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October 13, 1977

On behalf of the Marshall Islands Political Status Commission, I wish to express my appreciation to you for your invitation to resume formal political status negotiations in Molokai, Hawaii on October 24, 1977.

We accept your invitation with pleasure but wish to point out that our agreement to attend should be taken as an acceptance of the U.S. Guam proposal as a negotiating format only. We cannot commit ourselves to any particular political status in advance of negotiations and the Commission's acceptance of your invitation ought not to be construed by any party as constituting an acceptance of a specific future status, but we are optimistic that the free association concept as it evolves in the course of our negotiations will meet the needs of the Marshallese people.

We fully share your strong desire to reach agreement on a new political status expeditiously in order to meet the 1981 timetable announced by the President for terminating the Trust.

Accordingly we agree to negotiate exclusively the terms of a possible free association status and to defer the exploration of alternative status options until those negotiations have reached what we view as a satisfactory conclusion or an irreconcilable deadlock. It is our strong conviction that once the free association option has been fully negotiated we should be able to complete negotiations rapidly thereafter by immediately exploring alternative status options, focusing on those terms of free association on which the U.S. position would differ under such other options.