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December 5, 1974

Mr. Chairman, honored guests, members of the Marianas Political Status Commission, ladies and gentlemen:

We are happy to be here again at the invitation of the Marianas Political Status Commission to resume our work which began two years ago this month on Saipan. Our coming from Washington to these islands in December 1972 at the request of the people and the leaders of the Marianas District was the culmination of their desire going back more than two decades to the year 1950 when the Marianas House of Council and House of Commissioners forwarded a petition stating that the Mariana Islands District of the TTPI wished to be incorporated into the U.S. as an American possession or territory. Over the years that followed, the seriousness and sincerity of this desire was attested to time and again by the constancy and the persistency of local efforts to accomplish this goal through resolutions, petitions and referendums, despite a lack of encouragement from Washington and from the United Nations in New York.

The will of the people of the Marianas for a future political status separate from the other Districts did not however go unnoticed. Over the years, this sentiment and the freely expressed desire of the people for political association with the United States was recognized by the U.N. Visiting Missions, by the 1969 report of the Joint Commission on Future Status and by leaders of the Congress of Micronesia in statements to the Congress and in the context of the Congress of Micronesia status talks with the U.S. It was not until the spring of 1972, some 22 years after the first petition, that the U.S. finally acceded to a formal request to enter into talks with the Marianas separate from those with the Joint Committee on Future Status on the grounds that it did not wish to impose a future political status on the people of

... which they clearly did not ...

This ... awaited and hoped for decision set in motion the establishment and the appointment of the MPSC. Participating in this process were your elected leaders in the Marianas District Legislature, your municipal councils, including Rota and Tinian, your representatives in the Congress of Micronesia, your private business sector, the Carolinian community and your two political parties. One would search in vain far and wide from one end of the earth to the other to find a more democratically selected and representative negotiating delegation than the one that has been representing the 14,000 people of the Northern Marianas in these talks.

It was six months after the appointment of this Commission that we first met in joint session. Since that time our pace has been a steady one. We have met at six months intervals and much hard work has gone on in between each of the formal sessions. Our common efforts over the next several days will be based to a very large extent on the long hours of careful preparation by both sides that have preceded these talks and the progress that has been made by the Joint Committee on Land and the Joint Drafting Committee since we last met. In the interim you have had your internal consultations and so have we since we recognize, as I am sure you do, that our work is ad referendum in nature and that our success will depend upon the ultimate acceptance of our product by the people of the Northern Marianas and by the Congress of the United States.

Now as we turn our attention to our remaining tasks perhaps it would be useful to take a few moments to review a little more fully the historical background of these negotiations, the progress that has been made to date, and what kind of a future political status we are talking about.

The long train of events leading to these negotiations began, as I have already mentioned, in 1950 when the Trusteeship was only three years old and

the ravages of war were still real and fresh in everyone's memory. The then leaders of the Northern Marianas thought that the future welfare of all of their people would best be served by joining the United States. The original petition to this end was followed by calls for reintegration with Guam. These efforts led to the plebiscite on February 5, 1961 which resulted in an overwhelming popular vote supporting the idea of union with Guam. Not to be discouraged, the leaders and people of the Northern Marianas continued to pursue throughout the Sixties a separate status and a close and enduring political association with the United States including an oft stated desire for American citizenship.

In July 1969 the report of the Political Status Commission of the Congress of Micronesia recognized these sentiments and noted that ultimately the United Nations and the United States would have to resolve the Marianas aspiration for a future status separate from that of the other five districts of the TTPI. The Commission said that it would not oppose a future status for the Marianas which reflected the freely expressed desires of the majority of the residents of that District. In that same year the people of the Marianas once again expressed their continuing support for full integration into the American political system by the means of another plebiscite.

The first year of the Seventies saw the Marianas District Legislature vote for the first time in favor of the Commonwealth proposal that the U.S. had offered to all of Micronesia. In 1971 by legislative resolution No. 30 the Marianas District Legislature advised the Trusteeship Council and the Security Council in forceful language of its desire for immediate separate status and union with the United States. It was by this time clear to every objective observer that to deny the people of the Marianas District their desire for separate status would in fact be denying them their right of self-determination

as called for by the U.N. Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement. Consequently and reluctantly the United States in April 1972 in Koror, after informing the Joint Committee on Future Status, agreed to enter into separate talks with the Marianas. At the same time the U.S. stated its position that it would not terminate the Trusteeship Agreement for the Marianas in advance of the termination for all of the Districts of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. In June of 1972 the U.S. informed the U.N. Trusteeship Council of this decision regarding the Mariana Islands District of the TTPI.

