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PRESIDENT’S STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS



In her State of the Nation Address, President Heine reported on the accomplishments of her administration since taking office in February this year and outlined her administration’s goals based on her call for improved service by the Government to the people while encouraging service by the people to the Government.

While noting post-2023, President Heine informed Cabinet’s intentions of introducing during the 2nd session of the Nitijela, Agenda 2020 that identifies ten major challenges and ten Government Priority reforms. President Heine said although these challenges and priorities are not new, her administration believes that a comprehensive approach to addressing them will inevitably lead to the reinvigorated implementation of the National Strategic Plan. Moreover, President Heine provided the Cabinet’s proposed Legislative Agenda consisting of at least ten new amendments and bills.

The RMI continues to face the harsh impacts of climate change and other natural disasters.

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President Heine noted that substantial time and resources were spent on activities related to the drought. She thanked development partners that assisted the RMI during the drought disaster and continue to support its relief efforts.

President Heine underscored the continued importance of education and recognized public and private schools accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). To show appreciation for the roles private schools play, she announced that Government is seeking an increased appropriation of \$200,000 to the Aid to Private School Program, which is currently at \$300,000 a year. President Heine supports CMI’s One College One Dream plan that aims to transform CMI into a college that is responsive to the future needs of the RMI.

Health and security remain a priority for Government, particularly in relation to improving the RMI social security system, the fish poisoning in Kwajalein, and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). President announced that Cabinet has established a Social Security Taskforce and a Fish Poisoning Commission.

President Heine said funding support for promoting

the SDGs will be introduced to the Nitijela. To meet its obligations to international human rights conventions for the protection of women and children, President Heine said the Government is also proposing, in the upcoming budget, “to build safe houses known as Weto in Mour” for women who face domestic violence.

President Heine reported on fisheries, shipping, and aviation. In terms of private sector development, President Heine said the Government has included in its budget approximately \$2 million to instigate a small to medium small business loan program at MIDB. For the full text of President’s State of the Nation Address, please visit www.rmigov.com.

National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking

In her State of the Nation Address, President Heine announced that Cabinet recently approved the RMI National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Written in 2015 through a consultative process led by the National Taskforce on Human Trafficking, the Action Plan addresses the following four pillars of human trafficking:

prevention– by dismantling human trafficking networks, building awareness and creating deterrence, (2) protection– through rescue, services, and victim-centered criminal justice response, (3) prosecution– of offenders and perpetrators, and (4) partnership– between government, non-government, faith based organizations, health professionals/services, legal services, traditional leadership, and others.

Envisaged in the National Action Plan are several activities including the drafting and enacting of a Trafficking in Persons legislation to create an environment for the prosecution of those responsible for human trafficking activities. Labor and

Cabinet’s Legislative Agenda

1. **Amendment to MISSA Act** to revitalize this essential service
2. **Amendment to the Minimum Wage Act** to increase minimum wage by \$.50 every year until 2019 when it reaches \$4.00 per hour
3. **Amendment to the Immigration Act** which will exempt citizens of countries with which the Republic has visa-waiver agreement
4. **Amendment to the Imported Duties Act** to increase the Sin Tax and taxes on sweetened sugary drinks while lowering the tax on 100% natural juice.
5. **Amendment to the Banking Act** to bring up its standards to international minimum standards such as being more independent and accountable while addressing local issues of loan sharks
6. Some **amendments to the MIMRA Act**
7. **A bill to ban the importation of Styrofoam and disposable plastic cups and plates** as well as plastic shopping bags
8. **A bill to establish a national Youth Service Corps** to address unemployment rate among our youth while training them for future employment opportunities
9. **A bill on worker’s compensation** to address lack of health and life insurance benefits of our Marshallese workers on Kwajalein
10. **A bill to establish the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change**

Immigration legislative and regulatory reforms are also anticipated. Moreover, the Action Plan implies reviewing relevant conventions and protocols to begin the process of RMI becoming signatory to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 2000; Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children; and Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air. “Progressive actions to remove RMI from Tier 3 in the U.S. TIP Report continue to be implemented,” said President Heine.



Photo provided by: Office of the Chief Secretary

Post Drought Disaster Needs Assessment

On 01 August 2016, the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands in collaboration with the European Union, The Pacific Community (SPC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank (WB) commenced a Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) for the severe drought associated with El Nino 2015–2016. The PDNA commenced with a 3–day refresher training event for RMI sector specialists, led by the world renowned expert Mr Roberto Jovel.

