



REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE
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October 25, 2021

The Honorable Katie Porter
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

I cannot thank you enough for October 21, 2021's hearing on the unresolved problems from U.S. nuclear bomb testing and waste in the Marshall Islands and the failure of some U.S. officials to fulfill provisions of the free association of our nations for addressing these problems. In writing this, I know that I am doing so for all Marshallese -- here in the islands and in U.S. areas.

I am writing to bring clarity to some statements in the hearing's discussion of the negotiations that then Secretary of State Pompeo announced in 2019 to extend our free association.

The Marshall Islands has made every effort for productive negotiations since it was first asked to do so a year and a half ago -- and will continue to. However, the State and Interior Departments officials involved have been unwilling to discuss an agenda for the talks and tried to confine the discussion to their own limited proposals. The nuclear issue clearly was one reason. All issues raised by the Marshall Islands were met with assertions that they did not have authority to discuss the matters, without any indication that they would seek it.

The last meeting was 10 months ago. I reiterated three major issues that must be adequately addressed, including the unresolved nuclear issues, and made a dozen economic proposals. I followed this up with a proposed partial agreement nine months ago. We have not received a response, let alone one that would enable the negotiations to proceed to the next step. There have not been agreements on any matter, and no meetings are scheduled.

We recognize that the U.S. administration has changed and understand the need for its appointees to be put in place and have the time to learn about the problems. We have had a couple of opportunities to explain the deficiencies of the negotiations to new appointees. We hope for more and a reconsideration of the approach and positions that will provide a basis for negotiations that not only extend our free association but deepen and strengthen it.

The Marshall Islands greatly appreciates the Members of the U.S. Congress of both political parties who, like you and others in last Thursday's hearing, have urged the new U.S.

administration to focus the necessary attention on the future of the relationship between our nations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Casten', followed by a horizontal line.

Casten N. Nemra
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade
and Chief Free Association Negotiator

cc: Members, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations