



KIDID KWŌJKWŌJ



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From the President



It is with great pleasure that I extend greetings of Yokwe and Welcome to the inaugural edition of Kidid Kwōjkwōj, a weekly newsletter designed to keep you informed and up to date with the latest news and information from the Office of the President and Cabinet. In the olden days, when Kidid, a wandering tattler, visited our islands, people believed that was a sign of good tidings.

President Heine Welcomes U.S. Ambassador Stewart

President Dr. Hilda C. Heine accepted the diplomatic credentials of Ambassador Karen B. Stewart, the newly appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The presentation of credential ceremony was held at the Cabinet conference room on Monday, 25 July 2016.

President Heine congratulated Ambassador Stewart and reiterated the RMI Government’s commitment to the special and unique relationship between the two countries under the Compact. She acknowledged the RMI Government’s appreciation for the invitation of

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Kwōjkwōj means communion or feast. Through this publication, we hope to enhance communications with all interested parties and communicate in a more timely, efficient, and effective manner.

This newsletter supports our efforts in transparency and accountability. We invite you to provide questions, comments, and constructive feedback and suggestions that will help find solutions to the many issues that face the Republic and its people.

a staff working level meeting in August to discuss the 10 Year Review Report of the Compact, as Amended.

President Heine conveyed concern regarding the possible discontinuation of the “Ri-Katak” Program at the United States Army Garrison Kwajalein Atoll and the Government’s disappointment and view on the recent U.S. Department of State’s Trafficking in Persons Report.

“We have many outstanding matters to resolve and I am confident that over the course of the next few

weeks we can dialogue on these with a view to finding ways forward,” stated President Heine.

President Heine expressed, on behalf of the people and Government of the RMI, deepest condolences for the passing of Hawaii Congressman Mark Takai. Concluding her remarks, President Heine said she looks forward to working closely with the Ambassador to engage further on matters of common interests between the two countries.

Ambassador Stewart reciprocated by thanking President Heine for the warm welcome and conveyed desire to build on the strong record of friendship from her predecessor, former Ambassador Thomas Armbruster. Ambassador Stewart was nominated by U.S. President Barack Obama to be U.S. Ambassador to the RMI in November 2015.



Photo: President Heine presents Marshalllese handicraft as gift to U.S. Ambassador Stewart at the Cabinet conference room

Prior to her new post, Ambassador Stewart served as Political Advisor to the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation since 2013. She has also served as U.S. Ambassador to Laos (2010–2013) and Belarus (2006–2008).

Agenda 2020: A Framework for Progress

Immediately after assuming office in February this year, President Heine’s Administration undertook a stock-take of major challenges and priority institutional reforms in relation to Government Ministries and agencies respective functions and roles. The process is critical towards strengthening efficiency and effectiveness of Government and its services to the people.

Following two Cabinet Retreats, *Agenda 2020: A Framework for Progress* (Agenda 2020) was developed to serve as an outline to help the Government focus its attention on identified urgent and strategic priorities and to ensure Government services and delivery mechanisms are efficient and on target. There are ten challenges and ten priority Government reforms identified in Agenda 2020.

The RMI’s National Strategic Plan (NSP) is inevitably linked to Agenda 2020 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Agenda 2020 was supported by the Marshall Islands Mayors Association and the Marshall Islands Chamber of Commerce.

Agenda 2020 identifies ten challenges and ten priority Government reforms

Challenges

1. Growing the Economy
2. Preparing for the post-2023 Compact transition
3. Improving Majuro Hospital and basic health services
4. Supporting education, youth, and vulnerable groups
5. Adapting to climate change and reducing disaster risks
6. Strengthening water, energy, and food security
7. Improving the quality of life on Ebeye and other Kwajalein communities
8. Improving the welfare of outer islands communities
9. Tackling consumer debt and strengthening consumer protection
10. Strengthening laws, justice, and public safety

The 16th RMI Executive Leadership Joint Communiqué, signed on 18 July 2016, acknowledges and supports Agenda 2020.

President Heine and members of the Cabinet held discussions with the executive members of the Chamber of Commerce on 28 July 2016, who reiterated the importance of increasing jobs, current and potential retirees in relation to MISSA, and the need to increase local fisheries (including coastal fisheries), among others. Also discussed was local investment promotion which entails minor law amendments, such as MISSA requirements to invest overseas. All in all, the Chamber of Commerce supported Agenda 2020, and looked forward with working with President Heine's Administration in the coming years.

top photos: members of Cabinet and Chamber of Commerce consult on Agenda 2020 last week Thursday at Marshall Islands resort
bottom photo: Signing of the 16th Executive Leadership Conference Joint Communiqué that acknowledge & support Agenda 2020

