Statement of Ambassador Sobashima Hidenobu at the Emperor’s Birthday Reception on February 19, 2020

Traditional Leaders,

Your Excellency Mr. David Panuelo, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, and First Lady Madam Patricia Edwin,

The Hon. Kandhi Elieisar, Secretary of Foreign Affairs,

The Hon. Eugene Amor, Secretary of Finance and Administration,

The Hon. Bethwel Henry, One of the Founding Fathers and the First Speaker of the FSM Congress,

The Hon. Emanuel Mori, the Seventh President of the FSM,

Members of the FSM Congress Present,

The Hon. Reed Oliver, Governor, Pohnpei State,

The Hon. Feliciano Perman, Lt. Governor, Pohnpei State,

Members of Pohnpei State Legislature Present,

The Hon. Ginger Mida, Postmaster General,

Other Senior Government Officials Present,

Your Excellency Mr. George Fraser, Ambassador of Australia,

Your Excellency Mr. Huang Zheng, Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China,

Other Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Leaders and Members of Churches and Faith Organizations,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

 It is my honor and pleasure to welcome you all present here this evening to a reception to celebrate the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

 Japan has His Majesty the new Emperor from May last year.

The enthronement ceremony of His Majesty was held in October last year, and was attended by H. E. Mr. David Panuelo, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, among other leaders from foreign countries.

This is our first national day reception since then.

 His Majesty the Emperor will be 60 years old on the 23rd of this month.

 I would like to start by referring to the Novel Coronavirus disease.

I admire the leadership of H. E. President Panuelo, and the efforts of all those concerned to prevent its infection in the FSM.

 The Government of Japan, for its part, is endeavoring to contain and effectively control the disease, including at the cruise ship Diamond Princess.

 I sincerely hope that we will win this fight against the new infectious disease soon.

 As several sanitizers have been placed over there, you may wish to practice using one of them after a round of shaking hands with us; the hosts and guests today.

Now about Japan and the Federated States of Micronesia:

 While Japan and the FSM established the diplomatic relations in 1988, their people’s exchanges date back more than 120 years ago, and there are a great number of citizens of the FSM of Japanese relationship.

 In the recent years, while extensive activities of fishing by Japanese vessels have been seen in the waters of the FSM, the Government of Japan has been engaged in various development cooperation projects in the FSM including technical cooperation through people-to-people exchanges by JICA.

Exchanges organized by private and academic institutions have been also abundant between the two countries.

 The Government of Japan attaches importance to promoting the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”.

The unshakably friendly relationship which has been consolidated between Japan and the FSM, a country almost at the center of the Pacific which is linked to Japan by the sea, provides a strong basis for the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”.

 Last year, H.E. Mr. David Panuelo was sworn in as the 9th President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

The Hon. Taro Kono, then Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan visited the FSM, for the first time as the Foreign Minister of Japan in August, and proposed the cooperation between Japan and the Pacific Island Countries for a future that is actice, opportunity-filled and innovative, i.e. AOI Future.

The Ambassador of Japan to the FSM changed:

My predecessor Ambassador Horie Ryoichi left the FSM in June and I arrived in the FSM in October.

 I am particularly pleased with the fact that His Excellency Mr. David Panuelo, President of the FSM visited Japan two times already after my arrival here.

First, to attend the Enthronement Ceremony of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan in October, as I already mentioned, and secondly, to pay an official bilateral visit to meet H.E. Mr. Abe Shinzo, Prime Minister of Japan, among other official functions in November.

Prime Minister Abe then stated that Japan would strengthen support to the FSM’s sustainable economic and social development, and President Panuelo supported Japan’s positions on various matters including on North Korea, among other issues.

 Under these circumstances, I am determined to do my best, building upon the long-standing friendly and cooperative relations between our two countries, and in cooperation with the Japanese residents, experts, volunteers, NGOs and companies in the FSM, among other partners, to further advance the relations.

 In the past 4 months, I signed grant contracts to provide a garbage truck to Madolenihm, Pohnpei State in December last year, and to provide a portable X-ray machine to Chuuk State last month this year.

In addition to my stay in here in Pohnpei State, I visited Chuuk State last month.

I look forward to cooperating with all of you present here this evening, to further advance the friendly and cooperative relationship between Japan and the FSM.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having said this, now I would like to propose a toast to H.E. Mr. David Panuelo, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, wishing for His Excellency’s continued good health and leadership, and all of you present here, for the good health and happiness, as well as the friendly and cooperative relationship between Japan and the FSM.

Paiamwahu!

 Thank you.