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STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE JOAB SIGRAH, CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA,
SPECIAL ADVISER TO THE UNITED STATES DELEGATION TO THE
TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL, JUNE 4, 1974.

Mr. President and members of the Trusteeship Council:

I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to appear before the Trusteeship Council today and to present the views of both my constituents and colleagues in Micronesia about past progress in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and our hopes for the future.

Before beginning my remarks I would like to associate myself with the sentiments of previous speakers congratulating the President and Vice President upon their election to serve during this 41st session of the Council. I would also like to extend my thanks to the distinguished Representative of France for welcoming me and Senator Amaraich to the 40th Session of the Council last year.

I also wish to express, on behalf of Senator Kendall, the People and the Congress of Micronesia, our best wishes to the members of the Council for a successful session this year.

This year marks my second appearance before the Council and I must say that I am grateful to my colleagues in the House of Representatives of the Congress of Micronesia for allowing me to return to make a second presentation before you.

In my opening remarks last year, I concluded by saying that the attempt to reach the distant goals of self-government and self-sufficiency represents a long journey, the achievement of which begins with a single step, and that the Congress of Micronesia was determined to take that first step.

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This year I intend to review some of the progress, or lack of progress, in different program areas of the Trust Territory Government. I also want to highlight some of the steps which the Congress of Micronesia has taken to achieve those goals I mentioned. Finally, I will also suggest some courses by which Micronesia may be moved toward greater self-sufficiency and self-government in the future.

In doing so, I would like to depart from the manner of my presentation last year. I have prepared a rather lengthy statement which contains comments on specific matters and a listing of specific legislation.

If it is not out of order, I wish to ask that the President, with the approval of the Council, permit this detailed supplementary statement be made a part of the record of these proceedings.

The statement which I read now is a summary of the longer prepared statement which concentrates on the areas of development planning, economic advancement, and social advancement and self-government.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have with regard to my statement and if they cannot be answered during the questioning period, I will be able to provide answers in my closing remarks.

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND GOALS

It is not unusual for people to consider that progress can be measured in "yardsticks." If this is so, then our progress in one year may represent only one inch against that longer scale. It has often been said, but is worth repeating, that progress in Micronesia may often be measured in terms of one more bag of copra, several pounds more of fish, and so on. We have become accustomed, in Micronesia, to think in these terms; but I believe it is time that our government begin seriously thinking of not only measuring progress in terms of quantity, but also in terms of progress for what?

Many times I have sat in committees of the Congress and heard members of our Executive Branch, responsible for managing programs and projects for our government, asked what are the goals of their department, Division, or office. Invariably the response is "more" of this, or a "better" that. Agriculture wants to grow more vegetables, Marine Resources wants to catch more fish, Education wants to provide more and better facilities for all school children, Administration in general wants to be more responsive and more efficient. Health wants to provide more and better services to our people. And so it goes.

We now recognize that at the present and at projected levels of funding, we will have to decide upon our priorities and provide some reasonable rationales for our development through a balanced,

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developmental program. This is necessary so that competing government programs can be oriented and given a new direction compatible with our over-all development effort. Thus, while, for example, it is understandable that the agriculture and marine resources divisions have set their own priorities and programs, there is a real need to determine what is called for on a Micronesia-wide level, just what should be the scope and scale of our efforts, and how these efforts can be coordinated both in the government and private sectors.

Daily it becomes clearer that the needs and requirements of a developing country seem to be interlocked, much like the pieces of a puzzle; and while the goals of "more" and "better" are admirable in themselves, there are still pieces of the puzzle missing. Those pieces are "for what purpose" and "for whom", and "by what time." What is needed is an over-all, developmental scheme and specific goals to be achieved by a certain time period.

This is an approach that has been used successfully in many other developing countries of the world. This sort of planning can be based on what kind of development each district and all of Micronesia needs and wants. Such a plan has been recommended by various technical consultants, by the Congress of Micronesia representatives to this Council, and also by the Visiting Mission of the Council itself. We therefore strongly urge the Administering Authority to assist us in making these plans, a proposal which gains importance considering that Micronesia will soon be making the transition to a new political status; without such planning, our new political status may be a change in name only. In this connection, I must add that we are certainly grateful to the Administering Authority for the hundreds of millions of dollars which it has poured into the Trust Territory over the past years to advance our islands politically, economically, and socially. A large portion of these funds has been for, and continues to be for, the implacement of a basic infrastructure through capital improvement projects.

Unfortunately, despite the expenditure of large sums of money, we have yet to see an economy emerge which can support the expense of this infrastructure; we have yet to see the economy emerge for which this infrastructure is actually being built.

ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

Perhaps nowhere is this need for goals and planning more evident than in the economic area. At present we have an economy which is almost wholly dependent upon grant funds from the Administering Authority; we have an import/export ratio which is getting worse, not better; and a private sector which cannot compete with government wages and which, in fact "uses" or is dependent upon grant fund money from government salaries instead of generating or creating new sources of revenue to support these government salaries. Furthermore, despite some 30 years of stewardship of our islands by the U.S. in which time there has been some progress in many areas, economic statistics continue to be inaccurate, unreliable, or unavailable.

Despite these problems, and despite the lack of over-all goals, the Congress has identified and given emphasis to and supported development in Marine Resources, Agriculture, capital and foreign investment. We have thus taken steps in these areas designed to lead to more self-sufficiency and I shall briefly mention some of these steps.

The Congress this year continued to support funding of District Fishing Authorities created last year. It also created a Copra Processing Authority and appropriated one-half of a million dollars for its initial operations; it created a fund for loans to vegetable and animal producers and significantly, it re-created the Bank of Micronesia as a developmental bank and appropriated money for its initial operations. In the area of foreign investment, it welcomed the relaxation of the "most favored nation clause" of the Trusteeship by the Secretary of the Interior of the United States Government, and enacted legislation to help insure that additional investments under this new policy will continue to be beneficial to Micronesians.

Another important step the Congress of Micronesia has taken is to request the High Commissioner to initiate a manpower need survey for Micronesia to determine our present and future requirements in this area.

An area which the Congress has also identified as being one of priority is that of exploring various regional and international avenues of technical and financial assistance. During the past year the Congress has been represented at a meeting of the Asia Development Bank and by resolution requested the Administering Authority to sponsor membership of Micronesia in that organization; we have also pushed for the completion of a standard agreement between the United Nations Development Programme and the United States on behalf of the Trust Territory. The signing of this agreement will mark a great step forward in providing the opportunity for Micronesia to acquire the needed expertise, and perhaps funding, for long-range development in the future and when it is signed we must begin to discover the ways by which this organization can provide useful assistance to Micronesia. This year also saw representatives comprised of members from our Congress and the executive branch attending the 30th Session of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East as an Associate Member. We expect our participation in this forum to also produce valuable technical assistance to Micronesia in the future. Lastly, the Congress continues to participate in and financially support the South Pacific Commission and Conference.

SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT

In the area of social advancement, the need for planning also needs emphasis, and any future planning scheme must of necessity take into consideration the need to coordinate activities and efforts in this area along with those political and economic areas.

There is no sense, for example, in providing a U.S.-style education system geared toward college education which can accommodate all school age children through secondary institutions when not all students have the aptitude or the finances to continue their education, while there are not enough white collar jobs to go around, and while we continue to see alien labor being recruited to fill gaps in the labor market.

Therefore, the quality, the quantity, and the direction of education in Micronesia continues to be a concern to the Congress. I do not mean to say that the lack of educational facilities and staffing in some districts should not be corrected. They must be corrected, but at the same time the kind of education which will be provided, the question of "Education for what?" is also a primary consideration. Because education is so vital to our primary resource, our young people, we are concerned to note reductions in elementary and secondary education positions for this fiscal year; our same concern applies to the area of health as we see that some 28 positions may be eliminated at the district level. Congressional action in the social area during the year included continued support of our Micronesian Social Security Program, Vocational Education Programs, and Congress of Micronesia Scholarships for Higher Education. Lastly under this topic I wish to make special note of legislation passed and adopted by the Congress which will enable the people in Kusaie in 1977 to achieve their long-sought goal of becoming a separate district. In this regard, I wish to give special thanks to the Administering Authority for its support of this act.

SELF-GOVERNMENT

Before closing I would also like to touch upon several areas of effort by the Congress which are designed to move Micronesia further along the road to self-government. The Congress has continued to support political education in general through the efforts of its committees and members, and also through dissemination of information. It has also moved closer to self-reliance this year by deciding to absorb all costs of its own elections and of its operations. Also, as previously indicated in these remarks, and also in the longer prepared statement, the Congress has pushed for and expanded its contacts with regional and international organizations. Lastly, it has requested the Administering Authority, with special reference to Senate Joint Resolution No. 115, to grant greater autonomy and control to the Trust Territory Government.

We think that all things considered that it has been a year of progress and advancement for Micronesia and its people, in the political, social and economic areas. But in the end, the first questions which must be answered are what are the social, political and economic objectives to be achieved and by when? When these are identified, then we can begin to marshall our resources and efforts toward attempting to achieve the noble goals for our country as set forth in the Trusteeship Agreement and the Charter of the United Nations.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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