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STATEMENT OF SENATOR  
EDWARD DLG PANGELINAN, CHAIRMAN  
of the  
MARIANAS POLITICAL STATUS COMMISSION  
at the  
OPENING PLENARY SESSION

December 6, 1973

Ambassador Williams, Members of the U. S. Delegation, Honored  
Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Marianas Political Status Commission, it is my  
pleasure to welcome you here to continue the deliberations which  
we began last December looking toward a close political relation-  
ship between the people of the Marianas and the United States.

The members of the Commission are proud of the progress which  
the two Delegations have made in only a single year. The  
Joint Communique of last June 4, 1973--reflecting three weeks  
of intensive negotiations--has provided a clear and solid  
foundation for our further deliberations. Speaking for the  
Commission and the people of the Marianas, I am confident that  
this third session of our negotiations will show even greater  
progress toward our mutual goal--a secure and enduring place  
in the American political family for the people of the Marianas.

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Since the beginning of these negotiations, the members of the Commission have been in constant communication with the people of the Marianas. We are well aware that these negotiations will serve no useful purpose unless the status agreement which we negotiate is approved by the Marianas District Legislature and the people in a referendum. We are confident that the people of the Marianas support the tentative agreements which we have already made. Our most recent public discussion with the people was only three days ago, when the Commission met with the people of Tinian for a full and frank discussion of these negotiations and the U. S. proposals regarding land on Tinian. After these negotiations are concluded, the Commission plans to undertake a series of similar meetings in the various municipalities and villages of the Marianas.

As before, much work has been undertaken in preparation for these negotiations. Some of this work has been helped by the meetings in Washington of the joint working groups established by the parties pursuant to the terms of the Joint Communique of last June 4. As we get closer to specific final agreements, we believe that these working groups will become even more important. In addition, the members of the Commission have been meeting continuously for the past ten days in preparation for the session.

One development of special significance since our last session is the U. S. Policy Statement on the Return of Public Lands. On

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behalf of the people, the Commission wishes to commend the United States for issuing this Statement and promising to honor its long-standing commitment to return the public lands to the people of Micronesia. The Commission will make a proposal during these negotiations aimed at achieving the prompt transfer of public lands in the Marianas to the people. In some respects, we will need the assistance of the U. S. Delegation in this project and we hope that the United States will aid our efforts to implement the U. S. Statement of Policy on this important subject.

Our agenda for this session will include that familiar quartet of topics--political status, financial support, land and military needs, and transition. On some of these subjects, the Commission has proposals; on others, we expect that the United States will take the initiative in submitting proposals or responses to positions previously advanced by the Commission. Whichever is the case, the Commission is committed, as always, to free and open discussion aimed at making as much progress as is possible in the very short time--two weeks--which we have available for this session. Where specific agreements are possible, the Commission is prepared to try to arrive at them. Where complicated subjects are involved and the necessary staff work has not been done, it may be wise to settle for more general agreements and a joint determination to work together during the recess so that we can make further progress at our next session of negotiations.

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Whatever the outcome of our discussions of specific issues, you can rest assured that the members of the Commission remain firm in their conviction that we are engaged in an historic joint venture. Let there be no doubt in your minds regarding the enthusiasm with which the people of the Marianas face their future relationship with the United States. And it is with that spirit - Mr. Ambassador - that we welcome you here today and look forward to these negotiations.