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STATEMENT OF SENATOR PEDRO A. TENORIO  
BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL  
May 27, 1975

Mr. President, I am Pedro A. Tenorio, a Senator in the Congress of Micronesia, representing the Mariana Islands. I am a member of the Marianas Political Status Commission from Saipan.

I would like to carry forward on the theme expressed by my colleague in the Congress of Micronesia, Senator Olympio T. Borja, concerning the reasons that the people of the Marianas wish to have, and have the right to have, a political status of their own choosing.

There are those who assert that the Marianas cannot choose a political status different from that of the other districts of the Trust Territory. This, I respectfully submit, ignores both history and legal principle. The Trust Territory came into being as a result of the actions of the United Nations and the United States in 1947. The decision to have the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean now known as Micronesia administered as a strategic trusteeship by the United States was made without the participation of the people of the Marianas or the people of the remainder of Micronesia. We did not express the view that we should be administered by a foreign country. Instead, that decision was made on the basis of the views of those responsible for such matters here in the United Nations. The decision to

lump together all six districts as a single administrative unit was never agreed to by any one or all of the districts. I am not here to quarrel with that initial decision. I am here to suggest that this Council must now face the realities of Micronesia. It is now time to look forward not backwards. The political unity of Micronesia might be a desirable goal in the abstract, but it has no practical basis. There are important political, economic and social differences between the Marianas and other districts in Micronesia. These differences have lead to the desire of the people of the Marianas to exercise their own inalienable right of self-determination.

As a legal and indeed as a moral matter, it seems clear to us that the people of the Northern Mariana Islands have a right of self-determination separate from that of the people in the rest of the Trust Territory. The Trusteeship Agreement requires the Administering Authority to "promote the development of the inhabitants of the Trust Territory toward self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Trust Territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned." Thus, at the very beginning the United Nations recognized that the Trust Territory consisted of a variety of peoples, and not a single people in any real sense. Merely drawing lines on the map, as this Council and indeed as the

United Nations knows from history, cannot create a stable or unified political entity.

Thus there is no basis for the assertion that the Congress of Micronesia has the sole authority to decide the most appropriate political status for the entire population of Micronesia. The Congress is a creation of an Executive Order promulgated by the United States as Administrative Authority. One searches in vain throughout that Executive Order or any other official document to find any legal basis for the claim of the Congress of Micronesia that it is the exclusive representative of all the peoples of Micronesia with respect to political status matters.

As a member of the Congress of Micronesia myself I cannot realistically foresee any common political status for Micronesia that will be workable in the Marianas and the other districts. There are too many differences in political, economic and social views between us. The people of the Marianas have freely and repeatedly, without the interference of the Administering Authority or any other outside force, expressed their desire for a particular kind of political status which the leaders of the other districts say is unacceptable to them. They are entitled to their views; we are entitled to ours.

This Council should not overlook the fact that if the people of the Marianas were to be forced into a political

relationship with the remainder of the districts of the Trust Territory, they would be forced to give up their right -- their sovereign and inalienable right -- of self-determination. This is a fundamental right which no one can properly take from our people.

It is true, Mr. President, that some of my colleagues from the Marianas who are here today and who will be presenting testimony to you, do not agree with all of the views I have stated. I wish to make just two points in response to these friends of mine. First, no political leader in the Marianas and no portion of our population is opposed to U. S. commonwealth status for the Marianas or separation of the Marianas from the remainder of Micronesia. Those who object, object only to the terms of the Covenant itself. We believe strongly that the Covenant provides more than sufficient protection of our rights to local self-government and stable economic and social development, and that the Covenant embodies the only workable and realistic Commonwealth relationship with the United States which is available. Others may differ on that judgment, and it is their right to do so; but they agree with us in principle that commonwealth status and separation from the remainder of Micronesia is what our people want. That being so, the people of the Marianas stand as one insofar as the central issues before this Council are concerned.

Second, even if there are some who oppose commonwealth status or separation from the remainder of Micronesia in principle -- and there are few, if any, I believe -- my answer to them is that they must let the people speak at the ballot box. We do not ask this Council to do anything except let our people vote freely and fairly to choose their own political status, and to respect and to recognize their choice. If there are sound reasons to oppose the Covenant -- and I do not think that there are -- then those reasons can be presented to the people by the opponents of the Covenant, and the people can and will choose. Thank you.

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