

OUTLINE FOR DISCUSSION:

**INFORMATION ON INDEPENDENCE
FOR A SOVEREIGN REPUBLIC OF CHUUK**

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Status Commission**

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INFORMATION OUTLINE PUBLIC HEARINGS ON INDEPENDENCE

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Why are we moving toward independence?

INFORMATION FOR HEARINGS ON INDEPENDENCE

Historic background: History has not been kind to the islands and people of Chuuk. For generations, layer after layer of authority over us has kept Chuuk on the outside, watching the rest of the Pacific develop and make progress. Whether under foreign power or native Micronesian political arrangement, Chuuk has consistently been the last in line for modern development. The regional federation of states has failed us. Declining U.S. assistance under two Compacts shows we are being abandoned by that superpower. We must make our own future without outside meddling. The first step toward that future is the creation of an independent Chuuk, a full-fledged, duly recognized, internationally respected island nation.

- (1) . **Introduction:** The Political Status Commission was created by the Chuuk State legislature to study and identify which of various possible political arrangements would free our people from the limitations of economic underdevelopment. The findings of this legislative commission have now been made clear: Chuuk must become an independent nation.
- (2) . **Statement by Kachivosey Paulus, Chairman of Chuuk Status Commission:** Hello to my fellow citizens. After much research and work toward a better Chuuk, your Commission has made the decision to promote the goal of complete independence for our islands. We are now entering an important time of personal contact with our people in public meetings to explain this new direction for Chuuk. We will be urging your participation, your discussion, your vote for independence in a future plebiscite. Only if we gain the energy and the will of the people will we win nationhood.
- (3) . **Outlook for Independence:** As small island nations around the world have shown, the first step toward true and just economic and social development is to secure national liberation from outside forces, whether foreign governments or foreign commercial powers. The most viable, the most practical, the most healthful and the most peaceful future for any people sits on a foundation of national independence. Large and small nations show this; international organizations recognize this; it is time for our people to join this process. Chuuk must no longer be outside looking in, but must join the community of nations as a full member.

What's wrong with our current situation? (3)

- (4). **Current conditions making independence necessary:** The people of Chuuk are consistently denied the fundamental benefits of nationhood. Our citizens, living, working and struggling day-to-day within or outside our lagoon face harsh and backward conditions in every sector of activity.
- (4a). **Our old infrastructure:** Inferior sewers, impassable roads, unreliable electric power, unhealthy water, primitive transportation, poor construction, ruined and unsafe buildings. Seventy years of post-World War II "development" under outside control has delivered this. We must take over the management of our entire infrastructure.
- (4b). **Our polluted environment:** Land and ground water, lagoon and reef, harbor and storage tanks are all heavily affected by unregulated usage and commerce with no concern for the people, no respect for life. National status for Chuuk will bring scientific interchanges with other island nations who are solving dangerous environmental issues.
- (4c). **Our inadequate health system:** Even with skilled professionals, health services cannot be delivered properly with facilities which are now worse than ever. Independence can bring a national medical system with access to modern health care for all.
- (4d). **Our poor educational system:** Chuuk schools continue to produce only a fortunate few with university skills or productive trades. Our teachers, poorly paid, do their best but must be provided with modern and sufficient supplies, equipment and facilities. Direct nation-to-nation relations will move us toward advanced technology and education.

What has the Status Commission been doing for our independence?

- (5). **Backup of Commission efforts:** The CSPSC was created by the Chuuk State Legislature and given the responsibility of recommending back to the CSH the best political path to follow in order to lift Chuuk out of the miseries of underdevelopment.
- (5a). **Organization:** Officers of the Commission were selected, research committees formed, timetables developed, consultants hired. A broad plan to involve all Chuukese in a status plebiscite was developed.
- (5b). **Independence Resolution:** After investigation, research, debate, and extensive meetings, the Commission agreed that the only practical way out of the stagnation of the current political system would be to declare Chuuk a sovereign nation, linked to no outside authority. Commission Resolution #01-14, passed in February, urged a proclamation of independence and an eventual public vote on the issue.
- (5c). **Public involvement:** With independence as the choice, political education outreach was planned for all Chuuk populations, within Chuuk and living abroad. The final goal: a high participation vote (plebiscite) in support of immediate national independence.

