



## **FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**

### **Sixteenth Session**

Da Nang, Vietnam

27 November - 3 December 2022

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## **HEADQUARTERS MATTERS**

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**WCPFC19-2022-FAC16-09**

**9 November**

### **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. Power has been relatively stable throughout the year. There have been several periods of time with rolling blackouts but power outages have been less frequent than in previous years. 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 travel restriction. The Secretariat will work with the contractor to conduct the survey in 2023.

#### Professional Staff Housing

There has been considerable pressure on the housing market in Pohnpei. With the opening of the boarders, increased costs of building supplies, limited inventory and the establishment of a sub-regional UN office in Pohnpei, the cost of house rentals has gone increased. The Secretariat has managed to keep rental prices lower than the market due to long term leases and positive relationships with landlords.

#### COVID and Medical Care in Pohnpei

5. Prior to opening it boarders in August 2022, the state of Pohnpei experienced its first cases of community spread of COVID in July 2022. In accordance with the Secretariate's four-stage plan in response to the pandemic, staff were instructed to work from home to minimize the spread of COVID. Those staff who were infected fully recovered and the office has since resumed normal operations. Fortunately, there were minimal fatalities related to COVID in Pohnpei. All professional staff that were working remotely have now returned to the office.

6. Although Pohnpei has opened it boarders, the effects of having closed boarders for over two years has had an impact on the available workforce, including doctors and nurses. With the shortage of medical workers, medical care in Pohnpei continues to be a concern for both support and professional staff during the pandemic.

#### Security

7. The headquarters' compound maintains 24-hour security through directly hiring security guards. There was one security incident reported at professional staff housing over the last year and appropriate reports were filed with the police and foreign affairs.

#### Travel

8. A full schedule of flights has resumed to Pohnpei on United Airline. Air Nauru has resumed operations with a flight every two weeks to Pohnpei from Brisbane, stopping over in Nauru, Kiribati and RMI. As travel has resumed in the pacific there are a few trends that have affected travel arrangements. First, the frequency of flights has been reduced for some routes. Second, the costs of flights have increased but it is difficult to determine if this is a temporary increase as travel start to return to a more normal level or the actual new cost of travel.

#### 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 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.

#### **Recommendation**

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