

NIK PULA'S WELCOME REMARKS AT THE
BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES CONFERENCE IN HONOLULU,
APRIL 6 – 8, 2009

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen – good morning! My name is Nikolao Pula; I am the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs in the Department of Interior. On behalf of the Secretary of the Interior, the Honorable Ken Salazar, it is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you to the Island Business Opportunities Conference here in Honolulu.

Allow me to extend a very special welcome to all of our leaders from the Insular Areas – President Mori of the Federated States of Micronesia, Governor Camacho of Guam, Governor Togiola of American Samoa, and other high ranking officials representing the Marshall Islands, Palau, the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands. I also acknowledge the presence of members of legislatures and cabinets of the different local island governments. We especially extend a warm welcome to all our private sector and business partners from 22 states and the U.S. insular areas, and also our friends hailing from countries like China, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Iceland, and even Nigeria.

I must also recognize several officials of the Federal government from about 10 different agencies who are here today, including members of the U.S. Congress from the U.S. territories, U.S. Ambassadors, Congressional staff, and many others. Thank you for your collaborative partnership and participation.

According to our registration, overall, about 70 percent of you are from businesses in the private sector and 30 percent are government officials.

We know that economic times are not at their best, so we appreciate not only your time but also the financial commitment you have undertaken to be here. For some of you, this may be your first time at the business opportunities conference. We welcome you and hope you will have a wonderful and productive experience. Others who have attended previous conferences, I especially thank you for your continued support.

In the past, our conferences have focused on a variety of industries common to many of the islands such as infrastructure and tourism. This year, in addition to those sessions and general business networking, we are featuring a track of special sessions on renewable energy and energy efficiency. Our emphasis on renewable energy is quite timely because of the vast Federal resources currently being channeled to this particular sector. Moreover, this industry can assist our island communities diversify their energy sources so as not to depend solely on expensive foreign oil.

In addition, you will note that tomorrow afternoon our program will feature special island presentations. We asked the island communities to present unique business opportunities from their respective areas – and who better to do this than the people from the islands themselves? No one understands the islands' interests better than they do. They are the

experts! We highly encourage your participation at these sessions to hear directly from the government and business leaders of the island communities.

Before I introduce our esteemed speakers this morning, I want to take this opportunity to share with you some of the priorities that Secretary Salazar has emphasized in this new administration.

The Secretary believes that though the times are challenging, we have an opportunity to transform our society together and rebuild and reinvigorate America moving forward. The Secretary recognizes the important stewardship responsibilities the Department has for the vast natural resources owned by the American people and the important impact Interior's work has not only on the livelihoods of American citizens from coast to coast, but also on the American citizens in the U.S. insular areas, both in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

The Secretary has several cross-cutting priorities which include playing an important role in President Obama's vision of moving America toward energy independence.

Through these conferences and other related efforts, we are pleased to facilitate the sharing of business ideas and initiatives that promote stronger economic development in the islands. We hope this conference provides a forum where most of you can network and hopefully create business partnerships beneficial to both the islands and those interested in doing business there. As always, our policy is not to endorse or recommend any particular business opportunities or companies. It is the participants' responsibility to conduct their own due diligence. In that regard, I would like to say that whatever you get out of the conference is what you put into it.

Whether you represent business or government, this conference is about connecting people and creating partnerships. Initial meetings made at previous conferences have led to some developments in the islands such as:

- A fiber optic cable that landed last month in American Samoa that could lead to creating jobs through a call center
- A live-aboard dive boat scheduling tours in St. Croix in the US Virgin Islands
- The Honolulu based private university that set up distance education operations on Guam and Northern Mariana Islands
- Following our 2003 conference where Guam officials made privatization opportunities, a Guam telecom authority was successfully privatized

- Following our 2004 conference, a California based captive insurance company began operations in one of the islands
- Following our 2006 conference, an Alaska based IT company partnered with other businesses to provide security surveillance on one island

These represent a few of the positive developments that began with meetings at these conferences. We don't take credit for the results but we do take credit for the introductions. So please take advantage of this opportunity at the networking receptions over the next two days and especially during the Business-to-Business meetings on Wednesday.

This is an important conference because the objective is to formulate partnerships here which may foster private sector development in the islands and ultimately increase employment by creating JOBS, JOBS, JOBS! This is what these conferences are all about.

I wish you all a successful and fruitful conference over the next three days.