

25TH MICRONESIAN ISLANDS FORUM

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

FEBRUARY 13 -17, 2023

THEME: "TAKING ACTIONS TODAY FOR MICRONESIA'S PROSPERITY TOMORROW"

Resolution 23-03

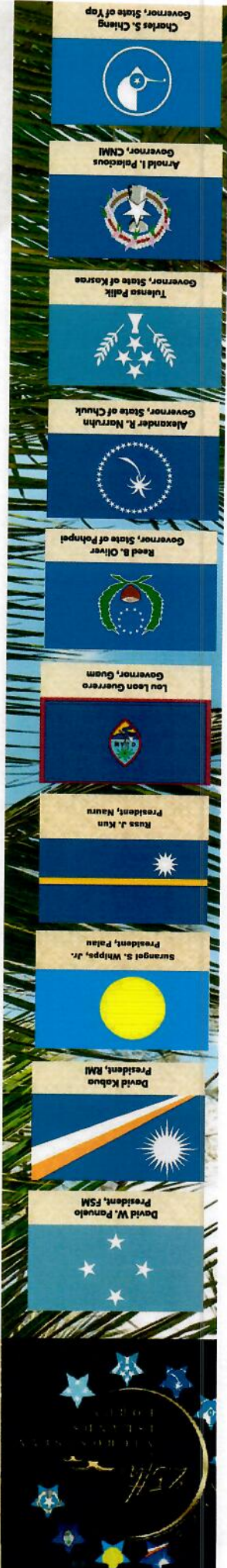
Investment and expansion of outer-island transportation, communication, and health dispensary infrastructure to improve healthcare access for hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations and reduce health disparities

WHEREAS, according to the World Health Organization for the Western Pacific Region (WPRO), "universal health coverage [UHC] means that all people have access to the full range of quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship. It covers the full continuum of essential health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care" and

WHEREAS, the Pacific Island countries and territories have endorsed the *Universal Health Coverage: Moving Towards Better Health Action Framework* at the 2015 WPRO Regional Committee Meeting (RCM) that outlines shared principles of UHC in alignment with the Health for All agenda set by the Alma-Ata Declaration in 1978 and multiple World Health Assembly resolutions. The UHA Action Framework "identifies 15 action domains and related priority actions, organized along the five essential attributes of high-performance health systems: quality, efficiency, equity, accountability and good governance, sustainability, and resilience. The action domains are intended to guide countries in developing country-specific road maps towards UHC, recognizing that the choice and combination of actions will be considered in the context of national needs and capacities, [and that countries] are encouraged to prioritize multiple actions that are mutually reinforcing and embed them in their national health policies and reforms as they move towards attainment of the UHC vision and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)"; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Pacific island jurisdictions were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic with approximately 117,828 cumulative confirmed cases and approximately 577 deaths from March 2020 to February 2023 impacting the delivery of comprehensive healthcare services and compounding existing critical shortages in the health workforce; and

WHEREAS, during the COVID pandemic, Pacific Island countries and territories with many outer-island (OI) communities faced significant transportation barriers to providing timely and affordable COVID-19 responses; and



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WHEREAS, transportation services to the OIs are very cost-prohibitive and often infrequent (In Chuuk, FSM, government ship travel from the main center of Weno to the OIs costs an average of US \$50,000 or more plus per trip; In Yap, FSM, government ship travel is averaging US \$120,000 per trip; in the RMI, OI ship travel is averaging US \$60,000 per trip; and local/domestic air travel within the FSM using the Pacific Mission Aviation (PMA) services for the transportation of essential healthcare working and temperature sensitive COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics averaged US \$30,000 per charter flight); and

WHEREAS, to date, the Pacific Island Health Officers' Association (PIHOA) has spent over US \$1.1 million in shipping and freight expenses alone to distribute essential COVID-19 preparedness and response equipment and supplies to US Pacific Island jurisdictions since the pandemic was declared in March 2020 to the present, and that there has been a significant mark-up of freight and fuel surcharges since the pandemic began and this often resulted in instances where freight expenses exceeded the total value of the goods being shipped; and

