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FACTUAL BACKGROUND ON TRANSITION IN THE NORTHERN MARIANAS

The following is a synopsis of U.S.-MPSC statements, exchanges and agreements regarding transition to internal self-government in the Northern Marianas. It is provided as background for the fifth round of negotiations.

First Round

The first direct, formal reference to "transition" was made by Senator Pangelinan in his opening statement at the first plenary session of the "Opening Round" on Saipan, December 13-14, 1972. He asked that if agreement were reached on a new political status for the Marianas before the remainder of the Trust Territory resolved its status that the new status for the Marianas "be initiated without delay". Ambassador Williams did not respond directly to this part of Pangelinan's statement nor did the MPSC attempt to follow it up in subsequent exchanges or in the communique.

Second Round

During the Second Round the United States agreed to assume certain obligations to provide budget support and economic assistance to the Northern Marianas until the people and the Government of the Marianas can meet the financial responsibilities of self-government from their own resources. The United States also agreed to finance the planning effort required to establish a new government and to draft economic and social development programs, etc.

### Third Round

The subject of transition received prominence with the appointment of a joint Ad-Hoc Preparatory Committee charged with preparing a detailed work plan, timetable and organizational structure and budget. Both sides recognized critical importance of such advance planning to assure the orderly assumption of responsibility by a new Government of the Northern Marianas, the adoption of a local constitution.

### Fourth Round

The report of the Ad-Hoc Preparatory Committee on Transition was approved. Pursuant to this it was tentatively agreed that the United States would provide \$13.5 million per year in direct financial grants during the initial seven years following the installation of a new government, plus other subsidies and direct federal program assistance and services.

Also, the United States promised to take under advisement the Marianas request for separate administration, which was put forward as part of the Marianas desire for early transition to self-government. To this end, both sides agreed that further study and consultation on this question--separate administration--should be carried forward prior to the next formal round of negotiations.

### Honolulu Discussions--October 1974

During these informal discussions with the Chairman and the Vice Chairman of the MPSC it was agreed that (1) there is an urgent need for a new cooperative effort between the MPSC, the District Administration and the United States in the area of

Education for self-government; (2) that a study of the effects of establishing a separate administration over the Northern Marianas should be initiated, as soon as possible; (3) a status plebiscite in the Marianas should be held in May, 1975, if possible, but that the UNTC would have to take some kind of action in response to a U.S. invitation to have U.N. observers on hand during the plebiscite; and (4) that an attempt should be made to adhere to the following schedule of transition events.

- a. December 1974 -- signature of status agreement.
- b. January 1975 -- Marianas District Legislature approval of status agreement and commencement of Phase I of the transition period;
- c. May 1975 -- status plebiscite followed closely by separate administration;
- d. September-October 1975 -- Marianas Constitutional Convention;
- e. Spring 1976 -- Constitutional Referendum;
- f. July 1976 -- Phase II begins with investiture of new government of the Marianas, following election of executive and legislators.

Both sides agreed, however, that the above schedule and related transition matters would require considerably more thought.