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June 12

CLOSING PLENARY STATEMENT

Senator Pangelinan, members of the Marianas Political Status Commission, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Three weeks ago our delegations sat down together to begin the serious and important task of laying the foundation for a political union between the Marianas and the United States which the people of the Marianas have repeatedly told the United States and the world they desire. As we recess the talks today, I think we can take great satisfaction from knowing that our time together has been well spent, that we have accomplished the goal we set for ourselves in this ^{27 1/2} round of discussions.

We agreed at the outset that our aim would be to reach preliminary understandings on the fundamentals of the Marianas-U. S. relationship. Through serious and businesslike, but always cordial, discussions we have achieved preliminary agreement in principle on all the major aspects of our future relationship, as the joint communique we are releasing today bears witness.

Both sides entered these talks in a spirit of mutual trust and with common objectives. It is thus not surprising that as each major agenda item was introduced we were able to identify quickly substantial areas of agreement. Our searching discussions, freely participated in by all members of both delegations, illuminated further areas of understanding and, as expected, highlighted specific questions of some technical complexity requiring further detailed joint inquiry by subpanels from our delegations.

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It is only in a formal and narrowly technical sense that we are recessing the talks today. Members of the American delegation are leaving Saipan to be reunited with their families, and those of you sitting opposite me in the Marianas Political Status Commission are looking forward to a well-deserved respite from your intensive labors of almost six weeks. ~~We hope to meet again as soon as possible.~~

Meanwhile, however, serious discussion and refinement of issues germane to these negotiations will go forward in technical level talks both here and in Washington. The joint communique notes that we have established joint working groups to consider questions relating to the political relationship, economics and finance, and land, and have sketched out their immediate tasks. These working groups will consult intensively in the months ahead to ensure that the next meeting of our full delegations will bring further substantial progress toward final decisions on the formal status agreement which now seems clearly in prospect.

I think there is little that I need add at this time about the nature of our understandings we have achieved in this series of meetings. As the talks progressed our two delegations made a conscientious effort to keep the people of the Marianas abreast of developments through a series of joint press releases. Today's joint communique, a somewhat lengthier and more detailed document than is perhaps usually issued on such occasions, is a further attempt to give an accurate account of where our discussions are leading--a matter of prime importance to all the people of these islands. In the final analysis, it is the people of the Marianas who will endorse or reject the fruits of our negotiating efforts.

Throughout these deliberations both delegations recognized that we were discussing matters which could affect to one degree or another the lives and future prospects of not only the present but indeed the future generations of the Marianas. If we have been sobered by the responsibility this lays upon us, we have also been inspired by the belief that through thoughtful and wise endeavor we can build an enduring structure which the people of the Marianas will enjoy in common with other members of the American political family. We do this in the belief that while man may not be the measure of all things under the universe, on earth he and his aspirations for liberty, justice, and equal opportunity are the legitimate concerns of government authority of which we form a part.

When I return to Washington I shall brief key leaders in the Federal Government's executive and legislative branches on the nature of our discussions here and on the understandings we have reached. I expect to tell them that during this visit to the Marianas the American Delegation was impressed anew by indications on every hand that the people and leaders of these islands are inspired and motivated by the same human values that move and direct the American people. I expect to tell them, too, that the people of the Marianas look forward to taking their place in the American family, conscious of the responsibilities which will devolve upon them, but confident of the contribution which their vancient culture and yet youthful population will make to the larger family. In Washington there is, as you know, abundant good will for the Marianas. There is no doubt that our successful labors will be widely welcomed there.

I wish to pay grateful tribute, on behalf of myself and the entire American Delegation, to the warm friendship and gracious hospitality which members of the Marianas Political Status Commission and private citizens of these islands have extended to us the past three weeks. We remembered the largeness of your hearts from previous visits here. We greatly appreciate the renewed evidence of your kindness and consideration for visitors in your midst.

Senator Pangelinan, in closing I pledge my delegation to continue to work conscientiously with the members of the Marianas Political Status Commission to complete expeditiously the historic work which has so well begun here in Saipan these last three weeks. Our final goal is clear. Let us continue to move steadfastly toward its full realization.