

DRAFT STATEMENT OF JAMES M. WILSON  
U.S. DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE FOR MICRONESIAN STATUS NEGOTIATIONS

Ambassador Williams has asked me to extend a special thanks to each of you for the opportunity to appear today and I have been asked to make a few brief remarks in support of the High Commissioner's request for supplemental funds and to elaborate on some of the areas which are of special interest to Ambassador Williams and the Office for Micronesian Status Negotiations. As the High Commissioner indicated, there is high priority in the Trust Territory for implementation of the capital improvement program. There could be little progress in the area of economic development without these programs. But, I am certainly not qualified to address those issues and will only say that there are three programs which have been included on the supplemental request which we feel are of special importance to the on-going future political status negotiations with the Micronesians. They are: funds for an Accelerated Land Cadaster Program, funds for a Micronesian Constitutional Convention and funds for a revitalized political education program for the peoples of the Trust Territory. I would now like to elaborate on each of these important requests.

Since December of 1972, Ambassador Haydn Williams, the President's Personal Representative for Micronesian Status Negotiations and the Joint Committee on Future Status of the Congress of Micronesia have been studying how best to make an early transfer of control over public lands to local authorities in Micronesia. It is the United States position that the public lands do not belong to and have never been claimed by the United States; rather they are held in trust by the U.S. for the people of Micronesia..

Beginning in Spring of 1973, priority concern by the Office of Micronesian Status Negotiations and by the Department of Interior, Office of Territorial Affairs has centered on this return of public lands in response to petitions from the traditional leaders of Palau calling for an early transfer of public lands to that district which were endorsed by the Joint Committee on Future Status as a precondition for continuing further negotiations to resolve the future political status of Micronesia. Under the direction of Ambassador Williams, representatives of these offices spent the entire month of August traveling to each of the districts of Micronesia to confer with the local leadership and people of all segments of the Islands. The consensus of views given in these meetings indicates that, except for certain public lands currently used by the Trust Territory Government for administrative purposes and certain other public lands tied closely to the future political status negotiations, an early transfer of all other public lands to local control of the districts is desired and would be in the best interests of the Administering Authority. The early return of public lands to local Micronesian control would be consistent with the U.S. policy of increased internal self-government within Micronesia.

The public lands of Micronesia have come to be public domain lands for a variety of reasons, including the transfer to the Trust Territory Government of the title of the bulk of the public lands, as succeeding sovereign to the Japanese, German and Spanish colonial governments. Since many of these pre-World War II land tenure and acquisition records were lost or destroyed, individual ownership boundaries within and which composed the tracts of public lands are somewhat unclear. Nevertheless, it is the

purpose of this public land transfer to maximize such local control over these lands as is practical and in the manner desired by local groups in each district.

To insure an orderly transfer of the public lands to the Micronesian peoples in a subsequent transfer to private ownership the United State must insure that the transfers will be commensurate with our responsibilities under the Trusteeship Agreement to protect the Micronesian lands. Pursuant to this responsibility an accelerated land cadaster program has been proposed for all of the six districts of Micronesia. The land cadaster program will be an integral part of the public land return because it will survey and register those lots distributed from these public lands to private ownership. This will also incorporate an expanded adjudication process already established in the Trust Territory to permit the use of the judicial process to resolve land title and boundary disputes that may arise. A related program is also needed to make final adjustment of private land boundaries in the Mariana Islands resulting from use of confusing land marker systems and realignments of public projects on Saipan immediately after World War II. Because of the anticipated operational delays encountered by the regular Trust Territory Government cadastral survey work for implementation of the CIP program and current registration so that this special land cadastral effort can be contracted out and completed quickly.

After consultation with appropriate experts and land survey officers in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands it is the opinion of the Department of Interior that this special land cadaster and subsequent

adjudication work can be completed in roughly two and one-half years at a total cost of \$6,000,000. There are numerous private survey firms in both Guam and the State of Hawaii which have had experience working with Micronesia; and which would bid on this contract.

A supplemental appropriation of \$4,205,000 is therefore requested to cover the major initial costs of this operation. To facilitate implementation of this program, funds received will go from the Department of Interior directly to the Trust Territory Government for distribution to those districts in the manners determined necessary to facilitate early completion of the project and will not be subject to the budgetary review process of the Congress of Micronesia. It is anticipated that the bulk of the expenditures and work will take place in the first year of the program. If additional monies are needed after review of the ongoing program, they will be requested within the authorization ceiling of the Trust Territory budget.

Additional funds have been requested for a Micronesian Constitutional Convention to enable the Micronesians to move forward toward framing their own government. The United States has recommended during our status negotiations that the convention take place at an early date, pointing out that the establishment of a Government of Micronesia is an obvious prerequisite to termination of the Trusteeship Agreement in order to insure an orderly transition from the present political status to any new status. The United States has told the JCFS that it will assist in the funding of the convention because it is in the interests of the United States to promote the formation of a viable local Government for Micronesia, and because it is consistent with the U.S. obligation under the Trusteeship

Agreement to develop Micronesia toward self-government. The Congress of Micronesia has assured the United States that it will allocate funds for that portion of a convention's costs not covered by a U.S. grant. After extensive consultation within the U.S. Government, it has been concluded that an appropriate U.S. contribution would be \$450,000.

The Office for Micronesian Status Negotiations also support a revitalized political education program to enable the Micronesians to have a broader, unbiased source of status negotiations. The U.S. High Commissioner for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the Department of the Interior, and other relevant offices in the U.S. Government recognize the need -- consistent with the U.S. obligation under the Trusteeship Agreement to develop the people of Micronesia toward self-government -- to expand and re-structure the current political education program in the Trust Territory. This effort will insure that the people of the islands will be appropriately informed on matters relating to Micronesia's movement toward self-government. The Congress of Micronesia has recently expressed an interest in having the Trust Territory Administration undertake such an educational effort. Moreover, in its report to the United Nations Trusteeship Council last May the 1973 U.N. Visiting Mission to the Trust Territory indicated that it considered present programs of political education in Micronesia to be inadequate.