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STATEMENT OF JOAQUIN I. PANGELINAN AND BENJAMIN T. MANGLONA BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL  
JUNE 1973

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Mr. Pangelinan:

Mr. President, I am Joaquin I. Pangelinan, a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission. With me is Benjamin T. Manglona, also a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission. On behalf of our Commission and the people of the Mariana Islands, I wish to extend to you and the members of the Trusteeship Council our appreciation for the opportunity to appear before the Council as petitioners.

As representatives of all the people of the Mariana Islands District of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, we are here to speak to the Council on the subject of our future political status.

Last year, representatives from the Marianas spoke to the Council about the deeply-felt desires of our people for a close political relationship with the United States of America. Since then, the people of the Marianas, freely and through their elected representatives in the Mariana Islands District Legislature, have created the Mariana Political Status Commission. The Commission has studied and is continuing to study important issues

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relating to our future status. At the request of the people of the Marianas, the United States Government has opened separate negotiations with our Commission aimed at achieving a close political relationship between the Marianas and the United States of America. During the past year, we have concluded two rounds of negotiations. We appear before the Trusteeship Council to report on the progress of those negotiations and to solicit understanding and support from this body for the position of the people of the Mariana Islands District.

My remarks will address the position of the Marianas with regard to our future political status. Mr. Manglona's statement will report on the progress to date of the negotiations between the Marianas Political Status Commission and the United States.

It is the desire of the people of the Mariana Islands District for a close political relationship with the United States. This sentiment has been acknowledged by your most recent Visiting Mission and by other United Nations observers over the past several years. Our desire for close association with the United States is not a recent development however. These feelings have been consistently expressed over an extended period. They have been expressed directly by the people in village town-hall type

meetings and informal plebiscites. They have also been expressed through their elected representatives in Municipal Councils and the District Legislature.

The movement for close association with the United States originated in the form of requests for reintegration with Guam, a United States territory. As you may know, the Marianas District has historical, economic, cultural, religious and common language ties with Guam. The basis for this movement, however, runs deeper than (and is no longer linked to) a desire for reintegration with Guam. The people of the Marianas wish to become a self-governing political entity in the American political family because we desire the rights, freedoms and benefits which flow from such an association with the United States.

There are several reasons for our belief that a close political relationship with the United States will assure the realization of these goals. First, the people of the Marianas have too long a history of rule by autocratic powers not to appreciate the degree of personal and political freedom which United States administration of the Trust Territory has brought us. We need only look to our close neighbor Guam or to any other members of the American political family to observe that the United States has promoted and preserved these values which we cherish so highly.

Second, the people of the Marianas believe that human rights and political freedom can best be assured when there is economic development that is designed to raise the standard of living and to promote economic self-sufficiency. A study of the possessions, territories and other members of the American political family makes it very clear that a close political relationship with the United States will assure the level of economic development which our people desire.

Finally, our people believe, and the work of the Marianas Political Status Commission confirms, that a close political association with the United States can take the form of a relationship that would fulfill the desires of our people for internal self-government. Such a relationship would be consistent with the United Nations principles of self-determination for all peoples.

These worthy goals of the people of the Marianas are the basis of our desire for a close political relationship with the United States. As this Council is aware, the Joint Committee on the Future Political Status of Micronesia has rejected close relationship with the United States and appears determined to pursue free association and independence as the alternatives for the future political status of all of Micronesia. We respect the right of the Joint Committee, the Congress of Micronesia and the

people of the other Districts of Micronesia to freely choose their own political future. We cannot accept, however, their right to deny the freely-expressed wishes of the people of the Marianas in this regard. It is for this reason that our people formed their own Commission on Future Political Status and requested the United States to open separate negotiations with that Commission.

The people of the Marianas recognize that the course we are pursuing may lead to our ultimate separation from the rest of Micronesia. In part, this course was thrust upon us by the Joint Committee's rejection of close association with the United States for Micronesia as a whole. It is fair to say, however, that sentiment in the Marianas for separation from the rest of the Trust Territory has deeper roots. The unity of Micronesia has been the product of our domination by outside powers -- not of the freely-expressed wishes of the peoples concerned. We share no cultural or language ties with any other District of Micronesia. As stated earlier, our traditional ties are with Guam, which is a part of the United States and from whom we were separated by the historical accident of the Treaty of Paris ending the Spanish-American War. It has been said that the word "Micronesia" is only a geographical term. One can fairly question even this description when that term is

used to describe distinct island groups separated by thousands of miles of ocean.

We do not believe that, when the United Nations created the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands in 1947, it intended to determine forever the political unity of the inhabitants of these diverse islands -- regardless of the freely-expressed wishes of the peoples concerned. And yet, the recent report of the Visiting Mission implies that separation of the Marianas from the rest of the Trust Territory would be contrary to the United Nations policy favoring national unity and territorial integrity.

