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STATEMENT OF JOSE R. CRUZ BEFORE  
THE UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL  
MAY 27, 1975

Mr. President, I am Jose R. Cruz, a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission from Tinian. I join with my colleagues in expressing my gratitude for this opportunity to appear before the Council. I will address my remarks to the views of the people I represent -- the people of Tinian -- about land and military requirements in the Northern Marianas.

As the Council knows, land is our most precious resource because of its relative scarcity and because of its cultural significance to our people. A great deal of progress with respect to the return of public land to the Marianas and to the other districts of the Trust Territory has been made since representatives of the Commission last appeared before this Council. Under the policy announced by the United States as the Administering Authority in 1973, public lands in the Trust Territory will be transferred to the districts so that each district can determine for itself what is to be done with its public land for the benefit of its people. For us, this is a critical matter, since it is estimated that 90 percent of the total land area in our District is now public land. This policy was implemented by a Secretarial Order issued by the U. S. Department of the Interior after the Congress of Micronesia twice failed to

enact the necessary enabling legislation. The Marianas District Legislative has enacted a law providing for the creation of a public land corporation to receive, hold and administer our public land for the benefit of the Marianas people. We expect that our public land will be transferred to us immediately after the public land corporation is established.

As our representatives have previously told the Council, we recognize that the United States has certain responsibilities for the maintenance of peace and security in the western Pacific. We recognize further that, as a member of the American political family, the Marianas will have certain obligations to assist the United States in meeting its defense requirements. The people throughout the Marianas well understand these points. We have consulted with the people often and widely concerning United States land requirements. On Tinian, these matters have been especially discussed, since, under the Covenant, the United States will obtain the right to lease approximately 7,203 hectares for military purposes. Generally, the people of Tinian, like those elsewhere in the Marianas recognize that there are very significant benefits to a close relationship with the United States, and that these benefits entail certain obligations as well. As a member of the Pacific community, as a people which have been ravaged by war within the memory of every person here, we cannot say too strongly that peace must reign in the

Pacific and that war must never again destroy our islands. For this reason we are willing to make our contribution to the United States, which promises to keep the peace, as our share in the maintenance of peace and security in the Pacific. Only if there is peace can the political freedom and economic development which our people desire be secured.

Part of the reason for the general willingness of the people of Tinian to support the land provisions in the Covenant is that the Commission was successful in negotiating with the United States a reasonable land provision which recognizes the interests of the people of the Marianas as well as the necessities of the United States Government. The United States agreed to a 50-year lease with a single option to renew for all or part of the property for an additional term of 50 years. This was a matter of great importance to us, since our people did not wish to part with title to their land even though they were willing to recognize the responsibility of making some land available. Furthermore, the United States will make a single payment of close to \$20 million for the land, a price which reflects our extensive study of land values, and which, if used wisely by the future government of the Marianas, can provide much needed services and facilities.

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Indeed, the Marianas Political Status Commission endorsed the request of the people of Tinian that a fair portion of the \$20 million should be made available exclusively for the local government on Tinian, and I am sure that this will be done if the Covenant is approved.

Finally, we were successful in negotiating with the United States a Technical Agreement Regarding the Use of Land to be Leased by the United States in the Northern Mariana Islands, which contains terms relating to the leaseback of property, to the joint use arrangement for our harbor and air field, and to the principles which will govern the social structure relations between the United States military and the Northern Mariana Islands Civil Authority. This Technical Agreement provides us with assurances that we will be able to leaseback from the United States Government for the nominal sum of \$1.00 per acre per year approximately 2,600 hectares on Tinian -- land which can continue to be used for farming and grazing as it is now, even though the United States will be making a lump sum payment for the use of that land.

Finally, Mr. President, I want to emphasize that we are here today pressing our view that the people of the Marianas must be allowed to vote in a free and fair plebiscite to determine their political future. I am confident that the people of the Marianas, including a majority of those on Tinian, want a commonwealth relationship and will approve

the Covenant. On my own island of Tinian, the Municipal Council on May 21st adopted a resolution respectfully reminding "all the people of the world" that only my colleague on the Commission, Bernard V. Hoshneider, and I "are the official representatives and spokesmen for the people of Tinian on all Tinian political status issues," and specifically reminding the nations of the world that "the people of Tinian support and want United States Commonwealth status in political union with the United States of America." This recent and unanimous action by the popularly elected Municipal Council reenforces my view, which I have previously had the honor to present to this Council, that my people are ready and eager to accept a political future in union with the United States in accordance with the provisions and protections of the Covenant. I believe that this Council will see for itself that this is so when the results of the plebiscite have been tallied.

Thank you.

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