Remarks of Mr. SOBASHIMA Hidenobu, Ambassador of Japan to the Federated States of Micronesia at His Farewell Reception

on October 28, 2021

Traditional Leaders,

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

The Hon. Kandhi Elieisar, Secretary of Foreign Affairs,

The Hon. Carlson Apis, Secretary of Transportation, Communications and Infrastructure,

The Hon. Marcus Samo, Secretary of Health and Social Affairs,

The Hon. Gardenia Aisek, Secretary of Education,

The Hon. Andrew Yatilman, Secretary of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Management,

The Hon. Ginger Mida, Post Master General, and Ambassador Kasio Mida,

The Hon. Stevick Edwin, Speaker, Pohnpei State Legislature,

Other Senior Officials of the National, State, and Local Governments Present,

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Heads of the International Organizations,

Distinguished Guests,

My wife Chikako and I thank you all for your presence here now to enable us to say “thank you” and “good-bye” to you.

Every day, I look at the Pohnpei Port and the beautiful beaches nearby through the windows upstairs at this residence, to notice ships from Japan from time to time, and reconfirm that Japan and the FSM are connected by the Pacific Ocean, and the two countries enjoy good economic and social relations now.

Then I am reminded of the importance of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

Chikako and I, and Mr. WAKI Kiyotaka, chef at the kitchen of our residence arrived in the FSM in October 2019.

When I arrived here, I was determined, as Ambassador of Japan to the FSM, to do my best, building upon the friendly and cooperative relationship existing between Japan and the FSM extending from the political, economic to cultural and other areas, and in cooperation with the Japanese residents, experts, volunteers and companies here, among other partners, to further advance our relationship.

Immediately after our arrival in the FSM, we received a delegation of Japan Air Self-Defense Force in the FSM.

In October and November 2019, H.E. President Panuelo visited Japan, to attend the Enthronement Ceremony of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, and to pay a bilateral visit to hold a meeting with H.E. ABE Shinzo, then Prime Minister of Japan, among other meetings and visits.

A few months later, however, COVID-19 hit the world and affected the FSM also, as an unexpected tragedy.

I admire the successive decisions and efforts of H.E. the President and all those concerned of the FSM and Pohnpei and other States, to have successfully prevented the entry of COVID-19 into the FSM.

I also greatly appreciate the U.S. and other foreign Governments and international organizations for having provided to the FSM the COVID-19 vaccines and other materials and equipment to fight the disease.

Japan, too, has cooperated, and intends to continue to cooperate to provide the “Last Mile Support”.

We provided the grant aid amounting to about USD 3.5 million last year and that amounting to about USD 3.7 million last month to the FSM, both for the purpose of procuring the medical equipment made in Japan, as well as other cooperation through UNICEF and WHO.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to share with you the fact that, as it might take some time before a decision would be made by the Government of Japan for its official assistance to the FSM for its fight against COVID-19, the Japanese residents here made a donation through the Pohnpei Japan Club to the FSM Government in March last year, responding to the request for emergency international cooperation from the FSM Government in February.

The collected amount from a number of Japanese residents, many of them are present here, was handed over from Mr. Koji Akinaga, Vice President of the Pohnpei Japan Club, whom I accompanied, to H.E. Yosiwo George, Vice President of the FSM, and the Vice President admired the good gesture of the Japanese community.

I attended many FSM National Taskforce meetings.

There, I not only explained the specific offers of cooperation from Japan to the FSM for its fight against COVID-19, but also shared the information of the COVID-19 situation in Japan and the countermeasures taken in Japan from time to time, including Japan’s policy of avoiding “Three Cs”: closed space, crowded place and close-contact setting.

I also wrote an article on “COVID-19 and Japan’s Responses” and contributed it to the Kaselehlie Press.

This is because I thought that not only the materials to be donated but also the experience in other places may be useful here.

In July this year, the Ninth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting, or PALM9 was held online, participated by H.E. President Panuelo, preceded by the bilateral summit meeting between the President and H.E. SUGA Yoshihide, then Prime Minister of Japan, resulting in positive outcomes for further cooperation between Japan, and the FSM and other Pacific island countries.

In the past two years, I have attended a number of signing ceremonies and handover ceremonies of the cooperation from Japan to the FSM, its States and local Governments.

But I have a number of things undone, and I have to leave the FSM soon.

In addition to staying here in Pohnpei, Chikako and I were able to travel to Chuuk, and I had an opportunity to visit Yap.

However, we have lost the opportunity to visit Kosrae.

While I have a number of things undone, I made my efforts, assisted by the officials of the FSM, State and local Governments, and Cooperating Partners and friends.

I thank all of you present here for your cooperation and friendship.

Also, although I normally refrain from appreciating my colleagues in my Embassy, as they are not my guests, I will do so now as this is my farewell occasion.

Thank you, my colleagues in the Embassy of Japan, both Micronesian and Japanese, for your cooperation.

Mr. MICHIGAMI Hisashi was appointed as my successor as Ambassador of Japan to the FSM.

I hope that he will take care of what I have left undone.

And I hope that all of you present here will accord your cooperation as much as you did to me, or even more cooperation, to him.

Now once again about COVID-19.

Japan has recently succeeded in reducing the new infections dramatically, and the State of Emergency was lifted.

However, the people of Japan continue to wear masks when going out, wash hands carefully after returning home, and try to avoid the “Tree Cs”.

Here in the Japanese Residence, we have made masks and sanitizers available, and placed disposable gloves on the table inside the building for use to touch the cutlery in picking food from large dishes.

I invite you to try to experience the new normal ways as a precaution against an unwelcome eventuality which should be avoided as much as possible.

And then please enjoy the drinks and the food prepared by my proud chef Mr. WAKI Kiyotaka who has spent two weeks to plan and cook our farewell banquet.

Distinguished Guests,

Having said this, I would like to conclude my remarks by thanking you again, for your advice, cooperation and friendship.

Thank you and farewell.