(5d). **Political education materials:** The CSPSC produced the first Beyond the Compact full-color newsletter introducing the Commission and its responsibilities and goals. Next, this newsletter was revised and updated with a second edition including pro-independence statements. Thousands of the second newsletter were printed and distributed through Commission members and officials. A third document was printed and circulated containing strong and thorough statements by Chairman Paulus and Speaker Onesim. Yet another newsletter of information is to be developed for political outreach to all Chuukese here and abroad, to be sent through Commission political education teams.

It's time to govern on our own:

(6). **Governing on our own:** Despite steady progress toward full self-government throughout smaller nations, including Pacific Island groups, Chuuk has never experienced the full benefit of actual self-rule. Every budget, every fiscal act, every regulation, every program, every commercial activity, every foreign contact, every aspect of civil (and military) life is somehow dependent on approval from "higher" authority, whether the U.S. or the FSM. In many cases, the Chuuk government must obtain authorization from both of these governments situated outside our Islands. The process can take years but our needs are immediate. Whatever word one uses for "authorization" (permission, approval, oversight, etc.), the actual situation of Chuuk is one of subservience or obedience or submission to a "higher" outside authority. In finally rejecting such relationships, Chuuk will face new political realities, but from a position of autonomy.

What about our individual rights in the United States?

(6a). **Transition period/diplomacy with the U.S.:** When this crucial time arrives, key parts of our long-standing relationship with the U.S. will come up for negotiation. Under the Compacts, we have had rights which have proven beneficial to many Chuukese. Among these are: **passport recognition**, enabling travel throughout the U.S. and opportunities to **reside, study and work** within that country. Independence does not mean an automatic end to such privileges. In fact, one of the first duties of any transition government will be to enter into **diplomatic talks** with U.S. officials regarding these matters. Some Commissioners want **dual citizenship** with the U.S., a matter to be decided by the people of Chuuk. U.S. officials always maintain that their Compacts with us are designed to promote democracy, development and self-government. Surely we can expect (and should demand) they will assist in guiding us into an independent future by continuing such country-to-country privileges in some form.

(6b). **Government structure/a new national government:** Much of the current governing system of Chuuk State can readily be adopted by a new Chuuk National Government. Executive, legislative and judicial branches will be formed, based on existing bodies with some exceptions. The Commission, for example, has considered whether a 2-house (bi-cameral) legislature will be necessary at all. Some prefer a single legislative house. This is a matter to be decided by the people. One new department will be essential: the Chuuk Department of Foreign Affairs. Most important is the fact that none of the new national bodies will be responsible in any way to outside authorities. Each branch will report only to the people of Chuuk.

How can a Republic of Chuuk survive financially?

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(7). **Financing/supporting our new independence:** Nobody has stated that independence will be easy. However, life under U.S.-FSM rule has turned out to be **disastrous** for our infrastructure, for our health, for our island environment, for our waters. We must be willing to work and pay for a better future for our children. It will be time to take a new, hard, and clear look at how we do business, what we produce, how we regulate commerce, how we use foreign assistance.