With all due respect, we cannot accept any such restrictive view of United Nations policy. Division of Trust Territories to reflect the freely-expressed wishes of the peoples concerned is fully consistent with the principles of self-determination. In addition, such division has already occurred in the British Cameroons with United Nations approval.

The United Nations policy of opposition to disruption of national unity and territorial integrity (set forth in General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV)) applies explicitly to existing countries. This policy has not, so far as we are aware, been applied to decisions freely made by the peoples concerned on the future political status of dependent territories. We believe that it should not be applied to those territories whose boundaries were

originally drawn for administrative convenience and not with regard to the differing conditions or wishes of the inhabitants.

We recognize the legitimate concern of the United Nations for the well-being of all of the peoples of Micronesia. We are sensitive to the concern that separation of the Marianas from the rest of the Trust Territory could temporarily disrupt the administration of the remaining districts. Whatever our choice of future political status, we recognize our obligation to accommodate these concerns. However, abstract notions regarding the unity of Micronesia must not be allowed to frustrate the ability of the people of the Marianas to freely choose their own future political status.

In closing this portion of our statement, I convey the hopes of my people that the United Nations will understand our political aspirations and will support our right to choose our own political destiny. We ask no more nor no less than the rights which are assured all peoples by the United Nations Charter.

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. Manglona will now report to the Council on the work of the Marianas Political Status Commission and the progress of its negotiations with the United States.

Mr. Manglona:

Mr. President, I would like to join Mr. Pangelinan in expressing my gratitude for this opportunity to appear before the Council and speak on a subject of vital concern to the people of the Marianas.

As Mr. Pangelinan has told you, the people of the Marianas, freely and through their elected representatives, have created the Marianas Political Status Commission in order to pursue their goal of a close political affiliation between the Marianas and the United States of America. The Commission is broadly representative of the people of the Marianas, including representatives from the Congress of Micronesia, from the District Legislature, from the Municipal Councils, from both political parties, from the local business community, and from the major ethnic and cultural groups in the islands.

Pursuant to its mandate, the Marianas Political Status Commission has been guided by the expressed wishes of the people regarding their choice of future political status. The Commission is continuing its dialogue with the people of the Marianas so that it will be better able to represent their views in future negotiations with the United States. We have employed qualified consultants to survey technical and legal questions in the areas of political status alternatives, economic development and land policy

With the benefit of these consultations and studies, we have opened negotiations with representatives of the United States Government. These negotiations were opened

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at the request of the people of the Marianas and not, as some have suggested in the past, at the instigation of the United States. After a ceremonial opening session last December, the two delegations met in Saipan during May to begin working sessions which lasted until June 4. It is my privilege to report to the Council on the progress of these negotiations.

In seeking a future political status that is consistent with the desire of our people for a close political association with the United States, the Commission has adopted the goals of maximum internal self-government for the Marianas and economic development that is designed to increase the standard of living of our people and to move the Marianas progressively toward economic self-sufficiency. We believe these goals are consistent with United Nations principles of self-determination. Also consistent with United Nations principles, the mandate of our District Legislature requires that any agreements reached between the Commission and the United States must be approved by the people of the Mariana Islands District through a plebiscite or referendum.

In moving toward agreement on the issues relating to our future political status, the Commission is proceeding

cautiously and deliberately. We are determined to consult with our people at every stage to determine their wishes. Our consultants are advising us on the complex technical and legal issues involved. This Council can be assured that our negotiations with the United States are not one-sided or unequal. Although we have made much progress, we are far from formal agreement. Many outstanding issues remain to be studied and worked out. Nevertheless, in the recent working sessions, a number of important preliminary understandings were reached.

In the area of future political status, the parties reached tentative agreement that the future political relationship between the Marianas and the United States would take the form of a commonwealth arrangement, as defined by a formal political status agreement. The Marianas government would exercise maximum self-government with respect to internal affairs, while the United States would have sovereignty over the Marianas and exercise authority in the fields of defense and foreign affairs. The new government of the Marianas would be established under a locally drafted and locally approved constitution which would provide for the institutions of local government. The fundamental terms of this relationship, as spelled out in the political status agreement, would be subject to modification only by mutual consent.

In the area of economics and finance, the United States would provide assistance to move the Marianas progressively toward economic self-sufficiency, which we believe is fully consistent not only with political stability and freedom but with true self-government. The people of the Marianas are concerned that the future of the Marianas should belong to our children. We intend to strive toward control of our own economy, as well as of our institutions of government. In this connection, land is our most precious resource both because of its relative scarcity and because of its cultural significance to our people. The United States has agreed in principle that, under our future relationship, land would remain in the hands of persons of Marianas ancestry.

