



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

Honorable Carlos S. Camacho  
Governor of the Northern  
Mariana Islands  
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

JAN 8 1980

Dear Governor Camacho:

On behalf of myself and the Secretaries of State and Commerce, I want to reply to your letters of November 21, 1979, regarding questions of fisheries development in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

I appreciate the frankness and the constructive spirit in which you addressed the issues that have arisen over the application of certain of the laws of the United States to the Northern Marianas in this area and I welcomed the comments that you made during my visit to Saipan.

The interested agencies of the Federal Government have been seeking to develop ways to meet what we understand to be the fisheries development concerns. We have attempted to concentrate first upon the legal restrictions placed on the use of foreign-built fishing vessels, which seem to affect citizens of the Northern Marianas in a manner which was unforeseen at the time the Covenant was enacted. I am pleased to report to you that, on the basis of extended discussions among the agencies concerned, the formal process for obtaining approval of a Presidential proclamation has been initiated. The proposed proclamation would suspend the applicability to the Commonwealth of United States vessel documentation laws insofar as those laws prevent citizens of the Northern Marianas from using foreign-built fishing vessels in the fisheries around the Northern Marianas. We expect that such a Presidential proclamation will be issued early in the new year.

There are other aspects of fisheries development in the Northern Marianas that we would like to pursue with you and appropriate officials of the Commonwealth. Representatives of the interested agencies of the Federal Government will be pleased to meet with your representatives in the near future to consider additional specific steps that might be undertaken. Your offer to consider a voluntary dismissal of the suit against the United States for

declaratory relief is viewed as creating a positive atmosphere for these discussions. We believe that the difficulties which gave rise to the suit can be resolved in a manner that will obviate the question of resort to the courts. On the other hand, we believe the forthcoming issuance of the Presidential proclamation is a clear indication of our good faith and of our intention to address the issues of fishery development in a practical and effective way.

With regard to timing of a meeting, there may be difficulty in organizing such a visit prior to mid-January. I understand, however, that many of the officials who would be involved on behalf of the Federal Government may be in the area in mid-February and I would like to suggest that time-period as a possible alternative.

I look forward to hearing your views on the timing of such a discussion as well as on specific topics that might be addressed. I have asked Mrs. Van Cleve to keep involved in this matter and she will coordinate it with the other Federal agencies that are concerned.

*Best wishes!*

Sincerely,

*Lois D. Andrews*  
SECRETARY