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President Heine’s State of the Nation Address



In her State of the Nation Address, President Dr. Hilda C. Heine highlighted the work that her administration has engaged in since the August Nitijela (Parliament) session last year and provided an outline of actions and undertakings for her administration for the next twelve months. President Heine delivered the

State of the Nation address during the opening of the 38th Constitutional Regular Session held at the Nitijela Chamber on 2 January 2017.

President Heine recognized Nitijela Speaker Kenneth A. Kedi for his involvement and leadership in guiding Cabinet’s legislative agenda to a successful conclusion. However, particular legislations, including the MISSA Act, will require additional modification to make them better and more responsive to the needs of the people, said President Heine. The Cabinet will be proposing amendments to the MISSA Act to take into account many of the issues that have been raised since the passage of the revised Act.

She informed on Cabinet’s recent adoption of Agenda 2020: A Framework for Progress which was introduced in the last Nitijela session and now serves as the administration’s driver towards achieving concrete results focused on ten challenges and ten priority reform areas

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President Heine’s State of the Nation Address	1
State of Health Emergency	2
RMI Receives Disaster Risk Reduction Equipment	2
RMI Receives Funding for Renewable Energy	3
Cabinet’s 2017 Legislative Agenda	4
Strengthening Capacity to Combat Human Trafficking	5
Justice Minister Thomas Heine Thanks Australia	6
Ambassador Kijiner Presents Credentials and more...	6

that have been identified for implementation over the next three years. “The overarching goal of Agenda 2020 is to improve the wellbeing of all Marshallese, and all who call the Marshall Islands home, through better government service,” stated President Heine.

For the full text of the State of the Nation Address, [click here](#).

Following the Nitijela session, a luncheon was hosted by Speaker Kenneth A. Kedi and Mrs. Theresa Kedi at the ICC.



Pictured L-R: First Gentleman Thomas Kijiner Jr., President Dr. Hilda C. Heine, Nitijela Speaker Kenneth A. Kedi, Mrs. Theresa Kedi at the ICC

Acting President Signs Proclamation Declaring a State of Health Emergency

In an effort to respond effectively and efficiently to the current outbreaks of Hepatitis A and the Zika Virus in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Cabinet has approved the Proclamation Declaring a State of Health Emergency.

After relevant response plans were formalized, Acting President Mattlan Zackhras signed the Proclamation on January 20, 2017, for the immediate mobilization of people and resources to mitigate the spread of dis-

ease. The Proclamation and all emergency orders will remain in effect until the expiry of ten days.

The Cabinet further approved the Resolution requesting the Nitijela (Parliament) to confirm that the Proclamation Declaring a State of Health Emergency issued by the President, on behalf of the Cabinet, on January 20, 2017, expires six (6) months from the date of certification of the Resolution or revoked earlier by the Cabinet.

Marshall Islands Receive Disaster Risk Reduction Equipment from Japan

Acting President Mattlan Zackhras received disaster risk reduction equipment, on behalf of the Government of the Marshall Islands, from Japan Ambassador Hideyuki Mitsuoka and the Government of Japan, during a handover ceremony held at the Ministry of Public Works on Friday, 20 January 2017. The disaster risk reduction equipment include two water tanks and two single drum compactors (for Majuro and Ebeye respectively) and a crane truck (for Ebeye).

The recent arrival of equipment are the remaining items from the first lot of disaster risk equipment

received in September last year which is part of a grant donation of \$2.6 million from the Government of Japan under the “Non-Project Grant Aid for the Provision of Disaster Risk Reduction Equipment.” There are three lots of equipment under this aid with lots two and three currently in procurement process by the procurement agency, Japan International Cooperation System (JICS), on behalf of the Marshall Islands Government.

Acting President Zackhras recognized Japan’s leadership in disaster risk reduction initiatives and conveyed appreciation to the Government of Japan for the equipment that will assist the Marshall Islands with disaster risk reduction and building resilience to disasters including climate change impacts. He acknowledged Japan Am-



Pictured L-R: Chief Secretary Justina Langidrik, Japan Ambassador Hideyuki Mitsuoka, Acting President Mattlan Zackhras, MWSC General Manager Joseph Batol, Acting Public Works Minister Michael Halferty in front of equipment following handover ceremony held at the Ministry of PuWblic Works

bassador to the Marshall Islands, Ambassador Hid-eyuki Mitsuoka, and thanked him for his dedication to ensure the successful implementation of the grant since announcement of the grant in May 2015 by Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to former President Christopher J. Loeak during PALM7 (7th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting).