(7a). **Local business sector:** Our greatest need among small businesses here may be management and accounting skills. Our people will show what they want through their purchases; the power of the marketplace. At the same time, without a clear picture of income and profits, any new national government will be in the dark with regard to possible revenue. **Review and revision to the tax codes** of Chuuk are essential to make sure that all have a fair chance at the market. Oppressive taxation can crush any size enterprise, but without **regulation and revenue**, no government can ever provide any services for our people. In addition to improved regulation, any new national government should assist in **new ventures** as yet not strong enough in Chuuk. For example, the new ecology tourism market ("eco-tourism"); thousands of travelers who are trying to totally escape civilization and immerse themselves in the natural world. While the diving industry here presents some of this, we can show off tropical jungles, mountainous islands and remote beaches. Another relatively undeveloped area of commerce is that of **joint foreign-local enterprises**. These have proven extremely beneficial to the people of Belau since the 1990s. Who enter in to such businesses with Taiwanese firms and make efficient use of tax revenues for infrastructure development. New direct foreign relations under independence will provide a foundation for profitable commercial partnerships.

(7b). **Improving production in agriculture and mariculture:** There is room in Chuuk to **diversify our agriculture**. Crops which now see only limited production (small bananas, for example) can be grown "plantation style" (on a larger scale) with the aim of local sale as well as export. Once we have established direct relations with other nations, we can establish agricultural exchange programs and gain the most successful growing methods for marketable produce. The same holds true for **fishing**. **New fishing technologies** are in use by fleets from developed Pacific countries. With national status, we can enter directly into cooperative treaties beneficial to our fishing industry.

(7c). **New channels of foreign assistance:** Independence will bring our new freedom to establish relations with whatever nation we choose. No longer will aid and development funding be filtered through the FSM or need approval from the U.S. Interior or State Departments. The horizon is broad for new positive relationships with neighboring countries, all Pacific Rim nations and wherever our sovereign diplomacy can take us. We can set our sights beyond Japan and the U.S., to Australia, Taiwan, China and farther. The people of Chuuk must have the same right to access development assistance that all other small island states enjoy. Throughout the 20th and now into the 21st century, we have been denied full respect as a people, as a culture, as a society, as a nation. As a free country, our new diplomatic corps will be welcomed as equals, not former colonized subjects.

Will U.S. Compact aid continue if we become independent?

(7d). **Continuation of U.S. Aid:** We must expect that the U.S., as our former rulers, will continue their **moral obligation** to fund our progress toward a self-sufficient future. After all, the U.S., with its paternalistic approach to Micronesia over the generations, has kept us on the slowest track to independence which they could devise. They have us in an arrangement now which has us desperately concerned, anticipating just what our future will be with the steadily declining Compact funds and full cutoff just a few years away. If the sheer suffering and basic denials our people undergo each day of their lives were not enough, then this dark threat of U.S. bureaucrats has surely and finally awakened us to the course we should have taken in the late 1940s. Then, the great push toward self-determination by peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific was kept from our learning processes by careful manipulation of our educational systems, emanating from Washington and the TTPI. Ultimately, the U.S. must face the reality they have pretended to wait for us for so long: true, sovereign national independence. From our new position as a nation, we must make clear in discussions and negotiations with U.S. officials that we fully expect their continuation of Compact funding for Chuuk as per Compact provisions.

What is our international future as an independent country?

(8). **New international relations:** Chuuk is well-situated to expand its diplomatic horizons to regions of the world long out of our experience. With broader international contacts our people can reach their full potential as world citizens. Over the years, we have gained much from our relationship with the U.S. Our ties to Hawaii are significant, and some of us have enjoyed the beauty, the cities and the economic and educational opportunities of California and the Pacific Northwest. But **Chuuk can no longer be limited** to these regions, this relationship. There are great universities in China, Japan, and other areas, not only the U.S. There are great employment opportunities in developed nations of Asia and Europe as well. There is great technical training to be had in Southeast Asia, even South America, not only in California. We must lift ourselves out of the narrow outlooks we have held for our futures. Our education, our training, our views of the future have limited us. They have resulted in no real progress for most of our people, no modern development for most of our islands, no real confidence that we can rule ourselves. Only from a basis of a true **national identity** can we break out of the gray of this semi-colonial history which shapes our thinking and thus our state of underdevelopment. We are a nation. We may not be recognized on paper as such yet, but **we are a nation**. It is time to formally declare this fact.