

19th FSM Judicial Conference

The 19th FSM Judicial Conference was held in Colonia, Yap from August 19th to 22nd, 2019. The FSM Judicial Conference is an event that the FSM Supreme Court began in 1994 and the venue of the event rotates among the four states. Its purpose is to provide a forum whereby judicial officers and court staff would have the



opportunity to come together to learn and share their experiences with one another and discuss issues that the judiciaries and stakeholders within the FSM are currently facing. For eleven consecutive years (1994-2005) the Conference was held annually and in 2006 to 2008, the Conference was not held due to limited budget. From 2009 to 2019, it has been on a Biennial basis.

This Year's judicial conference attracted close to fifty participants. Participants included Justices of the FSM Supreme Court, the four State Supreme Courts, municipal and land courts. Prosecutors, public defenders, and individuals from many different fields also participated in the conference. The topics that were covered during the four day conference included Human Trafficking, Environmental Law, Climate Change, Access to Justice and Enabling Rights reports for the FSM, Customs and Traditions in Courts, Evidence, Implicit Bias, and Court Security.

"Opportunities like this are rare, where we have all of the Courts in one place at the same time." said Chief Justice Dennis K. Yamase. "I urge that we talk among ourselves, share issues that are facing our respective courts and then collectively, as a Court family, we can address these issues together. The topics that we are covering this week are current issues that are important not only to the National Court and all the Courts within the FSM, but also important to the FSM National Government and all the state Governments and this nation as a whole. Most of these topics and issues are impacting the people we serve."

This Year's conference was made possible with the collaboration of the FSM Supreme Court and the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and its Pacific Islands Committee, and the Yap State Court which is the host State Court for the 19th FSM Judicial Conference. The next FSM Judicial Conference is currently proposed to be held in 2021 and the venue will be in Chuuk.