The national PDNA exercise comes at an opportune time for the Marshall Islands. It takes place immediately following the national consultations on the Sustainable Development Goals, which occurred at the end of last week, with and in collaboration with the UN. Local participants identifying risk information and data collection and management as a critical component of meeting the SDG targets, including national targets on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation.

“We now have the unique opportunity to assess and analyze all the social and economic sectors that were affected by the drought. That, in turn, will help us to

articulate and prioritize recovery actions, fine-tune national planning and provide guidance on financing,” said Chief Secretary Justina Langidrik at the opening ceremony of the Post Disaster Needs Assessment training.

The 3–week period following the training event will now involve in–country specialists from the sectors affected by the drought, together with overseas experts, analyzing the social and economic impacts of the 2015–2016 drought. The PDNA will conclude with a Strategic Plan, developed as part of the process, being presented to the Government of RMI by early September 2016.

Chief Secretary Langidrik further noted that “Sustainable development must be risk–informed. Recovery follows sustainable development principles and must be informed by social and economic assessments of the impacts of this drought. This will be critical as the country strengthens its capacities to prepare for and respond to such shocks in future and increase resilience.”

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Government will carry out the assessment with valuable inputs and support from a full range of stakeholders, including national and international NGOs, civil society, and development partners.

This PDNA is a first for RMI, a first for the Northern Pacific, the first Pacific drought-related PDNA as well as the first for an Atoll in the Pacific region.

There is a lot of learning involved for the Marshall Islands, the Pacific and the world. In her closing remarks to the national participants, the Chief Secretary stated, “The PDNA is the beginning for us. We must commit our time and effort to fully inform the national development process.”

Finance Minister Brenson Wase, on reflection on the PDNA stated, “resilience is the keyword. Effective contingency planning will depend on the availability of reliable data.”

The PDNA will in effect, enable the Government to know, if not the exact, a very accurate cost of economic loss to the people and the Marshall Island. “This PDNA is critical in informing the national budgetary process.”

Minister Wase also informs us that Cabinet has already establish a disaster fund for the National and Local Governments to enable future emergency preparedness and responding.

Minister Wase recognizes the important role that nongovernment organizations play in the drought recovery process and encourages cooperation between National entities and NGOs when working with Local Governments.

For more information, please contact Office of the Chief Secretary at 625-3234.

Cabinet Approvals

1. RMI Ports Authority Board of Directors (as of 4 August 2016)

- a. appointed Robert Pinho as Chairman
- b. Senator Sherwood Tibon, member
- c. Senator Daisy Alik-Momotaro, member
- d. Mr. Larry Hernandez, member
- e. Mr. Jack Chong Gum, member
- f. Mr. Anjojo A. Kabua III, member
- g. Mr. Michael Sawej, member

2. AMI Board of Directors (as of 4 August 2016)

- a. appointed Sonny Milne as Chairman
- b. Mr. Amon Tibon, member
- c. Minister Mike Halferty, member
- d. Mr. Kosuke Sato, member
- e. Mayor Veronica Wase, member
- f. Mr. Scott Paul, member

President’s Upcoming Trips

1. **10th Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders (PICL)** from 30 August – 1 September 2016 in Honolulu, Hawaii. This year’s PICL will coincide with the 25th Anniversary of its existence and on this occasion, the summit will focus on three key issues: advancing the Pacific region’s relationship with the United States, how to structure regional cooperation, and climate change/environmental issues.

2. The **47th Pacific Islands Forum** in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, from 7-11 September 2016. As part of this year’s Forum, President Heine will attend a series of meetings, including; the Smaller Island States (SIS) meeting that represents the region’s and the world’s most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change; followed by the Pacific ACP Leaders’ Meeting; Forum Plenary Session; then the Forum Leaders’ Retreat; the 28th Post-Forum Dialogue Partners Meeting.

Paris Agreement pledges nearing critical threshold; likely to enter into force this year

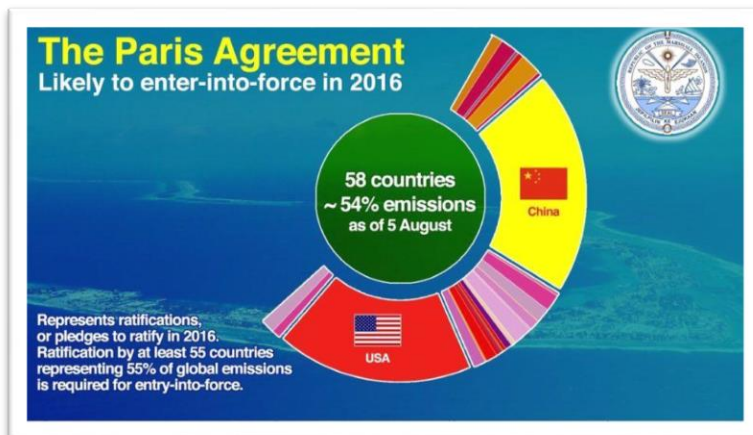
The Paris Agreement is nearing a critical threshold of pledges and is likely to enter into force this year.

