

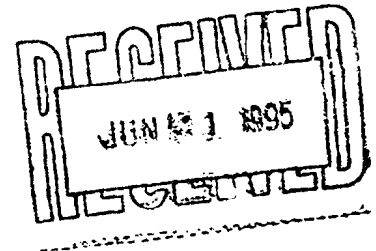


Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
Office of the Land Commission

Saipan, MP 96950  
(670)322-9420/9018

Cable Address:  
Gov. NMI Saipan

June 01, 1995



Mr. Herman T. Guerrero  
Chairman  
Pre-Convention Committee

Re: Land - How Should The CNMI Conserve and Utilize This Precious Resource?

Buenas para todos:

Thank you for inviting me to this forum. It is an honor to share and answer questions regarding land and related matters that might be of interest.

No one needs to be reminded - Land "OUR LAND", the most precious assets of possession we own. We must protect it at all cost.

With this in mind, I seriously question the effectiveness of the present arrangement of custodianship. To fully protect our land, this Constitutional Assembly must seriously address and consider effective land management administration and custodianship system. A system that must protect both public and private land ownership.

Over the years, governments throughout have become aware of the need for effective management of their nation's land resources if the economic and social needs of the communities are to be met. More importantly, good land management is dependent on the efficient gathering and production of effective land related information, also it is a basic tool for stimulating economic and social development in both rural and urban areas, and for ensuring effective administration and planning in the public sector. Demands in the area of accuracy, completeness, speed and whole new information products have shown these traditional, normal oriented systems generally incapable of satisfying the information appetite of modern government. The need for effective land and resource management is totally dependent on effective land information management.

An idea for a creation of a Department of Land Management is worth debating. This department should be charged with the responsibility for the management and disposition of all public lands. In addition, it should be charged with the responsibility

to register, examine, adjudicate, determine legal ownership, assist and monitor all transactions of land. It will also be helpful and ideal if the department examines and reviews all leases and sales of private lands to ascertain fair and adequate provision to protect both parties and to safeguard restrictions and requirements imposed by the Constitution and statutes. Our past events and experiences of confusions are evidences that warrant justifications for a creation of a Department of Land Management within the executive branch of our government.

Throughout our history our Government and its people had experienced lost, total destruction, and disappearance of land records and documents. Through these incidents, some land owners were completely being denied their rightful claims to their land for not being able to proof their holdings. To assure that incidents like these will not reoccur or be repeated, the Commonwealth must prepare and develop a secure and comprehensive plan to protect and safeguard all lands and their documents both public and private.

Our islands in the Commonwealth are all very small and fragile, we must be highly cautious and selective of the kind of development to be permitted on each of the islands. The available areas for community settlement and economic development in our major islands, Saipan, Rota, and Tinian are depleting rapidly. At the rate and scale of development growth together with the uncontrolled population explosion we are experiencing today, in a short period of time, within the next 20 years, should we not immediately develop plans to guide our developments, we would find ourselves in a very congested and uncomfortable situations. Even at this point in time, these problems and situations are unconsciously taking their tolls.

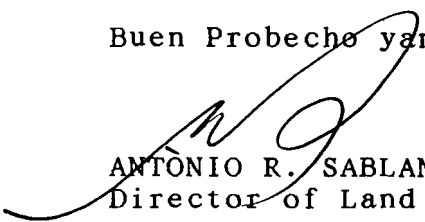
Some may claim that there are still adequate public and private lands remained in our control, unfortunately, this is not true. Our two major islands, "Saipan and Tinian", many acreage of undeveloped lands, specially those situated on prime locations are now in the hands and controlled by outsiders through long term leases or outright sales.

The subject of ALIENATION OF LAND is a topic that this Constitutional Assembly must seriously address. Issues that warrant serious consideration are whether the present provision of Article XII requires to be strengthened or be relaxed. An interesting and confusing situation would surface which ever way it is done. There will always be benefits and disadvantages that will evolve. For example, in the area of economic arena, if CNMI is to continue relying on outside investors to build our economic base, restrictions on alienation of land will be a subject of great concern and obstacle that stand in a way or limit the economic investment potential. However on the other hand, if the restrictions are relaxed, we must accept to let go of our identity.

Agricultural Homestead Program. The Trust Territory Government Homestead Program was initiated in 1958. The purpose was to provide land for the landless for their livelihood. Throughout the years the lifestyle in the CNMI has changed, we no longer are living in subsistence economy. Our way of life has tremendously changed. It warrants that the homestead program must be seriously re-evaluated to determine its continuance. The first Constitutional Assembly however, left this program with the legislature for their disposal. I believe that this issue is most appropriate for the legislature to decide, I, therefore support such concept.

Based on information being published by the Division of Public Land, there are not much public lands left on Saipan and Tinian. It left us no choice but to wisely utilize them in a direction that would positively benefit the Commonwealth and its people.

Buen Probecho yan Si Yuus Maase.



ANTONIO R. SABLAN  
Director of Land Registration

MARIANA ISLANDS (GUAM NOT INCLUDED)

<u>No Name:</u>	<u>Approx No. of Island</u>	<u>Dry Land Area (Sq. Miles)</u>	<u>Hectares</u>	<u>Acres</u>
<u>1. Uracas</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>.990</u>	<u>256.51</u>	<u>633.60</u>
<u>2. Maug</u> <u>(East Island)</u> <u>(West Island)</u> <u>(North Island)</u>	<u>1 (3)</u>	<u>.810</u> <u>(.363)</u> <u>(.254)</u> <u>(.183)</u>	<u>209.87</u>	<u>518.40</u>
<u>3. Asuncion</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2.834</u>	<u>734.32</u>	<u>1,813.76</u>
<u>4. Agrigan</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>16.797</u>	<u>4,352.27</u>	<u>10,750.08</u>
<u>5. Pagan</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>18.393</u>	<u>4,765.81</u>	<u>11,771.52</u>
<u>6. Alamagan</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4.467</u>	<u>1,157.44</u>	<u>2,858.88</u>
<u>7. Guguan (Pistol)</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1.495</u>	<u>387.36</u>	<u>956.80</u>
<u>8. Sariguan</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1.921</u>	<u>497.75</u>	<u>1,229.44</u>
<u>9. Anatanhan</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>12.139</u>	<u>3,145.33</u>	<u>7,768.96</u>
<u>10. Farallon de Mendinilla</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>.326</u>	<u>84.46</u>	<u>208.64</u>
<u>11. Saipan</u>	<u>1 (3)</u>	<u>47.46</u>	<u>12,297.36</u>	<u>30,374.40</u>
<u>12. Tinian</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>39.29</u>	<u>10,180.43</u>	<u>25,145.60</u>
<u>13. Agiguan</u>	<u>1 (2)</u>	<u>2.753</u>	<u>713.33</u>	<u>1,761.92</u>
<u>14. Luta</u>	<u>1 (3)</u>	<u>32.9</u>	<u>8,524.72</u>	<u>21,056.00</u>
<u>Total:</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>182.575</u>	<u>47,306.96</u>	<u>116,848.00</u>