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JOINT COMMUNIQUE

The Mariana Political Status Commission and the President's Personal Representative met in Saipan December 13-14, 1972 for the formal opening of negotiations which had been requested by the Marianas with a view to achieving union between the Mariana Islands and the United States of America.

The meetings consisted of a festive inaugural ceremony, a public plenary opening session and informal working talks. These afforded the opportunity for warm exchanges between the two delegations in anticipation of a future working relationship which will benefit all concerned.

Both sides reviewed the history of the repeated expressions of the desires of the people of the Marianas, as expressed by the Mariana District Legislature, for a "close and permanent affiliation with the United States," culminating in the formal request by the Marianas last year to begin talks leading to such a status and the response of the United States indicating its willingness to accede to the Marianas' wish.

There were no detailed negotiations or exchanges of formal proposals during the course of the meetings, but there was on both sides a friendly and frank exploration of the questions and issues to be resolved in the course of the substantive negotiations which will follow. The exchange of views and proposals between both sides is understood to be continuing on the other.

Plans and procedures for future negotiating sessions were worked out. The next meeting, which will concentrate on matters of substance, will be held in the Marianas in the spring of 1973. It was agreed that advance preliminary work will permit the overall negotiations to move swiftly as