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TRANSITION: PLEBISCITE

TALKING POINTS

- As the Administering Authority under the Trusteeship Agreement, the United States has responsibilities to the UN Trusteeship Council and the UN Security Council.
- The United States wishes the new relationship with the United States which the people of the Marianas have so long requested to be accepted by the UN if possible.
- The UN Trusteeship Council has acknowledged the desire of the people of the Marianas for a new relationship different from that of the other districts of the Trust Territory and is not presently opposing our separate negotiations of a Commonwealth status.
- The United States is on the public record, in statements to the UN as saying
--- that any final agreement on future political status will have to be approved by the people of the Mariana Islands District in a plebiscite
--- that we expect and will welcome a UN presence at such a plebiscite
- Arrangements for a UN presence can only be made through the Trusteeship Council, by a formal request of the United States submitted while the Council is in session.
- The next session of the Trusteeship Council convenes in the latter part of May and is expected to continue through the middle of June.
- A UN presence would take the form of a UN Visiting Mission under the aegis of the Trusteeship Council. The timing of the Visiting Mission

and its terms of reference would be worked out between the United States, as the Administering Authority, and the Trusteeship Council.

- With respect to timing, a Visiting Mission could not depart for the TTPI until the Trusteeship Council has concluded its session around the middle of June.
- Under our present plans, we would request the Trusteeship Council to send a Visiting Mission in time to observe a plebiscite to be held in early July.
- With respect to terms of reference, the Trusteeship Council at its session in May is expected in any event to authorize the next of the periodic UN Visiting Missions to the Trust Territory. Observation of the plebiscite in the Marianas would become an additional task to be performed by the Visiting Mission.
- A plebiscite on the Commonwealth Covenant will be regarded by the Trusteeship Council as the act of self-determination by the people of the Northern Mariana Islands.
- The Council and eventually the UN as a whole will be concerned that the outcome of the vote in the plebiscite reflect the freely expressed wishes of the people of the Northern Marianas.
- In its report last June the Council asked that a plebiscite not exclude any alternative.
- A simple "yes-no" vote on the Commonwealth Agreement would be strongly criticized as not providing the people of the Marianas a clear-cut choice between possible alternative future political statuses. It would also tend to oblige all those who oppose Commonwealth for a different reason to vote "no".

-- While the precise formulation to be used on the plebiscite ballot has yet to be determined, we believe that the people of the Marianas should be presented with two positive alternatives:

- 1) Commonwealth status, and
- 2) Remaining with the other districts in whatever future political status may be negotiated between the U.S. and the JCFS and approved by the people of all the districts. This would presumably be a relationship of Free Association but does not exclude the possibility of voting at a later date on the alternative of independence in unity with the other districts.

-- We believe a plebiscite ballot of the type I have just described would be acceptable to the UN Trusteeship Council and would be in our mutual best interest.