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P R E S S R E L E A S E

Eni F. H. Faleomavaega
Chairman

The Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington, D.C.

**FALEOMAVAEGA LEADS CODEL TO VIETNAM, CAMBODIA,
LAOS AND JAPAN**

Congressman Eni Faleomavaega, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment, led a Congressional Delegation (CODEL) from January 4-12, 2010 to Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Japan.

The Chairman, along with Congressman Mike Honda (D-CA), member of the powerful House Committee on Appropriations, and Congressman Joe Cao (R-LA), visited Southeast Asia for purposes of addressing U.S. foreign policy as it pertains to Agent Orange clean-up efforts in Vietnam, UXO clearance operations in Laos, the recycling or forgiveness of Cambodia's debt, the establishment of stronger trade ties, and the impact of climate change on the economies of these vulnerable societies. In Japan, the CODEL

reviewed military cooperation and troop readiness, focusing on recent frictions over the Futenma base issue and other strains in the bilateral relationship.

In Vietnam, the Members held talks with H.E. Ngo Quang Xuan, Vice-Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam; H.E. Nguyen Thanh Son, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs; and H.E. Pham Binh Minh, Standing Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs. A round-table discussion was also held with Ambassador Michael Michalak and included representatives from Vietnam's coordinating agency for Agent Orange Issues and the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation. The Congressional delegation also visited Tu Du Hospital to extend their warmest wishes to the children who are being treated for dioxin exposure. Among other issues, the delegation discussed religious freedom and human rights, noting that the U.S. has a moral obligation to rectify the wrongs of Agent Orange for both Vietnamese and American victims.

In Cambodia, the delegation met with Prime Minister Hun Sen, Secretary of State Ouch Borith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hor Namhong, Minister of Commerce Cham Prasidh, Governor Sou Phirin of the Siem Reap Province, and World Heritage officials. Meetings focused on trade, debt forgiveness, the impact of climate change on Angkor Wat and efforts to capture benefits of the tourist economy for the poor of Siem Reap. Faleomavaega also attended the National Day celebration of the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime.

“In 2008, as part of my assignment as Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment, it was my privilege to visit Cambodia,” Faleomavaega said. “To this day, I cannot erase from my mind the images of Toul Sleng. Neither can I forget the killing fields where I saw massive graves of some 9,000 bodies buried one on top of the other, a sickening reminder that the Khmer Rouge had beaten to death or buried alive innocent people whose blood now cries up to God for justice that most assuredly will come.”

“Knowing of Cambodia's suffering, I want to do everything I can to lend a helping hand and this is why I came back to Cambodia,” Faleomavaega continued. “In February 2008, I held a hearing calling upon the previous Administration to support legislation which would make it possible for Cambodia's debt to be recycled or forgiven. Regrettably, the previous Administration did not act. However, based on my recent discussions with Cambodia's leaders and in close cooperation with Ambassador Hem Heng, we are working to bring this issue to the attention of the new Administration in hopes that this matter can be set right. We are also working in Congress to gain the support necessary for a favorable outcome, and I commend Congressman Jim McDermott and the House Committee on Ways and Means for the work they are doing to improve trade relations and level the playing field for Cambodia. I also commend our U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, Theodore Allegra, for the outstanding work he is doing to promote better relations between the U.S. and Cambodia. Cambodia could have no better friend and the U.S. could have no better representative than Mr. Allegra. He is the kind of diplomat our country can be proud of and I appreciate all he did to make our visit successful.”

In Laos, the delegation met with H.E. Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs; H.E. Dr. Xaysomphone Phomvihane, Vice President of the National Assembly and Chairman of Foreign Relations Commission; and other parliamentary members. Members of the delegation also visited the Hmong Refugee Resettlement Camp in Ban Pha Lak, the first delegation to visit since resettlement occurred. In addition to expressing serious concerns about the Hmong resettlement, the delegation also discussed UXO clearance operations and committed to assisting Laos in this effort.

In Japan, the delegation held discussions on U.S.-Japan relations with some of the country's key leaders. The Members visited Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama at his residence and held talks with Cabinet Minister Mizuho Fukushima, who serves as Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food Safety, Social Affairs and Gender Equality, as well as Rep. Tomoko Abe, a member of the Social Democratic Party, the second largest party in the ruling coalition. In addition, the group met Koichi Takemasa, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“On behalf of my colleagues, I want to thank our U.S. Ambassadors and Embassy personnel for their assistance. While it was regrettable that our U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos was unavailable to meet us upon our Sunday arrival, we were appreciative that the Prime Minister was able to work us into his Sunday schedule. We also express our appreciation to U.S. Ambassadors Michalak, Huso and Chargé d’Affaires Theodore Allegra of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, respectively, and their staff, for their assistance and insights.”

“Above all, I want to thank His Excellency Le Cong Phung of Vietnam, His Excellency Hem Heng of Cambodia, and His Excellency Phiane Philakone and the gracious leaders of Southeast Asia who made this historic CODEL possible. This CODEL was unique in that it was the first Congressional Delegation comprised entirely of Members of Congress whose roots are from the Asia Pacific region. I can assure the leaders of Southeast Asia that, as a result of this historic CODEL, it is our intention to do all we can to improve and strengthen relations with Southeast Asia and I will be holding oversight hearings on these matters in the near future,” Faleomavaega concluded.