



FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
Fifteenth Session
Electronic Meeting
November 29 – 7 December 2021

HEADQUARTERS MATTERS

WCPFC18-2021-FAC15-08
19 November 2020

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to present for the information and consideration of FAC the issues concerning the operations at the Commission Headquarters in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia. They include headquarters' property, security, telecommunications, travel, environmental responsibility, medical care and utility services

Operational Issues

Telecommunications and Internet

2. This year the communication systems and services were available with minimal downtime. In addition to the fibre-optic connection to the Headquarter building provided by FSM Telecommunications Corporation, the Secretariat maintains a backup satellite connection with Kacific which launched internet services in FSM in 2021.

Utility Services

3. There continues to be a number of blackouts, brownouts and electrical power surges in Pohnpei. Although most of the IT infrastructure is protected, these electrical problems do cause damage to other equipment and appliances both at the Headquarters' building and staff residences. The backup generator for the office continues to operate effectively and is in good working condition.

Headquarters Building

4. The Headquarters' building remains in good condition due to regular maintenance. The Commission approved terms of reference and budget for the consultancy to undertake a building survey and the development of a maintenance plan for the Commission buildings (WCPFC15-2018-FAC12-09). The consultant that was selected to undertake this work was scheduled to travel to Pohnpei in the first quarter of 2020. Unfortunately, the consultant has not been able to travel to Pohnpei due to COVID-19. This work will commence once the travel restrictions related to COVID-19 in FSM have been lifted.

COVID and Medical Care in Pohnpei

5. FSM remains one of the few COVID free countries in the world. FSM shut its borders to disembarking passengers in March 2020 and started to open the borders to a very limited number of citizens and residents in mid-2021. Currently, all incoming passengers must undergo a 10-day quarantine in Guam followed by a 7 to 14 quarantine period in quarantine containerized housing in Pohnpei before being allowed to enter the community. The office has implemented a four-stage plan in response to the pandemic. Additional details on the Headquarters impact and preparations to the pandemic can be found in the 2021 Annual Report of the Executive Director (WCPFC18-2021-04).

6. Medical care in Pohnpei continues to be a serious concern for both local and professional staff during the pandemic. Due to a contract dispute with the Pohnpei state government and the inability to bring in new staff there is a shortage of doctors available at the public hospital. Routine medical care like monograms and other routine testing are not available on island and a concern for staff who have gone beyond the recommended intervals for undergoing those recommended medical tests.

Security

7. The headquarters' compound maintains 24-hour security through directly hiring security guards. There were no security incidents reported at professional staff housing over the last year.

Travel

8. In the second half of 2021 a more regular, although greatly reduced, number of flights have resumed to Pohnpei on United Airline. No other carriers have indicated a return to servicing Pohnpei.

Environmental Responsibility

9. The Secretariat continues to be conscious of the impacts of the operations of the Headquarter building on the environment. The Secretariat has greatly reduced its use of non-recyclable items and has worked to recycle as much waste as possible.

10. The Headquarters power is now primarily generated by solar energy with roughly 80-90% of the power consumed from solar power. Apart from the reduced impact on the environment, the costs saving to the Secretariat have been significant.

IT Audit update

11. The annual IT Audit for 2021 was delayed due to the inability of the auditor to travel to Pohnpei. The final report is expected to be available before the annual meeting.

Recommendation

12. The Committee is invited to discuss and note the paper.