

May 28, 1975

12

STATEMENT OF SENATOR OLYMPIO T. BORJA
BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL
MAY 28, 1975

Mr. President, I am Olympio T. Borja, a Senator from the Marianas in the Congress of Micronesia. I have been a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission. I was privileged to appear before you in 1972 when our separate political status negotiations began. I am privileged to appear before you again today to present on behalf of my people the reasons that we must be afforded the opportunity to decide our own political future.

Over the past years this Council has received many petitions presented on behalf of the people of the Marianas stating their desire for a close and permanent relationship with the United States. This Council has witnessed the establishment of the Marianas Political Status Commission and it is well aware of the reasons the Commission was created. And this Council has heard many local leaders explain the reasons that the Marianas desire to become a Commonwealth of the United States.

In my view, there are two fundamental reasons which underlie our position. The first is political. The political relationship that my people have expressed their desire for

has significant and distinct advantages over those other relationships that the Commission has studied. We believe that only through a close political relationship with the United States will it be possible for us to have a stable internal self-government, including the ability to draft and amend our own constitution in accordance with our own views of the way we should govern ourselves.

Nearly thirty years ago the basic foundation of democracy was planted on our island by the United States upon the liberation of the Mariana people by the United States armed forces. Ever since that time under the United States Administration, despite many shortcomings and deficiencies, my people have enjoyed the full benefit of a free and democratic society for the first time. Our children have been educated and are knowledgeable about the fundamentals of a democratic society. But during these thirty years, though we have had an increasing amount of self-government, the fundamental decisions concerning our islands have been made, in the last analysis, by the Administering Authority. We are now prepared to accept the responsibility for internal and local self-government ourselves. Our desire, and our right, to decide our future and to govern ourselves with respect to local affairs is explicitly recognized in the Covenant.

My people do not desire to continue to be governed as a part of the Trust Territory in accordance with the 1947

United Nations Trusteeship Agreement. For reasons with which this Council is intimately familiar, that status is now outmoded and entirely inappropriate to current conditions. At the same time, my people do not desire the same sort of political status as is presently being pursued by the other Districts of Micronesia. We desire to separate ourselves politically from the artificial entity which is known as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. We desire to become a part of the United States in a close and permanent relationship. And we desire to make this decision ourselves, in a free and fair plebiscite, in the exercise of our inalienable right of self-determination.

Another reason that the people of the Marianas desire to become a part of the United States as provided in the Covenant is that we feel that this relationship will provide a secure economic, social and educational base for the development of the people of the Marianas. Our people believe that the political relationship which assures us the best opportunity for the kind of economic development and social improvement is a relationship which associates us permanently and closely with the United States. This has been shown to us first under the immediate post-war occupation by the military government, and now under the present Trust Territory government. We believe it will be even better in the future when we are a Commonwealth of the United States. My people have

also learned, however, that economics alone is not a sufficient reason to justify a permanent political relationship of close association with any country. Thus it is the political reasons and our political views which lead us to favor this relationship, and not alone our desire for a stable and secure economic base.

The people of the other districts of Micronesia have views about local government, democracy, and individual rights which differ from those of the people of the Marianas. The people of the other districts desire a political relationship which differs from the political relationship which we desire. But I want to assure this Council that it is not the intention of my people completely to abandon and disregard the historical affiliation which brought the Marianas District into association with the other Districts. There are many matters of mutual concern, especially in the areas of cultural and social understanding. We will continue to participate in these areas as members of the Micronesian community.

However, it is not possible for the people of the Marianas to accept the idea that we can be forced into a political union with the other five districts simply because as a matter of administrative convenience for various other countries and without any vote ever having been taken in Micronesia, the Marianas are now part of the Trust Territory. The sentiment for political autonomy has been expressed in the

strongest possible terms by all the elected leaders of the Marianas District, those in the Congress of Micronesia and elsewhere. We do not wish a separate political status because we feel we are better than or superior to the other districts or because we consider ourselves more advanced economically or politically. We want a separate political status because we know, as a people, that our political aspiration is for a close and permanent relationship with the United States, as reflected in the Covenant. We respect the right of our fellow Micronesians to choose any political status which suits their goals and aspirations. We believe and expect that they will respect our inalienable right of self-determination, too.

Thank you.