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COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
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Micronesian Islands Forum 2024
Opening Remarks of Governor Arnold I. Palacios

Hafa Adai, Tirow, and Good Morning to all,

Thank you, Governor Lou Leon Guerrero, Lt. Governor Josh Tenorio, and the people of Guam for your hospitality in hosting this Micronesian Islands Forum. This is my first MIF as governor of the Northern Marianas. I've been looking forward to it.

This forum offers a unique platform for the nations and territories of Micronesia to share issues of mutual concern in our region, to learn from each other, and to cooperate in our own, Micronesian solutions.

We are stronger when we work together. Our histories in Micronesia are intertwined. Our shared roots run deep. Sometimes we forget, and forums like this are good reminders. For generations, our ancestors crossed the ocean, navigating by the stars, trading and sharing resources, knowledge, and hospitality with each other.

In this forum, the leaders of Micronesia come together to do the same. All of us here were called to be like navigators, to lead our people to a better future, perhaps beyond the horizons we can see.

Our mutual challenges are large and daunting - from the climate crisis to healthcare and IUU fishing.

But our shared opportunities are also great, to tackle these challenges together and build secure and thriving communities across our region. To discern the path forward, we can learn a great deal from our history, and the wisdom of our ancestors.

In the words of the late Papa Mau, "To navigate we must be brave and we must remember."

How do we really get into implementing these regional initiatives, to encourage each other and work as a unit to turn ideas into action? We have done it before. I remember Air Micronesia. We worked together then to build robust, regional air transportation links through UMDA. Every government had a stake, everyone cooperated.

We can do this again across many sectors - in air and ocean transportation, healthcare, biosecurity, energy, workforce development, and more.

And we can use technology to our advantage, to build stronger links across our region and the world. We can also advocate for each other, in this and other forums. I was happy to see the Compacts between the Micronesian nations and the United States government finally renewed and funded.

Governor Lou Leon Guerrero and I both advocated strongly with our federal partners in support of the Compact renewals. The Compacts are critical to economic development and security in our region. And we appreciate the support of our Micronesian family in elevating the positions of the CNMI and Guam in the Pacific Islands Forum.

“To navigate, we must be brave and we must remember.”

As we navigate the path to a greener, more resilient and regenerative future for all of Micronesia, we cannot forget our roots. Yes, we can embrace new technologies and practices that help us, but we also got to go back to the taro patch, to the ocean, to the wisdom and traditions that have sustained us for generations.

We have to keep our cultures strong, our values as people of Micronesia, and our friendships with each other.

Figuring out solutions and navigating together - that’s what this forum is all about.

Si Yu’us Ma’ase, Ghilisou, and Thank You.