Adapting to climate change & reducing disaster risks is one of the ten national challenges identified under Agenda 2020: A Framework for Progress, an ambitious

Marshall Islands Selected to Receive Funding for Renewable Energy Project through IRENA/ADFD

The Marshall Islands was selected as one of four developing countries in the Pacific and Africa to receive USD\$44.5 million in funding for renewable energy projects. The announcement was delivered by IRENA (International Renewable Energy Agency)/ADFD (Abu Dhabi Fund for Development) Project Facility on 14 January 2017, at the Seventh Session of the IRENA Assembly.

Other countries selected in this funding round are Niger, Seychelles, and the Solomon Islands. [Click here](#) for the YouTube video on the chosen projects.

Resources & Development Minister Alfred Alfred Jr. (pictured at the Seventh Session of IRENA Assembly) expressed the Marshall Islands' appreciation to IRENA and ADFD for approving the USD\$11 million solar PV micro grids project for Marshall Islands.

President Dr. Hilda C. Heine stated, "The project will reduce diesel-based power generation on Ebeye, Wotje, Jabor, Jaluit, and Rongrong." She further said, "The project will enable the Marshall Islands to provide power supply that is reliable, sustainable, and affordable to nearly 16,000 people in these communities."

"This will help the Marshall Islands achieve its goal of 20 percent power generation by 2020," noted President Heine

The project selected for the Marshall Islands is a

development agenda adopted by the Cabinet last year, including actions to address climate change and disaster related risks.

Witnessing the handover ceremony were officials from the Office of the President and Cabinet, Office of the Chief Secretary, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Public Works, Majuro Atoll Water and Sewer Company, and the Embassy of Japan.



4.6-megawatt (MW) hybrid micro-grid project, using solar PV and advanced lithium-ion batteries. It will essentially eliminate fossil fuel based generation on three outer islands and reduce it by more than a third on a fourth island.

[click here](#) for the Article by Giff Johnson, published in the Pacific Islands Report, featuring President Dr. Hilda C. Heine, Kwajalein Senator David Paul, & National Energy Planner Angeline Heine-Reimers.

Cabinet's 2017 Legislative Agenda

1. Bill to adopt the National Nuclear Commission Act - This Bill is to establish a Nuclear Commission to develop a strategy on nuclear justice as well as coordinate all aspects related to the nuclear testing administered by the various entities
2. Bill to adopt the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons Act - This Bill is a stand-alone prohibition on TIP aside from the few provisions in the Criminal Code.
3. Bill to amend the Scholarship Act - This Bill is to repeal the post of "Secretary of Education" as this has legally been changed to the Commissioner of the Public School System. Moreover, it requires that the Secretary of the Scholarship Board, which is also the Director of the Scholarship Office, to be a member of the PSS, not PSC.
4. Bill to amend the Price Retail Board Act - This Bill is to repeal the requirement of the Cabinet-appointed members of the Board to be approved by Nitijela. Also, this Bill specifies that the Board is now under EPPSO, which in turn includes the Director of EPPSO being the Chair and a member of said Board.
5. Bill to amend the Associations Law - This Bill repeals the tax exemption granted to non-resident entities, the Trust Company as Registrar of Non-Resident Companies and the Maritime Administrator.
6. Bill to amend the MISSA Act - This Bill is to delay the effective date of the amendments to the Original MISSA Act.
7. Bill to amend the Minimum Wage Act - This Bill is to delay the 2nd \$.50 increase to 2018 while requiring that MoFA and EPPSO do an assessment report on the impact of the initial \$.50.
8. Bill to amend the Motor Traffic Act - This Bill is to give 100% seat belt fines to the Ministry of Justice Special Revenue Fund.
9. Another Bill to amend the Motor Traffic Act - This is to lower age of children to obtain driver's license [from 18 to 17 years old] and driver's permit [from 17 to 16 years old].
10. Bill to amend the Immigration Act - This Bill reciprocates visa waivers to EU and associate EU member states.
11. Bill to amend the Import Duties Act - This Bill increases penalties of offenders, including revocation of licenses for tobacco and alcohol should offenders have these in their possession.
12. Bill for ConCon Amendment - This Bill is to do a ConCon Amendment Act to give more independence to Auditor-General's Office.