WHEREAS, PIHOA and other regional, federal, and global partners faced significant freight and shipping challenges during the COVID pandemic due to reduced or eliminated air and sea shipping/freight routes (and which still have yet to fully recover); and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 highlighted continuing gaps in telecommunications infrastructure and related services at existing OI health dispensaries; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 further highlighted the ongoing need to build and expand healthcare infrastructure, including constructing new health dispensaries and clinics in OI settings to ensure OI communities are able to access, at a minimum, basic primary care services in an effort to reduce health disparities in OI settings;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the MIF leadership commits to identify and implement strategies and interventions that support and sustainably finance local and regional efforts to improve and make more affordable air and sea transportation services across the Pacific region and to remote, OI settings; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the MIF leadership commits to identify and implement strategies and interventions that support and sustainably finance local and regional efforts to build new and modernize existing telecommunications infrastructure and related services targeting OI health dispensaries; and



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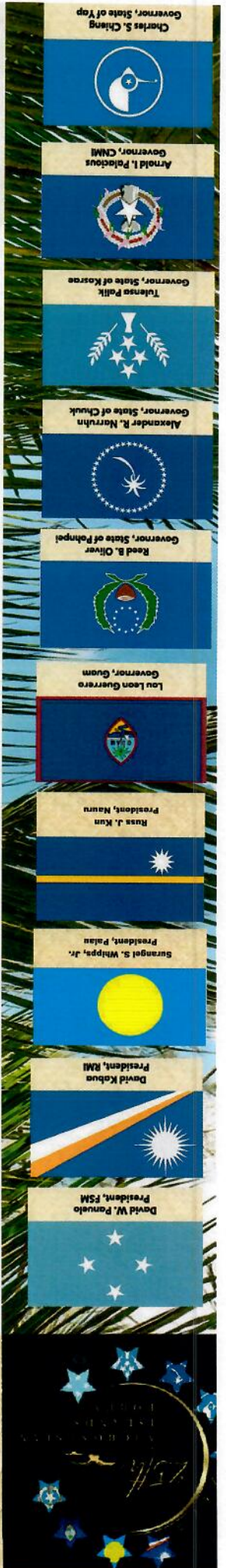
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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the MIF leadership commits to planning and financing construction projects to build new and update/fix existing OI health dispensaries to ensure adequate health services reach remote and vulnerable OI communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the MIF leadership take note of the urgent and critical needs put forward in this resolution, and further commit to consulting with and supporting RHC members to mobilize the relevant financial and other resources required to achieve these urgent actions in a timely and sustainable manner; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the MIF leadership tasks its Secretariat to disseminate this resolution to the relevant MIF regional committees, government agencies, and partners that have the technical knowledge, financial, and other resources required to support health departments/ministries to plan and implement these critically needed actions and interventions, including facilitating intersectoral engagements and collaboration with non-health sector partners and stakeholders, both domestically and regionally, to seek a more holistic and integrated approach to improving access to and quality of health services across the islands.



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MINISTER GUSTAV AITARO for
SURANGEL S. WHIPPS JR.
President
Republic of Palau

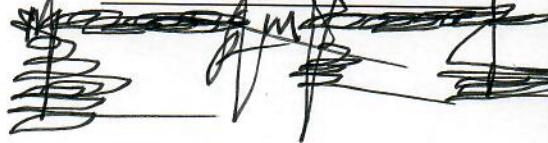


ARNOLD PALACIOS
Governor
Commonwealth of the
Northern Mariana Islands

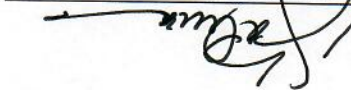
ALEXANDER R. NARRUHN
Governor
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DAVID W. PANUELO
President
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