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Statement by Ambassador Barbara M. White, United States
Representative on the Trusteeship Council, on the Trust Territory
of the Pacific Islands, June 4, 1974.

First of all I should like to congratulate both the outgoing President of the Trusteeship Council, Mr. Bertrand De Lataillade of France, for his service to the Council during the past year and our new President, Ambassador Laurence McIntyre of Australia. As a newcomer to the Council, I particularly welcome Ambassador McIntyre's long and valuable experience with trusteeship matters.

Since this is indeed my first appearance before the Trusteeship Council, I should like to express my satisfaction at having the honor to represent the United States Delegation in this very important body of the United Nations. I am well aware of the constructive role played over the last quarter of a century by the Council as it fulfilled its obligations under the Charter to supervise the progress towards self-determination on the part of eleven Trust Territories. It is a measure of the Council's accomplishments to note that so far the people of trust territories have peacefully exercised their right to choose their own political future. In this connection, my Delegation welcomes the news that, based on the act of self-determination exercised by the people of Papua, New Guinea in March 1972, the Australian Government will request termination of the trusteeship for that territory as soon as there is agreement on a date for independence.

Before discussing developments in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, I would like to welcome and bring to the Council's attention those members of our Delegation who have made the long trip from Micronesia to be with us during these important deliberations. Once again, we have with us as our Special Representative the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory, Mr. Edward E. Johnston, who has participated in every session of the Council since 1969. I would also like to introduce the two Special Advisers. Senator Wilfred

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Here, a few words of explanation about the question of public lands are in order. Public lands include all lands acquired by the prior Spanish, German and Japanese administrations for governmental or other public purposes as well as such lands as the Trust Territory Government may itself have utilized for public purposes. According to current calculations, over sixty percent of Micronesia's total land area is public land -- by district 90% in the Marianas, 68% in Palau, 66% in Ponape, 17% in Truk, 13% in the Marshalls and 4% in Yap. Prior to the opening of these talks, the United States Government issued a policy statement on public land in the Trust Territory. In essence, the United States proposed to transfer title to all public land now held by the Trust Territory Government to those districts of Micronesia which desire it.

In this policy statement, the United States requested the Congress of Micronesia to pass such enabling legislation as is necessary to effect the early transfer of title to public lands and the District Legislatures in each district to indicate formally the wishes of the people in that district with respect to the disposition of public land.

At this seventh session, the Micronesian Delegation expressed their satisfaction with this new policy of the Administering Authority. Subsequently, implementing legislation was introduced into the session of the Congress of Micronesia which met this past winter on Saipan. Although committee hearings were held on this bill, the Congress did not take final action on it. We expect that public lands legislation will be one of the subjects to be discussed at this summer's special Congressional session and hope that the necessary action will be taken then.

Although financial arrangements were discussed at length at the seventh round of negotiations, no agreement was reached on the size of the United States contribution to Micronesia after the termination of the trusteeship. Discussion of this subject was resumed, however, on Saipan in January 1974 when Ambassador Williams proposed and Senator Salii agreed that the future financial needs of Micronesia be explored informally and in depth through joint conversations between experts on both sides.

This joint exploration was in fact conducted on Saipan in February 1974. Leaders of the two delegations met again informally in Carmel, California in April to discuss the results of this financial study as well as remaining issues in the draft compact of free association. Subsequently, there have been two more meetings between Ambassador Williams and Senator Salii on Guam. Both sides have expressed satisfaction with the progress recently achieved and a further informal meeting between them is scheduled for early July. We anticipate another formal negotiating session soon after the July meeting to consider all remaining issues. These will include both arrangements for the plebiscite through which the people of Micronesia will be consulted on their own future, and transitional arrangements for establishing a new government before the end of the trusteeship.

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Kendall has represented the Marshall Islands in the Congress of Micronesia since 1972 and is making his first appearance before the Council. I want to welcome back Congressman Jacob Sigrah, who attended last year's Council session and who represents the Island of Kusaie, at present part of the Ponape district, in the House of Representatives of the Congress of Micronesia. I emphasize the phrase at present because at the last session of the Congress of Micronesia, the legislators passed and the High Commissioner approved a bill to make Kusaie a separate district of the Trust Territory. Congressman Sigrah was instrumental in securing passage of this legislation.