- Priority Government Reforms**
1. Improve fiscal management
 2. Reform SOEs
 3. Salvage MISS
 4. Strengthen PSC and Office of the Chief Secretary
 5. Improve Infrastructure planning, development, and management
 6. Enhance accountability and good governance in the public sector
 7. Sharpen foreign policy and development assistance, and seek nuclear justice
 8. Strengthen management of cultural and historical resources and assets
 9. Improve and integrate information technology systems in government
 10. Amend and Improve the Constitution



Pictured L-R: front row- Internal Affairs Minister Amenta Matthew, President Hilda C. Heine, MIMA President & Wotje Mayor Ota Kisino, MIMA Secretary & Likiep Mayor Veronica Wase. back row- Internal Affairs Secretary Wallace Peter, Minister-in-Assistance Matlan Zackhras, Majuro Proxy Boaz Lamdrik, Enewetak Proxy David Obet, Jabat Mayor Heinkey Lomwe, Ebon Mayor Ione Lutip de Brum, Lae Mayor Anderson Kattil, Namdrik Mayor Clarence Luther, Ailinglaplap Proxy Anno Aiseia, Utrik Mayor John Kaiko

Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals

The RMI Government, in partnership with the UN and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, held a Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) sensitization workshop at the ICC last week from 28–29 July. The workshop raised awareness on the SDGs and held discussions on localizing and aligning the goals to the RMI’s national development and priorities. Incorporated into the discussions was Cabinet’s recent Agenda 2020 Framework that is in the process of being formalized.

President Dr. Hilda C. Heine emphasized on ensuring that the SDGs are well-aligned with RMI’s growth and development aspirations while encouraging active participation, partnerships, and collective efforts of stakeholders. In addition, President Heine touched on the need to align relevant policies, strengthen regulatory framework where necessary in order to better align private sector incentives with public goals.

She noted key bilateral structures, in particular, the RMI-US Compact that can explore strategic approaches to addressing the SDGs in partnership.

“The Government is committed to the Sustainable Development Goals and looks forward to forging the necessary partnerships needed to realize and achieve the goals,” said President Heine.

Minister-in-Assistance Mattlan Zackhras said an “island-tailored” strategy of national ownership – and stakeholder partnership – is needed.



Photo: President Heine delivers her remarks at the final day of SDGs localization workshop Friday last week at the ICC

He underscored the challenges for policy integration, implementation, and data-driven monitoring, particularly for a small, capacity-challenged nation like the RMI. Data capacity will be a particular challenge where the SDGs could include a heavy data burden, however, the RMI should explore very practical approaches at the national level including instances where existing pathways can be utilized, he said.

“...the RMI’s national SDG strategy must be a benefit, not a burden,” stated Minister Zackhras.

UN Resident Coordinator for the Pacific, Ms. Osnat Lubrani, congratulated the Government of the RMI on its leadership and foresight for getting onboard the SDG train so soon in 2016–the first year of implementation of the 2030 SDG Agenda.

The expected outcome of the workshop is the development of a roadmap that will provide a holistic and clear direction in meeting national development plan and aspirations whilst linking in the SDGs. One of the key outcomes of the workshop was identifying First Gentleman Thomas Kijiner Jr. as the national champion for the SDGs.

Photo: Minister-in-Assistance Zackhras officiates the SDGs localization workshop last week Thursday at the ICC.



Cabinet Approvals

Ministry of Health Medical Licensing Board (as of 28 July 2016):

- a. Dr. Marie Lanwi–Paul, Physician (Chair)
- b. Dr. Tessie Briand, Dentist (member)
- c. Nurse Hillia Langrine, Nurse (member)
- d. Lab tech Paul Lalita, Allie Health Sciences (member)
- e. Nurse Jalusen Matauto, Nurse (member)
- f. Rev. Russell Edwards, ex officio/non–voting/advisory (member)

Marshall Islands Shipping Corporation (as of 14 July 2016)

- a. Mayor Anderson Kattil, Chairman
- b. Senator Leander Leander Jr., member
- c. Captain Joe Tiobech, member
- d. Mr. Ywao Elanzo Jr., member
- e. Mr. Jemi Nashion, member

Retail Price Monitoring (as of 7 July 2016):

- a. Secretary of Internal Affairs, Chairman
- b. Frederick de Brum, Director of EPPSO, member
- c. Secretary of Finance or designee, member
- d. Mayor Manini Kabua, Jr., member
- e. Miram de Brum, WUTMI, member

At its meeting on 28 July 2016, the Cabinet approved the establishment of a **Presidential Commission on Fish Contamination in the RMI** whose member will consist of a person identified from each of the following Ministries, offices, and agencies but not limited to: Office of the Chief Secretary, Office of the Attorney General, Environmental Protection Agency, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority and the Kwajalein Atoll Leadership.