Against this background of long years of careful and deliberate consideration by the members of successive municipal councils and your local legislature and by repeated expressions of popular opinion by the people themselves our present negotiations opened at the Mount Carmel auditorium on December 13, 1972. Since that time we have reached agreement in principle in a number of important areas--in fact in most of the areas that will serve as the basis of the new relationship we are building toward between the Marianas and the United States. Our next task is to reach understandings on the exact language of an agreement itself, a task that requires the drafting of precise and at time detailed, complicated technical and legal language. This process will take time and patience and an element of faith on both sides.

In general terms what will the Commonwealth Agreement include, what will it mean to the people of the Northern Marianas?

It will mean that if approved by the people, the Northern Marianas will join in a political union with the U.S. under American sovereignty.

It will mean that the people of the Northern Marianas will be given the opportunity of becoming American citizens with all of the benefits and duties that accompany that status--or if they choose they may become nationals upon declaration of the choice.

It will mean that the Northern Marianas will be self-governing which in turn means that:

- it will write and adopt its own constitution.
- it will elect its own governor
- it will elect its own legislative bodies
- it will have its own courts

It will mean that the Northern Marianas will be responsible for planning its own economic future, the pace and the nature of its economic growth, its land use, the allocation of its financial resources and the establishment of development goals and priorities. In this process the federal government will provide assistance during the transition period and during the first years of the new relationship and after that on an agreed as needed basis.

This assistance will be provided by many direct and indirect methods.

- by grants for budget support for the Government of the Commonwealth
- by grants for capital improvement program with special initial funds reserved for Tinian and Rota.
- by grants for economic development loans with special funds reserved for small farmers and fishermen.
- by tax benefits and rebates with all taxes collected in the Marianas being used exclusively within the Northern Marianas.
- by the provision of funds from various federal programs and services for which the Northern Marianas would be eligible in the same manner as the territories.

It will mean that all public lands now held in trust for the people by the Administering Authority will be turned over to the Marianas to be controlled in accordance with local laws and policies. This will include the return of all remaining military retention land to the public domain from which U.S.

defense land needs will be met.

It will mean that the Northern Marianas will be asked to contribute to national defense requirements of the U.S. and to the maintenance of peace and stability in the Western Pacific by making some of its land available for defense purposes. This land as agreed to includes 7,207 hectares on Tinian, 72 hectares in Tanapag Harbor area, 196 hectares south of Isaly and the use of the uninhabited island of Farallon de Medinilla.

These are some of the most important areas of agreement that have been reached in principle. Detailed final agreements have not as yet been reached in all of the areas of the federal relationship. Remaining questions along with the method of acquisition and the price to be paid for lands to be used by the federal government for defense purposes will occupy most of our time over the coming days (and nights). We believe that further exchanges on the subject of transition and the approval process and timetable would also be useful and we will be looking forward to the views of the MPSC on these matters.

As we proceed we of course remain fully aware that our decisions and final agreements are all subject to approval by our principals and this reality should never be lost sight of. You have your principal and constituents to consider including their wishes and their needs. We have our Congress to consider and what may be possible and what may not be possible in obtaining the House and Senate approval of a final document.

Continuing consultations and keeping the people informed are both essential if we are to be successful. More than a half century ago President Woodrow Wilson made his famous call for "open covenants openly arrived at". That is exactly what I am sure both sides in this negotiation desire. We have no secrets and it should be our dedicate aim to dispel any illusion on

the part of anyone that our work is in any way secretive. We must do our utmost--all of us--to see that correct and continuing information on our talks is made available to those most directly concerned--the people of the Northern Marianas. They need to know--and it certainly is their right to know--the facts, for in the most direct sense it is their, and their children's future which we are considering. To that end I pledge to you the members of the MPSC our fullest cooperation.

In conclusion let me say that I believe we have come a long way together over the past two years. Substantial progress has been made and as we move toward the completion of our task of drawing up an agreed text, I would recall the first three words of the preamble of the Constitution of the United States. They read: "We the people". Those significant words, set at the very beginning of the Constitution, show where the power and sovereignty of our nation resides. Here in your islands we are working together in a spirit of cooperation toward the establishment of a new wealth which will be based on the same solid principle of "government by the consent of the governed". Let us then steadily continue toward the completion of the task that has been given us, conscious of its full meaning and importance and dedicated to its fulfillment.

Thank you.