Strengthening Capacity To Combat Human Trafficking in the Marshall Islands

Acting President Mattlan Zackhras congratulated twenty-six participants from the police and law enforcement agencies that completed a week-long human trafficking training, during its closing ceremony held on Friday, 20 January 2017. The training aimed to strengthen capacity in identifying and assisting victims of human trafficking and prosecuting perpetrators.

In his remarks, Acting President Zackhras emphasized the commitment of the Government of the Marshall Islands in fighting human trafficking and summarized legal and policy developments in this regards, particularly a Draft Bill that is now before the Cabinet to outlaw human trafficking activities, provide heavy penalties for perpetrators, and provisions to protect and support victims of trafficking.

“The Government is committed to combat all forms of human trafficking to ensure the protection and safety of our people,” stated Acting President Zackhras.

He further said, “Law enforcement measures alone cannot solve the problem. All of us have a duty to ensure every man, woman, and child will never have to go through being enslaved.”

In 2014, the Cabinet approved the formulation of a National Task Force to lead efforts against human trafficking, followed by the endorsement last year of the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons

in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Attorney General Dr. Filimon Manoni recognized and applauded President Dr. Hilda C. Heine and Cabinet for elevating to the forefront national efforts to lay out the necessary framework to combat human trafficking and the support the Government has provided toward these efforts.

The training was made possible by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, with funding from the U.S. Department of State.

Acting President Zackhras conveyed appreciation to the Government of the U.S., through U.S. Ambassador Karen Stewart and the U.S. Embassy on Majuro, and IOM, for their partnership with the Government of the Marshall Islands in this area.

He acknowledged and thanked Colonel Gerald Tatzgern, a certified trainer and human trafficking investigation expert who conducted the training.

The training has been replicated in Ebeye, starting on Monday, 23 January.

Justice Minister Heine Thanks Australia for LOMOR Life Extension Refit and Training of Crew



LOMOR and crew are on their way home to the Marshall Islands after the boat spent 7 months of undergoing a life extension refit in Cairns, Australia. The refit was coordinated by Australia under the Pacific Patrol Boat Defense Cooperation Program at a cost to the Australian Government of over \$9 million, says LCDR Mat O'Loughlin, Royal Australian Navy Maritime Surveillance Advisor to the Marshall Islands.

This is the final life extension refit for all the 22 Pacific Patrol Boats of the 12 participating Pacific countries, with the first of the Guardian Class replacement vessels being delivered to Papua New Guinea next year, adds LCDR O'Loughlin.

A handover ceremony was held where Justice Minister Thomas Heine, LOMOR Captain Dennis Jibas, and the crew, received the boat in an "as new" condition from Serco and Norship that conducted the refit. The ceremony was followed by a week and a half of intensive training, including mariner skills, navigation, firefighting, and damage control, by LCDR O'Loughlin and Australian Navy Chief Petty Officer Mick Grant.

Justice Minister Heine recognized and expressed appreciation to LCDR O'Loughlin and Officer Grant for providing the training to the crew and for the support and assistance the Government of Australia has provided to the Marshall Islands under the Pacific Patrol Boat Defense Cooperation program, including the life extension program of patrol boats.

LOMOR and crew are expected to arrive Majuro on 3 February 2017.

Ambassador Kijiner Presents Credentials to Indonesia President Widodo

Republic of the Marshall Islands Ambassador to Japan, Ambassador Tom D. Kijiner, presented his Letter of Credence to Republic of Indonesia President Joko Widodo, accrediting him as the Non-Resident Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the Republic of Indonesia.

Ambassador Kijiner was amongst eight other Ambassadors to present credentials during the ceremony today (12 January 2017) at the Istana Merdeka Palace, in Jakarta. The ambassadors who presented creden-

tials today included Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the United States to Indonesia, Ambassador Joseph R. Donovan, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Republic of France to Indonesia, Ambassador Jean-Charles Berthonnet, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to Indonesia, Ambassador Benabdellah Ouadia, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Portuguese Republic to Indonesia, Ambassador Rui Fernando Sucena Do Carmo, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Bangladesh to Indonesia Major General Azmal Kabir,



Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Mauritius to Indonesia Ambassador Isop Patel, and Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Rwanda to Indonesia Ambassador Guillaume Kavuruganda. Following the ceremony, the ambassadors were provided the opportunity to hold individual informal conversation with President Widodo, accompanied by Foreign Minister Retno L.P. Marsudi on the back porch of the Merdeka Palace.