L-R: Justice Minister Thomas Heine, new RMI Australian Navy LCDR Matthew O’Loughlin, President Dr. Hilda C. Heine, outgoing LCDR George McKenzie, Minister-in-Assistance Mattlan Zackhras

President Welcomes Australian Navy LCDR O’Loughlin

Royal Australian Navy Lieutenant Commander Matthew O’Loughlin paid a courtesy call on President Dr. Hilda C. Heine at the President’s Office last week Wednesday, 27 July 2016. Foreign Minister John Silk joined President Heine in the discussions with LCDR O’Loughlin and outgoing LCDR George McKenzie. President Heine welcomed LCDR O’Loughlin and expressed appreciation for Australia’s commitment and cooperation on maritime issues of importance to the region, such as, environmental protection and security. She noted the welcome initiative by Australia for further support regional cooperative efforts namely the Pacific Maritime Security Program.

Philippines Donates \$50K for Disaster Relief Efforts

Honorary Consul Dr. Alex Pinano and members of the FAMI presented, on behalf of the people and Government of the Republic of the Philippines, a \$50,000 check to help towards the RMI’s disaster drought relief efforts. Receiving on behalf of the people and Government of the RMI, President Dr. Hilda C. Heine conveyed gratitude for the generous donation and reiterated the RMI’s commitment to further strengthening the relationship between the RMI and the Philippines.

ROC (Taiwan) Hands Over Disaster Relief Goods

During a hand-over ceremony organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs last week Wednesday, ROC (Taiwan) Charge d’Affaires Robert Lo officially handed over a cargo container of charity items to President Dr. Hilda C. Heine, who received on behalf of the people and Government of the RMI. The items are donations from SimplyHelp, a non-profit charity organization based in Los Angeles, California, dedicated to relieving poverty by providing emergency disaster relief assistance.

Foreign Minister John M. Silk conveyed appreciation to ROC (Taiwan) Ambassador Winston Chen, Charge d’Affaires Robert Lo, and the ROC (Taiwan) Embassy for arranging the delivery of charity items with SimplyHelp, following the RMI Government’s call for assistance from partners and organizations toward the Government’s disaster drought relief efforts. Minister Silk said the donation is a welcome gift to the people of the RMI, particularly to the people living in the outer islands that are suffering from the drought.

Charge d’Affaires Lo announced that a container shipment of quality rice is on its way to the RMI, slated to arrive on August 10th. “This will not be the last one...we expect another handover ceremony,” said Charge d’Affaires Lo. He thanked the RMI Government for the continued support of ROC (Taiwan)’s meaningful participation at the UNGA and other UN specialized agencies and mechanisms, such as, the ICAO and UNFCCC.

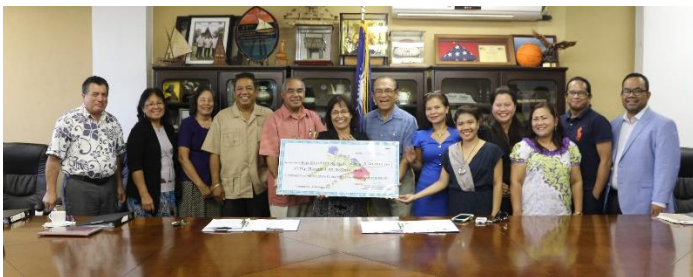


L-R: Public Works Minister Anthony Muller, Mrs. Sharon Muller, President Hilda C. Heine, Olympic athlete Mattie Sasser, & Marshall Islands National Olympic Terry Sasser Supporting the “1.5 The Record We Must Not Break” Campaign

“The highest point in the RMI is just 2 meters above sea level. That is why our country needs the world to limit global temperature to 1.5 deg C as set out in the Paris Agreement. The RMI, and countries like it, is already seeing climate change happening right before our eyes. Earlier this year, the RMI was devastated by another unseasonal and prolong drought while our Pacific neighbors suffered typhoons and cyclones, and in, other parts of the world, floods, heat waves, and unprecedented weather events like king tides that are washing away our homes. Climate change threatens our livelihood, our culture, and our very existence.

We refuse to give up on hope and science clearly tells us, now is not the time to give up. We need to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 deg C to ensure the survival of the most vulnerable countries, especially atoll nations like the RMI. Help us raise awareness on “1.5 the record we must not break,” help us in the fight against climate change. The future depends on it.”

--- President Heine



Top photo: Honorary Consul Pinano & members of FAMI present \$50k check that will go towards drought stricken atolls/islands. Right photo: President Heine, Foreign Minister Silk, & Chief Secretary Langidrik, & Charge d’Affaires Low pose with disaster relief donations from SimplyHelp

