

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 22-09

RE: COMMITTEE TO WAIT ON THE PRESIDENT

JULY 20, 2022

The Honorable Wesley W. Simina
Speaker, Twenty Second Congress
Federated States of Micronesia
Fifth Special Session, 2022

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee to Wait on the President was duly appointed on July 18, 2022, consisting of members Robson U. Romolo, Joseph J. Urusemal, Esmond B. Moses and Paliknoa K. Welly. Robson U. Romolow was designated as the chairman.

The Committee met with the President virtually and his key cabinet. The Committee to Wait on the President took place on July 19, 2022 at 9:30 a.m. The Committee communicated the priorities of Congress for this session, and it received an agenda from the President for the meeting.

The President asked the indulgence of the Committee to Wait to update Congress on two matters outside of his written agenda. First, the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Fiji had a very good outcome. The President stated that his letter to the twenty-one Pacific island leaders was well received. Other member countries of the Forum took the opportunity to voice their agreement with the stance that FSM took in the President's letter. The FSM will be the site of two new northern Pacific sub-regional offices for international organizations. The United States will appoint a special envoy to the Pacific Islands Forum and increase its presence in the region. Also, the FSM will be have the Secretary General position in the Pacific Islands Forum for the next five years.

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The President requested that the Committee to Wait bring his appeal not to override his veto of Congressional Act No. 22-110 regarding the specification of Congress ratification process of subsequent substantive treaty matters. He stated that this was direct overreaching into the powers of the President and would tie the hands of future presidents. The President emphasized his willingness to do in person briefing with Congress and stated he understood their frustration. However, the President stated that much of the problems in this area stems from the conducting of business virtually during the pandemic period. Further, the President indicated that he did not want to further burden the future executive leaders by requiring that they submit routine foreign affairs matters through a time-consuming process not used by any other country.

There were two agenda items proposed by the President for this special session. First, he stated that there will be a modest supplemental funding bill transmitted today for Congress consideration. This bill will include necessary funding for the JCRP to continue its meetings through the end of this fiscal year. Also, the request will include proposed funding for vessel maintenance.

The majority of the discussion during the meeting was the August 1, 2022 border opening and the transition after the expiration of the President's emergency declaration. With the new Healthy Border Act the National Government has consulted with the States and all relevant agencies to develop regulations to implement this new law. The regulations have been out for public comment and the President believes that they will be ready for his review and signature next week.

Concern was raised by the Committee that some States do not feel ready to move to this next stage and open their border without a strong quarantine component. The President explained that as the international borders will be open from next month the Nation is concentrating on capacity of its test and treat centers, and its healthcare systems ability to handle cases of the virus. The Committee was also advised that the FSM does have effective medication for the treatment of COVID-19 which is U.S. FDA approved. This should answer some of the concerns of the citizens.

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A clear problem that was raised by the Committee was the home quarantine portion of the regulations. As drafted the regulations provide for home quarantine of five days. This is not practical in our Nation. The Secretary of Health and Social Affairs admitted that as a prevention method this was not effective. At this stage in the process of opening our borders it will have to be accepted that the virus will eventually cross our borders and it will spread in our communities. That is why the primary emphasis is on vaccination and treatment going forward.

A sticking point is what if a state does not want to let travelers in after clearing immigration because the state government wants to quarantine but does not have funding to do so. The Secretary of Justice stated that a state may not close itself to immigration, and once the traveler has arrived the state leadership must decide if it will use its financial resources and workforce to conduct quarantine. The discussion was clear that funding at the national level from donors had been exhausted and would not be supported by domestic revenue.

The members of the Committee to Wait raised the following issues with the President. First, it has been a concern that the Vice President has not been at the national offices or available at meetings of the government. What analysis has been done by the President or his cabinet regarding the capacity of the Vice President to remain in his position? The President stated he had been waiting and was hopeful of an improvement of the Vice President's health, and had sincerely looked forward to him being able to return to work. As there has been no improvement in the Vice President's health the President stated that now it may be time that experts, such as someone designated by the Secretary of Health and Social Affairs, make an evaluation of the Vice President as to his capacity to remain in the office.

Your Committee raised more detailed concerns regarding the lack of communication from the President to Congress regarding recent foreign affairs actions. Several significant actions have been taken by the President that Congress received no advance briefing about. It was also raised that the President has made statements that seem counter to the FSM position, for example, on seabed mining. The Committee emphasized the need to be

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briefed and to understand the positions being taken on the Nation's behalf.

The meeting concluded with mutual agreement to move forward on the above issues in a timely and cooperative manner. Your Committee kindly requests the members address any further questions regarding the priority issues for this session to the members of the Committee during the discussion of this report at session.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Robson U. Romolow
Robson U. Romolow, chairman

/s/ Paliknoa K. Welly
Paliknoa K. Welly, member

Esmond B. Moses, member

/s/ Joseph J. Urusemal
Joseph J. Urusemal, member