During the brief meeting, Ambassador Kijiner expressed gratitude to President Widodo for accepting his appointment as the Marshall Islands first Ambassador to Indonesia followed by Ambassador's conveyance of an invitation to President Widodo, on behalf of Her Excellency President Dr. Hilda C. Heine, to



visit the Marshall Islands. Ambassador Kijiner also avail the opportunity to express his commitment to strengthening the relationship between the Marshall Islands and Indonesia and further conveyed the Marshall Islands' interest in identifying an individual of high caliber and moral standing to act as the Marshall Islands Honorary Consul in Jakarta, to which was met with much favor by both President Widodo and the Foreign Minister.

Ambassador Kijiner is expected to make a follow up trip to Indonesia in the next few months to meet with the Indonesian Government to further discuss issues of mutual interests and benefits. *(photos provided by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia)*

Marshall Islands Establishes Diplomatic Relations with Kyrgyz Republic

Formal diplomatic relations between the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Kyrgyz Republic were established last month on 22 December 2016.

The Joint Communiqué on establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries was signed in Tokyo by Ambassador Tom D. Kijiner, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to Japan, and Ambassador Chingiz Aidarbekov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kyrgyz Republic to Japan.

The text of the Joint Communiqué declares that the parties have established diplomatic relations, guided by the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and the international law, particularly the respect and promotion of international peace and security, equality among States, due respect of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, independence, respect of international treaties and non-interference in internal affairs of States.

Both Ambassadors agreed that the formal signing of diplomatic relations between the two countries marks



an important milestone in their respective nation's history and further expressed their commitment to further solidify and enhance the newly established relationship through various areas of bilateral cooperation.

After the Joint Communiqué signing ceremony the parties expressed their mutual intention to develop relations of friendship and cooperation between two States in the framework of the United Nations and other international organizations, as well as between the Embassies of two countries accredited in Japan.

Marshall Islands Establishes Diplomatic Relations with Kingdom of Cambodia

The Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia, in conformity with the interests and desire of the two peoples, have establish diplomatic relations on 20 January 2017, in an official ceremony at the Embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands in Tokyo. The Joint Communiqué on establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries was signed by Ambassador Tom D. Kijiner, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to Japan, on behalf of the Marshall Islands, with Ambassador Chea Kimtha,

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia, signing on behalf of Cambodia.

The text of the Joint Communiqué declares that the parties have established diplomatic relations, guided by the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and the international law, particularly the respect and promotion of international peace and security, equality among States, due respect of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, independence, respect of international treaties and non-interference in internal affairs of States.

Following the signing of the communiqué, both Ambassadors expressed the hope that this important event would be backed up with concrete steps to foster understanding between both countries. Both Ambassadors further expressed their personal commitments to enhance and solidify the relations between the two nations and further reiterated that the establishment of diplomatic relations will lay a foundation for further cooperation in various areas of common interests and benefits.





The ceremony concluded with Ambassador Kijiner presenting Ambassador Kimthea with a Kili Bag, explaining the origin of the bag and how the hand-

bag was made famous by the former First Lady of the United States, Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, when she was presented with a similar bag back in the 1960s.

Witnessing the signing ceremony from the Marshall Islands Government's side were the Marshall Islands Consul-General to Thailand, Mr. Steven Xianxi, Deputy Chief of Mission, Ms. Annette Note, and Administrative Assistant Kentaro Miyasaka, as well as Mr. Isaac Marty and Mr. Jefferson Botla, who are in Japan on a month-long training program funded by the Association of Promotion for International Cooperation (APIC) of Japan. The First Secretary of the Royal Cambodian Embassy to Japan, Mr. Makara Chay, accompanied Ambassador Kimthea to the Marshall Islands Embassy and further witnessed the ceremony.

President Heine Applauds Marshallese Education Day Committee



President Dr. Hilda C. Heine met with members of the Marshallese Education Day (MED) committee, an organization that recognizes the best and brightest Marshallese students while providing educational support and assistance for the growing population of Marshallese on Oahu, Hawaii.

The MED members hosted a dinner for President Heine to extend their appreciation to President Heine, who has always been a great supporter of MED, and the Government of the Marshall Islands for the continued support.

President Heine applauded the organization's positive impact and commitment toward student achievement. This year marks the 10th anniversary for MED. To learn more about MED or if you wish to lend a hand for the

upcoming annual event, please contact Tamera Heine, Community Outreach Coordinator at the Marshall Islands Consulate Office at tameraheine@gmail.com