The Special Representative, High Commissioner Johnston, will introduce those members of our Delegation from Trust Territory Headquarters.

I would, however, like to mention the presence in this chamber today of several visitors from the various districts of the Trust Territory. Their being here is evidence of the great interest shown by the people of Micronesia in the work of the Trusteeship Council. On behalf of the United States Delegation, I would like to welcome from the Truk district Mr. Juan Sablan, District Administrator, Mr. Mitaro Danis, Deputy District Administrator, Mr. Susumu Aizawa, Chief Magistrate of the Island of Tol, and Mr. Erhart Aten, District Representative for the Mortlock Islands. From Ponape, the Reverend Johnny Hadley, President of the Protestant Church Council. from Yap, Mr. Francisco Luktun, District Civil Affairs Officer.

I turn now to developments in the Trust Territory and I wish to highlight that which is naturally of most concern to the members of the Council -- the steps taken by Micronesia during the past year towards the determination of a new and freely chosen political status.

Since the last session of the Council, there has been continuous and direct contact between the United States Government and representatives of the people of Micronesia with regard to the negotiation of a new political status in conformity with the provisions of the Trusteeship Agreement. As members of the Council will recall from the last session, for the past 18 months negotiations have been proceeding with two separate bodies -- the Marianas Political Status Commission as well as the Joint Committee on Future Status of the Congress of Micronesia -- so as to respond to the people of the Mariana Islands who wish to establish with the United States a closer form of political association than that currently desired by the other island groups of Micronesia.

Last November, United States and Micronesian delegates headed respectively by Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, the President's Personal Representative, and Senator Lazarus Salii, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Future Status, resumed formal status negotiations in Washington. During this seventh round, which lasted from November 14 to November 21, the principal subjects of discussion were public land and finance.

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Thus, Mr. Chairman, negotiations with the Joint Committee on Future Status have been frequent and vigorous during the past year, and give promise of being well on their way to successful conclusion.

Turning to our negotiations with the Marianas Political Status Commission, I am pleased to announce that at the fourth round of talks, which concluded May 31 on Saipan, the two delegations affirmed basic decisions with respect to the establishment of a commonwealth of the Northern Marianas under U. S. sovereignty with maximum internal self-government, including the right of the people to draft and adopt their own constitution and to establish local courts to administer local laws. In light of the progress achieved in these talks, the United States and Northern Marianas delegations have now agreed to establish a joint drafting committee to prepare a status agreement. This draft will be presented to the Marianas Political Status Commission and the United States at the next negotiating session. Both sides reaffirmed that any final agreement will have to be approved by the Marianas District Legislature, the people of the Mariana Islands District in a plebiscite, and the United States Congress.

The successful conclusion of this latest round of talks with the Marianas encourages us to believe that negotiations to establish a commonwealth of the Marianas in permanent association with the United States will also be completed rapidly and we believe that the Marianas Political Status Commission shares our optimism. I understand that representatives from the Marianas will again be appearing before the Council as petitioners and they, I am sure, will further enlighten the Council on this matter.

As in the case of the rest of Micronesia, the agreement on the political future of the Marianas will be put to the people of the Marianas by means of a plebiscite, which will be agreed upon in the course of the negotiations.

I am fully aware of the Trusteeship Council's concern over the years with the maintenance of the integrity of trust territories. I believe, however, that the Council is well aware of the special situation of the Marianas, the great majority of whose inhabitants, as last year's UN Visiting Mission report noted, favor separation from the rest of the Trust Territory. For over 20 years, the Council has received petitions from the Marianas to this effect. Until 1972, however, the United States, hoping that it would be possible to maintain the principle of unity, declined to enter into separate negotiations. It is worth repeating here that the U. S. agreed to separate negotiations only after elected representatives of the Marianas made it clear that the future political status being sought by the Congress of Micronesia - free association with provision for unilateral termination - was unacceptable to their people, who wished a closer relationship with the United States, and a permanent one.