We are also negotiating for the return of public lands, now held in trust by the Administering Authority, to the future government of the Marianas and ultimately to the people of the Marianas. The United States has committed itself to an early return of land now held in public trust.

We recognize that under international agreements the United States has responsibilities for the maintenance of peace and security in the western Pacific. We recognize further that, as a member of the American political family, the Marianas will have certain obligations to assist the United

States in meeting its defense requirements. We are, therefore, negotiating with the United States with respect to specific military land requirements in the Marianas.

The subject of United States military land requirements is a matter for negotiation because we believe that no land should be made available for this purpose without the agreement of the people concerned. The Marianas Political Status Commission is aware of reservations by the residents of Tinian to the use of certain areas of Tinian by the United States military. We would like to assure this Council that any decision reached on these matters will be made only after full consultation with the people of Tinian. In addition, any agreement reached by the Commission in this area will be submitted for approval to the people of the Marianas along with the agreements reached in the areas of political status and economics and finance.

We have agreed in principle to negotiate in good faith on meeting the acknowledged United States need for land in the Marianas for defense purposes. However, the Marianas Political Status Commission has reached no agreement with respect to meeting specific land requirements. The Marianas Political Status Commission is consulting closely with the people who might be directly affected by a decision to make land available to the United States for military purposes. In light of the scarcity of land in the Marianas, we believe that the land requirements of the United States must be reconciled with the best interests of the people of the Marianas.

These are the areas of preliminary understanding that have been reached in our negotiations with the United States. It is apparent that much work remains to be done

before we could be ready to submit a formal agreement to the people. We believe our efforts to date have been fully consistent with the wishes of our people that we explore a close political relationship with the United States. Despite the clear mandate from our people in this regard, however, we have been criticized in the Congress of Micronesia and by certain segments of opinion within the United Nations. I would like to say a few words about this criticism.

The people of the Marianas and its Political Status Commission fully respect the right of the people of Micronesia collectively to pursue their own future political status. We recognize the right of the Joint Committee to explore political status alternatives for Micronesia as a whole. The two members of the Joint Committee, who are also members of the Marianas Political Status Commission, continue to participate in the work of the Joint Committee.

While respecting the rights of the Joint Committee, the people of the Marianas cannot allow that Committee or the Congress of Micronesia to dictate the terms of a future political status for the Marianas which is contrary to the freely-expressed wishes of its people. Therefore, we cannot accept the nonbinding resolution of the Congress of Micronesia (S.J.R. No. 38) which holds that our Commission has no authority to seek a separate political status for the Marianas. We agree that the Joint Committee is presently the only organization with authority to negotiate with the

United States on the future political status of Micronesia as a whole, but we respectfully do not agree that the Joint Committee has the right to deny the freely-expressed wishes of any of the Districts of Micronesia for a separate political status.

When the Joint Committee rejected close association with the United States as a future political status alternative for Micronesia, it threatened to deny the right of our people to choose that alternative upon termination of the Trusteeship. We agree in principle with the sentiment of the recent Visiting Mission Report that the people of Micronesia must be given the option of choosing among different alternatives in deciding their future political status. The mandate of the Marianas Political Status Commission is to give the people of the Marianas the option of close association with the United States -- an option which the Joint Committee apparently has foreclosed.

Despite our differences with the Joint Committee, we hope that its negotiations with the United States will proceed rapidly toward a tentative agreement. We believe all the citizens of Micronesia look forward to termination of the Trusteeship and the right to freely choose their future political status, consistent with the principles of self-determination. Our separate negotiations with the United States are not inconsistent with the work of the Joint

Committee. Both of us look forward to termination of the Trusteeship. The results of our efforts will enable the people to freely choose their political future.

In its recent report, the Visiting Mission stated that the people of Micronesia should have the right to explore the option of independence at the same time they are exploring the option of free association. We do not understand how the Visiting Mission can argue that the people of the Marianas should be denied the right to explore the option of close-political association with the United States. With all respect to this body and its Visiting Mission, we believe that the Visiting Mission's recommendation to suspend the talks between the Marianas Political Status Commission and the United States is contrary to the principles of self-determination. Unless the people of the Marianas are presented with a fully developed alternative reflecting close association with the United States, they will be denied the right to freely choose their political destiny.

The people of the Marianas have expressed their desire for close association with the United States for many years. In order to determine the wishes of the people, a district-wide plebiscite was held in 1969. The Marianas Political Status Commission is the vehicle to implement the expressed wishes of the peoples concerned. We ask this body to support the right of our people to pursue



their choice through the negotiations now under way between the Commission and the United States. We pray that you will not deny us that right.

Thank you.