

December 12, 1973

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JOINT STATEMENT FROM SENATOR PANGELINAN AND AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS

The Chairman of the Marianas Political Status Commission and the head of the U. S. Delegation noted with satisfaction today that since the Marianas Political Status Negotiations resumed last Thursday steady and substantial progress has been made. The goal of the present talks is to explore in more detail specific issues arising under each of the major agenda headings on which preliminary understandings were reached last May-June--namely, constitutional and legal arrangements, economics and finance, land, and transition--and to reach further tentative agreement on as many of these issues as time permits.

Since last Thursday there have been several working sessions of the full delegations and of subcommittees representing them to explore some of the more technical aspects of the issues being considered. The two sides have arrived at agreements in principle on questions relating to the right of local self-government, a generalized approach to the application of U.S. laws in the Marianas, as well as customs, excise and income taxation. Also, the U. S. and the Marianas Political Status Commission have reached general agreement on the wording of a clause in the ultimate status instrument providing that the people of the Marianas will become U. S. citizens or U. S. nationals as they may desire. The specific agreements reached on these and the other topics to be discussed in the negotiations will be set forth in a Joint Communique to be released at the close of this session of the talks.

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The delegations are presently discussing the funding and initiation of a series of transitional studies and steps by which the Northern Marianas will, following the signing of a status agreement, prepare for a new government's smooth, orderly assumption of responsibility for local affairs pursuant to a constitution to be framed and adopted locally.

The Chairmen of the two delegations anticipate that later this week their delegations will consider in more specific terms than they have previously attempted the future economic and financial relationship between the Northern Marianas and the United States and a number of remaining questions relating to land.

The Chairmen emphasized that the pace and momentum of the talks to date have met their expectations. They noted that while the delegations are exchanging a great deal of information on complicated matters requiring much study, reflection, and discussion, the negotiations are proceeding efficiently and harmoniously.