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The Council has recently received a communication from the Marshall Islands requesting separate negotiations with the United States. As Ambassador Williams stated in a press conference on Saipan May 16, it continues to be the hope of the United States Government that the Marshalls and Carolines, which currently comprise five of the six districts of the Trust Territory, will form a single political entity after the termination of the trusteeship. We believe that the kinds of issues which apparently have provoked this manifestation of separatist sentiment can be resolved by further talks among Micronesians and that they are essentially internal questions in which the United States should not intervene. We feel that the forthcoming Constitutional Convention will provide an excellent forum for debate and resolution of such issues as revenue sharing and we hope that representatives of the Marshalls will participate in this convention.

Thus, with regard to Micronesia's future, while there are still many technical details to be resolved and occasional temporary hurdles to be overcome, I am glad to report that there is purposeful momentum by all concerned towards two goals - free association for the Carolines and Marshalls and commonwealth for the Marianas.

In addition to this forward movement towards a new political status, the Trust Territory has also taken some significant additional steps on the international stage.

On August 9, the United Nations Economic and Social Council approved a resolution admitting the Trust Territory to ECAFE as an associate member. In March, a Micronesian delegation led by Senator Kabua, attended the 30th plenary session of ECAFE in Colombo and, although participating in a United Nations Conference for the first time, played an important role in securing passage of a resolution which changes the name of ECAFE to Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

The United States Government has agreed to Micronesian participation on the United States delegation to the forthcoming Law of the Sea conference.

The United States Government, on behalf of the Trust Territory, expects to sign very shortly an agreement with the United Nations Development Program which will enable the Trust Territory to participate in various programs of economic assistance and once again to obtain United Nations training fellowships for Micronesians.

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The United States Government supports the Micronesian membership in the Asian Development Bank and will sponsor that membership following enactment of legislation by the U.S. Congress essential to such membership. We are now seeking that legislation.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I should like to make a few observations stemming from my trip to Micronesia this spring. It was my first trip to the Trust Territory, and a most rewarding one.

My fellow delegates to the Trusteeship Council will I think be interested to know that I found lively discussions in progress throughout the territory on the future of Micronesia. These discussions appeared to me very healthy signs that the people of Micronesia are facing, with seriousness and commitment, the decisions on self-determination that they will make in the near future. The questions they are addressing include not only their future status and relationship with the United States, but also the relationships they wish to have with one another. They must decide on the form of government they consider best suited to their unique circumstances as island peoples, few in number, scattered over an expanse of ocean approximately as large as the United States.

I wish each of you could have seen in operation, as I did, the Congress of Micronesia, a legislative body conducted with a professionalism and seriousness of which many larger and long-established countries could be proud; the district administrations, each now headed by a Micronesian; and the district legislatures and town councils, all elected through universal suffrage with a high participation of the eligible voters. Although Micronesia has yet to attain full self-government, she already displays impressive examples of democracy in action.

I have already outlined the steps now underway to negotiate new status agreements that will bring an end to the Trusteeship. High Commissioner Johnston will tell you about the Constitutional Convention, soon to come to grips with the critical questions of internal government, as well as the "education for self-government" program now under way to ensure that Micronesians understand the choices that they face.

Finally, I should like to share one other observation based on my first-hand view of Micronesia. While much still remains to be done, the essential groundwork for informed decisions by the people of Micronesia has already been laid through their educational system. In the Trust Territory I found a healthy ferment of discussion and self-criticism about that system, what its goals and methods should be, just as most of us find in our own countries today. But I also found reassurance that the groundwork for democratic choice has been well laid through universal education. Mr. Chairman, in Micronesia today, an estimated 99% of elementary-school age children are in school and an estimated 53% of high school age children are attending high school. Even in higher education, the accomplishments are impressive: of high school graduates, an estimated 20% go on to some form of higher education, either in Micronesia or abroad.

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There are plans for improving this record, both qualitatively and quantitatively. But I believe you and my fellow delegates to the Trusteeship Council will agree that such a wholehearted commitment to developing the human resources of Micronesia will see its fruits in the months and years ahead.

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