According to an analysis compiled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, around 58 countries together representing nearly 54% of global emissions have now ratified, or pledged to work towards the ratification of the Paris Agreement by the end of 2016. This includes Peru, Morocco, Iran, Ukraine and Ghana which all completed their domestic ratification processes in the last month, as well as the United States and China which are expected to ratify the Agreement in the coming weeks. If countries representing just over 1% of global emissions are now also able to do so before the end of 2016, this would likely tip the Agreement above its entry-into-force threshold of 55 countries accounting for at least 55% of global emissions. For example, achieving this now would likely only require Russia, India, Japan, Brazil, Korea, South Africa or Turkey to also ratify the Agreement in 2016.

In March, RMI became the third country to ratify the Agreement, following quickly in the footsteps of its Pacific island neighbors of Fiji and Palau. A record breaking 175 Parties went on to sign the Paris Agreement at a signing ceremony held in New York in April where RMI became the first country to deposit its instrument of ratification with the UN Secretary-General – a further five have since signed the Agreement, and a total of 22 Parties have now deposited their instruments of ratification.

Speaking on the release of today's analysis, RMI President Dr. Hilda Heine, said:

“What we agreed in Paris at the end of last year will likely now have the force of the law by the end of this year. This is a big recognition of the urgency with which we must now get on with the job.”



RMI's Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Honorable John Silk, added:

“There can be no excuse for countries unnecessarily dragging their feet towards ratification. We hope many more countries will come forward and pledge to get this done by December, and we expect the UN Secretary General's invitation to accept instruments of deposit at a special event on the sidelines of the General Assembly on 21 September will only add to this groundswell.”

RMI's Climate Ambassador and the convener of the High Ambition Coalition, Tony de Brum, added:

“There is still a lot of work to do to secure a safe climate future. This means doing all that we can to bend global emissions trajectories in the direction of the temperature goals we agreed for the first time in Paris – to limit warming to well below 2°C, and pursue efforts towards 1.5°C. Global emissions need to peak this decade. Our Coalition is ready to again take the lead and has identified the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement as one of its [three priorities for action in 2016](#).”

The Agreement will enter-into-force 30 days after instruments of ratification crossing the requisite thresholds have been deposited. At that point, no Party can withdraw for four years.

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A full list of countries included in this analysis is available (this excludes Austria, France, Germany, Hungary and Spain which have completed their

domestic ratification, or pledged to do so by the end of 2016, but will collectively deposit as part of the EU; they account for a further 5.13% of emissions): <http://bit.ly/2ax72t3>

MIR General Manager Provides Positive Report

Prior to the 21st Anniversary of the Marshall Islands Resort (MIR), MIR team led by General Manager Hirobo Obeketang paid a courtesy call on President Heine to inform and invite President Heine to the MIR's 20th anniversary opening ceremony and celebration events. Sunday, 31 July 2016, marked MIR's anniversary with activities held from 4–6 August.

General Manager Obeketang provided MIR's FY 2015 highlights, including Increased Revenue by \$142,000, expense increased by only \$7,000; and increased positive cash flow of close to \$200,000 results without subsidy from RMI Government. MIR has contributed to the local Economy (local



Photo: President Heine (center), MIR team- GM Obeketang, Enra Manager Handelene Maddison, HR Director Trudy de Brum (right side), Foreign Minister John Silk and President Chief of Staff Christopher de Brum (left side)

vendors) about 1 million dollars and 90% of employees are Marshallese, said General Manager Obeketang. President Heine congratulated and expressed best wishes to MIR board, management, and staff.



Health Minister Kalani Kaneko recently completed the Leadership for State Health Officials Executive Education Program at Harvard Kennedy School held from 24–27 July 2016. Photo: Minister Kaneko & Adjunct Lecturer in Public Policy Sheila Burke (former Chief of Staff for former U.S. Senator Bob Dole).



Foreign Minister John M. Silk, Kwajalein Mayor Hirata Kabua, the USAG–KA Command Team, members of Seabees construction team dedicated the new dock shelter on Enniburr during a ribbon–cutting ceremony on 29 July 2016. (photo provided by KADA Executive Director Carl Hacker)