

May 28, 1975  
12

STATEMENT OF DR. FRANCISCO A. PALACIOS  
BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL  
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Mr. President, and distinguished members of the Trusteeship Council, I am Francisco Palacios, a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission from Saipan. It is my pleasure to indicate to you generally the development of and work that has been performed towards political education of the people of the Marianas in preparation for the plebiscite to be held on June 17, 1975.

A short moment in reference to the historical background of the Marianas is important in truly being able to evaluate the political education we have accomplished. For the past 400 years the people of the Marianas have been subjected to a colonialistic environment, initially by the Spaniards, later by the Germans and most recently during the mandate period under the Japanese from 1917 to 1944. During this period the people of the Marianas never had an opportunity to advance either economically or educationally towards political self-government, nor were they afforded the opportunity to express themselves freely as we are doing today. For the past 30 years the Marianas has been under the stewardship of the United States as Trustee for the

Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. During this 30-year period, the United States has assisted the people of the Marianas economically and in particular in developing the people educationally towards political advancement based upon the free and democratic principles of self-determination that has been the bulwark of the American system for the past 200 years. And in keeping with the mandate and the spirit of the Trusteeship Agreement, the United States has focused its attention specifically on the area of education of the people toward their total development educationally, socially, economically and politically. As a result of this development, especially during the last ten-year period, the people of the Marianas have consistently requested that the United States enter into an association with the people of the Marianas toward a close and enduring relationship.

During this period of time our political development continued to mature as is evidenced by the development of the Congress of Micronesia of which I had the pleasure of being a charter member. Our political development was further reinforced by the establishment of the Marianas District Legislature that focused more specifically on the problems of the people of the Marianas. As an outgrowth of this political development, the people

of the Marianas have expressed many times through various resolutions and referendum their desire to have a close and enduring relationship with the United States. As a result of these repeated requests, approximately three years ago the United States agreed to open a dialogue toward a political relationship between the people of the Marianas and the United States to assist us in achieving our political aspirations. Since that time the United States and the Marianas Political Status Commission have held six sessions of negotiations preparing a Covenant to Establish the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, which was signed on February 15, 1975. During and after each of these sessions the Marianas Political Status Commission undertook a comprehensive political education program to inform the Marianas District Legislature and the people of the Marianas of the progress and results of each negotiating session with the United States. During the interim periods between the various negotiating sessions there were meetings between the Marianas Political Status Commission and the various municipalities of Saipan, Tinian and Rota. As evidence of these efforts, the Status Commission published the various documents which we are transmitting to you for your records at this time including all the interim reports of the Status Commission negotiations over the last three years.

During this same period of time, in addition to the official documents developed for publication as presented here today, there has been much dissemination of information through the news media and through local radio and television broadcasts, as well as public meetings conducted at the grass roots level that fully explained each step of the negotiations as they progressed.

Furthermore, the Status Commission has always invited the general public to express its views and participate fully in every step of these negotiations. I mention all of these historical aspects and background material to indicate to the Trusteeship Council that political education for the people of the Marianas has been a continuous development especially over the last ten-year period. Since the establishment of the Marianas Political Status Commission, political education has been a significant part of our daily lives in the Marianas. There have been extensive publications, meetings, disseminations on radio and television, and individual discussions at the grass roots level. We are not a large population and we are not a large area. I dare say there is not an individual within the Marianas who is not aware of the political developments and that there is not an individual within the Marianas who has not been given

ample opportunity to participate fully in the interchange of ideas concerning our future political status.

Since the signing of the Covenant on February 15, 1975, the efforts toward the political education of the people of the Northern Marianas has been intensified and developed to a point of complete dissemination of all relevant material representing both pro and con viewpoints. The Covenant has been disseminated throughout the Marianas in three languages, English, Chamorro and Carolinian. In addition to that, the Marianas Political Status Commission has developed a weekly publication, the Covenant Newsletter. In addition to the Covenant Newsletter, there has been detailed discussion each week on radio of the various areas of the Covenant that are discussed in the newsletter. This radio dissemination has also been in three languages. It covers the Covenant itself and the section-by-section analysis as presented in the newsletter. Additionally, the radio has afforded equal time to all interested parties to present their views about and analysis of the Covenant. At this time the Marianas Political Status Commission would like to submit to the Trusteeship Council graphic evidence of the complete political education program that has been presented to the people of the Marianas on all sides.

14534

Please note that not only is the Covenant Newsletter included in our submission, but also evidence of other news media carrying the opposite viewpoint.

In addition to the efforts of the Marianas Political Status Commission that obviously favors adoption of the Covenant and the opposite viewpoint as presented by individuals within the Marianas community who have taken a different approach, the Plebiscite Commissioner, Edwin Canham, has developed an independent political education program for the people of the Marianas. This program enhances and supplements the information disseminated to the people of the Marianas on all aspects of the Covenant and how it will relate to the people.

There was a time when I was very concerned that we should proceed slowly with this Covenant that is now about to be voted on. I was concerned with the possibility that the people of the Marianas were not being supplied with sufficient educational background and material to allow them to make an intelligent decision on this most serious issue to ever be presented to the people of the Marianas. However, the political education program that has been developed in the Marianas through the Marianas Political Status Commission, its opponents, and the Plebiscite Commissioner has convinced me that we have

had a comprehensive and fully adequate political education program. We are convinced that the people of the Marianas have been given the most complete political education program possible. We feel that it is a credit to our hoped-for future relationship with the United States that the United States itself has been extremely careful in its involvement in the political education program. There has been no attempt on the part of any of the negotiators for the United States to interfere or unduly influence the political education program in any way.

I am hopeful that the United Nations will send observers to the Marianas to review firsthand the educational program that is now in progress and the plebiscite itself. Needless to say, I sincerely hope that there will be an overwhelming vote in favor of establishing this new relationship with the United States. However, I am also aware of individuals who desire the opposite result. The aspect that gladdens my heart more than any other is the fact that the people themselves will have the opportunity to vote on this issue and that during this age of major powers within the world, that a small island group with a population of only 14,000 people, will have the rare privilege of determining for themselves through a free vote its future political status.

This is indeed a credit to the members of this Council and the principles the United Nations stands for. Thank you.