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Senator Edward Pangelinan and Ambassador Haydn Williams, Chairmen respectively of the Marianas and American Delegations to the Marianas status talks, said today their delegations have reached broad preliminary understanding on most aspects of the Marianas-U.S. political relationship envisaged under a commonwealth arrangement for the Marianas.

They indicated that at this early stage of deliberations the main effort have been to highlight areas of tentative agreement and to identify technical questions requiring further study and discussion, rather than to explore the precise language of an ultimate status agreement.

In describing the preliminary nature of their understandings, Senator Pangelinan and the Ambassador reiterated that, in any case, the instrument of agreement emerging from this and possible future negotiating rounds will have to be approved by the Marianas District Legislature, the people of the Marianas, and the U.S. Congress. The two Chairmen believe, nonetheless, that the present considerable degree of understanding on the fundamentals of the political relationship provides an excellent foundation for a subsequent instrument of agreement.

The two Chairmen indicated that preliminary agreement had been reached on a commonwealth relationship which will vest sovereignty over the Marianas in the United States Government under a territorial relationship and permit maximum Marianas control over local affairs. This would be accomplished under a locally-drafted, locally-approved constitution providing for a bill of rights, separation of powers, and a popularly elected chief executive. There are also the following additional tentative understandings: the U.S. Government will have responsibility for defense and foreign affairs, though the federal government will welcome the advice of the Marianas on international matters directly affecting the islands. Moreover, the U.S. will support the Marianas' membership in regional or international organizations concerned with economic, cultural, or comparable areas of interest which permit representation from constituent parts of a political family. While the judicial systems of the Marianas and the U.S. will be compatible and consistent with federal law, the Marianas will have the right to establish local courts for purely local matters. The two sides will explore a common approach to the U.S. Congress regarding the nature of the Marianas' representation in Washington.

The two delegations are agreed that further joint study is necessary on the applicability to the Marianas of specific U.S. laws, the precise extent of self-government to be exercised by the Marianas under the U.S. Constitution and relevant federal legislation, and the status to be accorded those residents of the Marianas who might not wish to become American citizens. Subpanels of lawyers from the two delegations have already begun a useful exploration of these largely technical matters and will continue their deliberations during the course of the present talks and subsequently in Washington.

The two Chairmen noted that the area of understanding on the basic structure of the political relationship is sufficiently broad to warrant the delegations' moving now to consideration of such other major agenda items as economics and finance, land, and transition.