

Statement to The Hague Forum, 8-12 February 1999

As written:

THE FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

STATEMENT BY

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GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERATED STATES OF
MICRONESIA

AT

THE CAIRO+5 HAGUE FORUM

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Federated States of Micronesia

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Mr. President, Madame Secretary-General, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen

I am honored to address the Forum on this important occasion on behalf of the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. President, let me join those who have spoken earlier and convey my delegation's congratulations to you on your unanimous election to preside over the Forum. With your able stewardship, my delegation is confident that this Forum will be a constructive review process on the national implementation of the ICPD Plan of Action.

I would like to express my government's sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Dr. Nafis Sadik, for her unrelentless efforts in making it possible to reconvene here this week, to share our experiences in implementing the ICPD Plan of Action in the five (5) years following the ICPD.

Shortly after the adoption of the ICPD Plan of Action in September 1994, my Government embarked on an internal public sector review aimed at “reorganizing government operations and structures” to make it more responsive and sustainable. The sustainability issue is critical as we are approaching re-negotiation of our **15-year** Compact of Free Association with the United States, which provided us with some of the economic assistance in the operation of government including social programs and services. Certain economic provisions under this relationship may end in 2001. International cooperation will become even more vital than ever.

I will now attempt to provide a brief highlight on what has been done to date and what we aspire to do in the next five years, relative to the ICPD Plan of Action.

My Government has put in place implementation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure timely integration of population in national development. The newly restructured Departments (Ministries) of Economic Affairs and Health, Education, and Social Affairs are now responsible for ensuring that population concerns are fully integrated into sustainable economic planning and management, sustainable development, policy formulation, and decision-making process. In our view, this integrated approach is vital to the reformulation of population commitments into an equitable and gender sensitive socioeconomic policy.

The government completed its first comprehensive population and housing census in 1994. We have noted an appreciable decrease in the annual population growth from 3.4% - 3.0% and total fertility rates from 5.4% - **4.6%**, some narrowing of the population pyramid, especially at the 15-24 age groups, and an essentially young population base. Crude birth rate and crude death rate are recorded at 23.4% and **3.7%**, respectively. The infant mortality rate (IMR) remains the same. The contraceptives prevalence rate has increased by 25%.

In spite of these significant changes, population growth will continue to be a major challenge for my Government as resources are diminishing, and the intrinsic growth rate remains high at 3%.

Reducing population growth through an integrated **multi-sectoral** strategy is a goal my Government is committed to pursue. Provision of primary health, reproductive health and family planning services; enhanced economic and social benefits through education, job creation; employment; empowerment of women, youth, and disadvantaged groups; and emigration, are integral components of this strategy.

At the core of the issue is the well-being of a mother. Reproductive rights are already explicitly recognized in all family planning program sites. These rights include, but are not limited to, services provided to all persons; without regards to age, sex, color, or national origin, religion, creed, parity or the marital status of the mother, and legal

residency. No person shall, on the grounds stated above, be subjected to discrimination under any activity.

All family planning contraceptives and services are provided on a voluntary basis without coercion or any restriction on the different contraceptive methods. Women have full access to all health services.

The ICPD POA has rekindled and reaffirmed the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia's commitment to assure that reproductive health/family planning-sexual health services should be provided in a manner that protects the dignity and basic human rights of the recipient. It will be offered as any other primary preventive health care services, respecting the privacy, dignity, freedom of choice, social and religious beliefs of the individual.

Prior to ICPD-94, the Government already had in place a mechanism for monitoring and measuring the progress in achieving some of the quantitative goals that became the major focus of ICPD, such as universal access to reproductive health services, maternal and infant mortality, life expectancy and others. The mechanisms for tracking key indicators for maternal and infant mortality are in place through existing programs in public health, such as family planning, maternal and child health, immunization, STD, HIV/AIDS, and others. This activity is a joint effort between the relevant departments at both the national and state level.

The College of Micronesia-FSM, the only tertiary institution in the Federated States of Micronesia, has developed training manuals and institutionalized credit courses on population education/family planning and sexuality education. **In-**service and pre-service students have enrolled in the courses since 1992. The previous projects intended to establish population education in elementary and secondary schools were successful; however, the schools were left with limited curriculum materials for the integrated curricula by the government at the national and state level. Therefore, the extension of the projects was requested jointly by the **COM-**FSM and the FSM Department of Health, Education and Social Affairs to improve population education in schools through a more coordinated curriculum and instructional materials development based on some relevant research and teacher training. The materials are field-tested and will be disposed to the schools as soon as they are printed.

With the daunting population-related problems and issues among the nation's adolescents, the college has teamed up with the national government in establishing **counselling** centers in schools and communities to strengthen the information, education and communication (IEC) component of the population programs in the nation. Young adolescents, faced with the new population-related problems such as teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, young crime and suicide and sexually transmitted diseases, entailing the ever present threat of a HIV/AIDS epidemic, will utilize these centers.

In the area of Gender equality, equity, and empowerment of women, my Government has upgraded the national women machinery from a desk to a Women and Development Unit with creation of the National Women Advisory Council under the new Department of Health, Education and Social Affairs. FSM States have established women's programs in the state governments' structures and all four FSM States have established women's NGO umbrellas.

Ratification of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW Convention) remains a top priority of my Government. A CEDAW Awareness and Literacy Workshop is planned for the immediate future. My Government is hopeful that this process will pave the way for favorable legislative action and adoption of the Convention before the year 2000.

With declining finances in the government sector, the role of the private sector, **NGOs**, and civil society in providing basic services will become increasingly essential. Government is, therefore, committed toward strengthening and enhancing this partnership through creating opportunities by providing **enabling** processes for mainstreaming and into appropriate government policy and decision-making bodies; and by some resource allocation to operate and administer needed community-based services and programs.

The government and NGO partnership is essentially good. With the reform process in place, the government will work

with the **NGOs** to provide assistance in institutional strengthening and capacity building.

The on-going reform process and the reality of the change in certain Compact provisions is important to mention here again not to justify the actions or lack thereof in implementing the principles of the ICPD Plan of Action, but to stress the importance of the partnership between the international community, development partners, bilateral and multilateral agencies, regional partners and **NGOs**.

A high level of political commitment alone will not carry the momentum forward. It is evident that the strategies to achieve the objectives of the ICPD POA will be through Advocacy and Information, Education and Communication in Reproductive Health, Family Planning and Sexual Health Programmes, Institutional strengthening and capacity building. Participation at all levels is essential.

This Forum comes at a crossroad for our region, a region comprised of islands with small land masses and limited resources. We join the world community at this Forum to examine experiences and to learn from each, lessons that will be vital to our survival.

Mr. President,

In closing, I would like to express the appreciation of my delegation to the Government of Netherlands for hosting this important conference to review the first five years of the

ICPD POA and for the warm hospitality extended to my delegation since our arrival.