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HEADQUARTERS MATTERS

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Submitted by the Secretariat

Introduction and Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide updates on current operations at Commission Headquarters (Secretariat) in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia. Updates cover Secretariat property and staff housing, security, telecommunications, travel, environmental responsibility, medical care, and utility services.

Operations Updates

Headquarters Building

2. The Secretariat building remains in good condition due to ongoing maintenance. The Secretariat is currently working with the host government on upgrades to the building. These upgrades include repairs to the ground floor tiling, and improvements to the parking area.

Professional Staff Housing

3. There continues to be considerable pressure on the housing market in Pohnpei. With limited inventory and the establishment of a sub-regional UN office in Pohnpei, along with additional staff from other organizations, the demand for housing remains high. The presence of these organizations has further increased pressure on available rentals. Fortunately, the Secretariat has established strong relationships with landlords and secured long-term leasing arrangements for current professional staff.

Security

4. The Secretariat compound maintains 24-hour security through direct contracting of security guards. No security incidents were reported at professional staff housing or the Secretariat in the past year.

Telecommunications and Internet

5. Communication systems experienced minimal downtime throughout the year. In addition to the fibre-optic connection provided by FSM Telecommunications Corporation, the Secretariat transitioned its backup satellite service from Kacific to Starlink. The satellite connection now provides redundancy in case of fibre outages and handles low-priority internet traffic for the office.

Travel

6. United Airlines continues operations in Pohnpei. Starting in December, flight schedules will change, but the number of flights will remain the same. Air Nauru also operates a once weekly service connecting Brisbane, Australia to Palau, via Nauru, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, and Pohnpei. A new weekly direct flight from Palau to Australia provides

an additional connection from Pohnpei to the South Pacific. The Secretariat monitors flight costs and has observed slight increases over the past 12 months. Early booking is recommended for all travel to Pohnpei.

Environmental Responsibility

7. The Secretariat continues to be mindful of the environmental impact of its operations. Solar energy now generates 75-85% of the Secretariat's electricity, significantly reducing environmental impact and costs. Additionally, the Secretariat seeks to minimize the use of non-recyclable items and maximize waste recycling.

Medical Care in Pohnpei

8. Medical services in Pohnpei are limited and many essential procedures and tests are unavailable on the island. Most staff members must travel overseas for routine medical tests, treatments, and care. This remains a concern for both support and professional staff, as overseas travel adds to costs and logistical challenges.

Utility Services

9. Electricity has been inconsistent throughout the year, with periods of rolling blackouts and frequent daily outages. The backup generator for the office is in good working condition and has helped in minimizing disruptions to daily Secretariat operations.