

SEVENTH ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS ON MICRONESIAN FUTURE STATUS

OPENING STATEMENT BY SENATOR LAZARUS E. SALII, CHAIRMAN, MICRONESIAN DELEGATION

Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

I have found from past experience that these formal sessions never result in any actual drafting language and, therefore, I will not dwell at length on my remarks this morning.

We are truly pleased that this seventh round is finally underway. It has been more than a year since we began putting together the actual language of a draft Compact of Free Association between Micronesia and the United States. The reason for this delay is a matter of record. Our delegation pre-conditioned the resumption of these talks upon the return of so-called public lands in Micronesia to their rightful owners. On the eve of our departure from Micronesia to Washington, we received from you a response to our request. It came as the people of Micronesia had long asked, in the form of an official United States Government policy. In its essence this policy is an agreement -- a commitment -- on the part of the United States that it will return the so-called public lands to the districts in Micronesia immediately. The actual implementation of this policy will, out of necessity, have to be held in abeyance for a few months pending certain actions on the part of the Congress of Micronesia and the district legislatures.

Yesterday our two delegations met to discuss this new American policy. I now place the minutes of yesterday's discussions into the official record of this seventh round.

I will only state here that your delegation and ours are able to open the talks this morning because our delegation finds the American policy acceptable with the clarifications and modifications agreed upon yesterday.

And now that the land question is out of the way, the task before us is to complete drafting the Compact of Free Association. There is no reason that

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this task cannot be completed in a short period of time. Both sides have had more than one year to formulate their positions on the remaining issues of finance and termination. Our drafting committee is prepared to meet with yours immediately after this morning's session to begin that task.

I do not find this great capital city objectionable in any great respect, but your weather is a bit too cold for our warm blood. You can therefore be assured that our delegation is prepared to wind up these sessions in the shortest amount of time possible for several reasons.

Thank you.

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