

PRESS RELEASE

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Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, the President's Personal Representative for Micronesian Status Negotiations, announced today that the United States has accepted an invitation from the Marianas Political Status Commission to meet in Saipan on December 13th for the formal opening round of talks on the future political status of the Marianas District of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

The Mariana Islands District is administered by the United States Government under a United Nations Trusteeship Agreement. During the past year the United States has been conducting talks with representatives of the Congress of Micronesia regarding the future political status of the other five districts of Micronesia. Plans for these continuing negotiations will be discussed at a meeting between the Chairman of the Micronesian Joint Future Status Committee and Ambassador Williams in Guam in advance of the U.S.-Marianas talks.

Last April, during talks with the Micronesian Delegation at Koror, Palau, the representatives from the Mariana Islands District informed Ambassador Williams that the Marianas wished to seek a future status separate from the rest of Micronesia which would involve a form of political union with the United States. In supporting their request for separate negotiations, the representatives said:

"We advocate our present position for the sole reason that we desire membership in the United States political family because of the demonstrated advantages of such a relationship. More than any other nation with which we have had contact, the United States has brought to our people the values which we cherish and the economic goals which we desire. Continued affiliation with

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the United States offers the promise of the preservation of these values and the implementation of these goals."

This request, the last in a long series expressing the desire of the Marianas people for a close, permanent affiliation with the United States, was reiterated by representatives of the Marianas at the UN Trusteeship Council Meeting in New York in May. Such sentiment had been expressed many times over the past 10 years in referenda, in resolutions adopted by the Marianas District Legislature, in petitions to the United Nations, by the Marianas endorsement of the 1970 Commonwealth proposal, and by direct representation to the U. S. Government.

In the face of this long record and the clearly defined aspirations of the people of the Marianas for close association with the United States, the U. S. Delegation at Koror responded affirmatively to the Marianas request and agreed to enter into separate negotiations with the Mariana Islands.

Following the Koror statement, the Marianas District Legislature established a 15-man Political Status Commission drawn from a wide cross-section to represent the people of the Marianas in the forthcoming negotiations. Senator Edward D.L.G. Pangelinan of the Congress of Micronesia and President Vicente Santos of the Marianas District Legislature were selected Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Commission, respectively.

The U. S. Delegation, which will be headed by Ambassador Williams, includes Mr. James Wilson, Jr., U. S. Deputy Representative; Captain William J. Crowe, USN, Director of the Office of Micronesian Status Negotiations; Mr. Stanley S. Carpenter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior, and advisers.