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PRESS RELEASE

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President Emanuel Mori Had Busy Schedule of High-Level Meetings with US Government Officials While Attending National Prayer Breakfast in Washington DC

President Emanuel Mori recently traveled to Washington DC as guest of the US Congress to take part in the activities of the National Prayer Breakfast (NPB) that was held from 6 – 7 February 2008. The NPB is a high-profiled two-day non-government event annually sponsored by the US Congress where American and invited world leaders from around the globe come together in Washington for fellowship and to reflect on the importance and primacy of seeking Divine guidance and compassion in civic duty and in the governance of man.

The FSM President was in DC from 03 – 09 February 2008. While the primary purpose of his visit was to attend the NPB, the President also took the time to take up a busy schedule of high-level bilateral meetings with officials in the capital of the country with which the FSM has premier diplomatic partnership and which provides the bulk of the economic sustenance to the FSM Government. “This is an opportunity not to be missed,” Mori said of the program of visit that was prepared for him by the FSM Embassy in Washington, in close collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Office of Statistics, Budget and Economic Management, Overseas Development Assistance Coordination, and Compact Management (SBOC).

President Mori and President Bush had the opportunity to interface and exchange greetings at the NPB. Adhering to protocol and diplomatic practices, and in light of the special relationship between the FSM and the US under the Amended Compact of Free Association, President Mori also met with Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, as Secretary of State Condolezza Rice was out of town at the time. Mori also met with Assistant Secretary Christopher Hill, who is in charge of the State Department’s Bureau of Asia-Pacific Affairs.

Another high-level meeting that the President had was with Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, who had visited the President in Palikir soon after the installation of the Mori Administration. Through its Office of Insular Affairs, the

Department of the Interior is responsible for the implementation, management, and oversight of funds provided under the Compact.

Under the Compact, the US assumes delegated defense and security authority over the FSM. In recognition of this important element in the bilateral relationship, the President also met with General James E Cartwright, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Department of Defense, during which visit he was given a VIP tour of the Pentagon.

Additionally, the President participated in a Roundtable discussions held at the State Department involving representatives of various US departments and agencies operating in the FSM or having programs and projects in the FSM. The Roundtable discussions were chaired by Mr Glyn Davies, a principal officer in the State Department's Bureau of Asia and Pacific Affairs.

Historically since the Trust Territory era, the US Congress plays a major role in US relations with Micronesia. Its role is all the more significant, given the nature of the provision of funding under the Amended Compact treaty. Therefore, the President also met with the following members of the US Congress: Senator Jeff Bingaman, Chair of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; Senator Daniel Inouye, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations; Senator Daniel Akaka, Chair of the Committee on Veteran Affairs; Representative Nick Rahall, Chair of the Committee on Natural Resources; Representative Eni Faleomaevaga, Chair of the Subcommittee on Asia, Pacific & the Global Environment; and Representative Donna Christensen, Chair of the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs.

One of the issues highlighted in the meetings by President Mori is the participation of the FSM in the Defense Department's Submarine Fiber Optic Cable (SFOC) project from Guam to Kwajalein and the need to bring broadband connectivity to the FSM. During the recent meetings of the Chief Executive Council, the FSM leadership has opted to first link Pohnpei to the DoD fiber cable from Guam to Kwajalein and, later, to expand to the other three states. President Mori places high priority on the bringing broadband connectivity into the country, seeing it as a critical backbone of socio-economic development in the FSM in terms of telemedicine, distant education, e-commerce, and e-government.

The other important issues raised during the President's meetings included: the US military buildup on Guam and the needed preparations for gainful participation of FSM citizens; need for creativity in further enhancing the stability and mutual benefits of the partnership; areas of cooperation at the multilateral level; cooperative maritime surveillance and resource management; FSM citizens serving in the US military and their contributions to the global war on terrorism; importance of strengthening the FSM's private sector; sea-level rise and the adverse impact of Climate Change on the FSM; the need for assistance, including the Investment Development Fund (IDF), for the fiber optic project, particularly for its second phase; and possible areas of regional cooperation.

Aside from the meetings with US officials, President Mori met with Ambassador Sallai Meridor of Israeli during which several areas of possible bilateral economic cooperation were identified. It was agreed that further discussions be held to examine the proposed ideas in greater detail. The Ambassador expressed hope that the President would be able to visit Israel.

In his various meetings, President Mori was joined by Mr James A Naich, Charge d'Affaires of the FSM Embassy in DC; Mr Fabian S Nimea, SBOC Director; Mr Epel K Ilon, SBOC Deputy Director; Ms Jane J Chigiya; Assistant Secretary of Foreign Affairs in charge of US relations at the Department of Foreign Affairs; Mr James T Stovall and Mr Mick Staton, both DC-based advisors to the FSM Government. Telecommunication advisors to the FSM Government, Mr William Jahn and Dr Norman Okamura, also participated in providing advice and recommendations relating to the SFOC project, broadband connectivity and other matters relating to information and communication technologies (ICT).

At the end of the busy week of meetings, the Embassy hosted a small reception in honor of the President that was attended by approximately sixty friends and supporters of the FSM based in Washington DC. Shortly thereafter the President left DC for a meeting on biological diversity in Rome before heading homeward -- to the FSM.

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