fisheries Agency and agreed to work with the U.S. Department of State and the FAA towards that end. The Chief Executives also agreed to endorse the full participation of Guam and CNMI in international fisheries and transportation conventions.

The Chief Executives fully endorsed and agreed to provide support to Palau Micronesia Air (PMA), a new regional airline beginning operations out of Palau and providing services to various regional locations, as a symbol of the future of expanded air travel in the Western Pacific.

Governor Camacho remarked that Continental Airlines requested a letter from the Chief Executives be sent to the Transportation Safety Administration recommending the

alleviation of requirements to empty planes at each island stop to eliminate the long waits and expiration of allowable in-flight hours of its employees. The Guam Economic Development and Commerce Authority presented a draft letter to the Chief Executives for their review and signature.

In the area of shipping, the Chief Executives agreed that greater regional cooperation was necessary to provide better shipping services to the region. Recognizing this need, the Chief Executives indicated their support for greater involvement by the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI).

In order to ensure smooth shipping operations under new international shipping requirements, the Chief Executives directed the development of a statement announcing that all ports in Micronesia are in compliance with federal guidelines and relative international treaties to help speed certifications from the International Maritime Organization.

At the request of Guam, the Chief Executives also agreed to support Compulsory Pilotage (pilots required for vessels of a certain class) in all jurisdictions.

In the area of fisheries, the Chief Executives recognized a need for greater regional cooperation and participation in Pacific fishing organizations and efforts. The Chief Executives consequently agreed to support Guam and the CNMI gaining membership in the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). Currently the two governments have observer status while Palau, the FSM and the RMI are active members. To achieve this goal, Palau and Yap agreed to seek the support of the governments of the FSM and the RMI.

The Chief Executives also expressed grave concerns regarding the scheduled expansion of fishing operations in certain areas of the Pacific and the continuing drop in fish stocks in the Pacific.

Health

In the area of healthcare, the Chief Executives first recognized the diverse approaches to healthcare amongst our respective peoples. The Chief Executives agreed that the task at hand is not to consolidate and unify, but to search for ways to skillfully blend the various healthcare ingredients together in order to support optimal healthcare services for our peoples.

To that end, the member states acknowledged progress in the areas that were jointly identified in the First Communiqué of the Western Micronesian Chief Executives' Summit.

The Chief Executives agreed to support the sharing of information on blood, medication and equipment needs and to jointly negotiate, where appropriate, with suppliers for price benefits, delivery schedules, payment terms, etc.

In the area of medical referrals, the Chief Executives agreed to support all member states in their respective efforts to gain affordable and quality medical referral services, while reinforcing the desire to maintain close ties with all members in eventually cultivating more medical referrals to a central medical facility in Guam. The Chief Executives consequently supported the proposed Pan-Micronesia Regional Medical Center. The Chief Executives agreed to work together to seek the necessary federal funding for the development of the proposed Medical Center.

In the area of workforce development for healthcare, the Chief Executives agreed to support and participate in medical workforce development to locally train health care service providers through the respective National, State, Commonwealth and Territorial hospitals, health departments, universities and colleges in the region. In addition, all members agreed to participate in a regional workforce and economic development conference sponsored by the Guam Department of Labor in October 2004.

To address the need for a uniform regional certification and licensing system, the Chief Executives agreed to support a meeting of each government's Board of Medical Examiners to develop a Memorandum of Understanding on regional licensing requirements prior to the next Chief Executives Meeting.

The leaders also agreed to address tobacco control and alcohol consumption regulations as a high priority. The next meeting will focus on regional approaches that can be taken to reduce alcohol and tobacco use.

The Chief Executives endorsed a September 2004 Regional Medical Symposium, a vehicle for education, networking and the fostering of a health professional fellowship in the Western Pacific, focused on disaster preparedness preparation, joint licensure and credentialing approaches and the local certification of continued professional education.

All states agreed to support a regional medical conference to be hosted by the Guam Medical Society and the Guam Memorial Hospital in September for the purpose of sharing information and input on clinical and medically specific issues.

Finally, the Chief Executives expressed their support for the promotion/protection of health and prevention of illness to the same degree as they support the treatment of diseases. This means that while supporting the development of tertiary and quaternary care development in the region, health systems must equally support the development of primordial, public and primary health care systems. The Chief Executives therefore supported the following:

1. Endorse health as an economic strategy in the region;
2. Define and protect the foundation of health in the region;
3. Investment in health must be consistent with the national risk indicators;
4. Regionalize the efforts to reduce the disparity in health;
5. Regionalize the efforts to reduce the health professional exodus (brain drain) outside or within the region; and
6. Regionalize the efforts in human resource development, specifically in the area of public and primary health care.

Tourism

Following the preliminary Tourism Summit, the Chief Executives established a Regional Tourism Council to be responsible for executing a regional destination awareness strategy. The Council will consist of a representative from each government's tourism organizations, the region's airports, airlines that serve Micronesia, and the private sector, including a member of the Micronesia Chapter of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA). The Chief Executives decided that it would appoint members from their respective islands to the Regional Tourism Council to the Chairman by August 1, 2004. The Regional Tourism Council will develop cost allocations per destination and a Communications Plan that will include media, frequency, reach and message.

The Chief Executives agreed that the FSM and the RMI should be included in this regional promotional campaign.

The four states also recommended the development of a regional campaign to raise global awareness of Micronesia as a destination within a thirty-six months time-frame.

Telecommunications

The Chief Executives agreed that regional cooperation in the area of telecommunications is necessary to optimize telecommunications services to the people of each jurisdiction. The Chief Executives further agreed that a unified approach is necessary in negotiations with the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

In the past, the CNMI and Guam have worked together on telecommunications issues before the Federal Communications Commission and the U.S. Congress. This joint approach has resulted in the inclusion of the 'Insular Areas' into the 1996 Telecommunications Act, which led to significantly decreased long distance costs and benefits through the U.S. Universal Service Program. While the CNMI and Guam gained inclusion in Universal Services, regulations under that program have failed to recognize the unique geographic conditions of the islands, especially in the area of medical support (telemedicine).

Palau has also recently petitioned the FCC for inclusion in the Universal Service Program and indicated that such inclusion has been delayed because it has been tied to other Compact of Free Association issues. Recognizing that a joint approach between the three governments could prove effective and beneficial, the Chief Executives agreed to jointly approach the FCC seeking (1) the inclusion of Palau in the Universal Service Program and (2) amending the definition of urban and rural locations for CNMI and Guam. The State of Yap, recognizing that communications is a national power, indicated that it would discuss the matter with its national leaders.

The Chief Executives further agreed to regular consultation regarding telecommunications among the states and, in this effort, each appointed a contact person in this area.

Postal Service

President Remengesau noted that in the past there has been poor mail service to the islands of Micronesia by the U.S. Postal Service. Chief Executives have been advised that there have been great strides taken to improve the delivery of mail to the people of the islands with the introduction and use of new mail tracking technology in the Western Pacific used by the Postal Service and the air carrier who transports the mail to and from Guam, the CNMI, Yap State and the Republic of Palau. To understand the mail process further, the Chief Executives have requested from the Guam Postmaster a copy of the U.S. Postal Service Contract with Continental Airlines which outlines mail delivery service to Micronesia.

Conclusion

The Chief Executives stressed the need to adopt practical regional initiatives to further strengthen the economic development of each of the four states. They also committed to fully integrating regional issues into ongoing governmental planning and budget processes.

The next meeting is scheduled on the first quarter of 2005 in Guam.

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