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VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SIXTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 16 May 1989, at 10.30 a.m.

President: BIRCH (United Kingdom)

- Examination of petitions (T/INF/37 and Add.1)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

EXAMINATION OF PETITIONS (T/INF/37 and Add.1)

The PRESIDENT: The Council will now continue with the examination of conditions in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

As agreed at our meeting yesterday, we will begin hearing petitioners whose requests for a hearing are contained in documents T/PET.10/732 to 734 and 736 to 739. I suggest that the Council hear today the following petitioners:

Mr. Glenn Alcalay, National Committee for Radiation Victims; Mr. Roger Clark, Vice-President, International League for Human Rights; Mr. Charles Scheiner, National Mobilization for Survival; and Ibedul Gibbons, High Chief, Governor of Koror.

If we have time towards the end of the morning, and there are other petitioners present who would like to deliver their petitions today, I propose that we take them as well.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Alcalay, Mr. Clark, Mr. Scheiner and Mr. Gibbons took places at the petitioners' table.

The PRESIDENT: I call first on Mr. Glenn Alcalay of the National Committee for Radiation Victims, whose request for a hearing appears in document T/PET.10/732.

Mr. ALCALAY: I am grateful once again to the Trusteeship Council for the opportunity to appear before you today on the question of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the last remaining Territory under the United Nations Trusteeship System.

We are all familiar with the infamous remark made by Henry Kissinger in reference to Micronesia. Responding to a question in 1969 concerning the rights of eminent domain in the Trust Territory, Kissinger abruptly stated: "There are only 90,000 people out there. Who gives a damn?"

(Mr. Alcalay)

Recently, Dan Quayle, the American Vice-President, provided an updated version of the same sentiment towards the people of the Pacific. While in American Samoa last month, Quayle told the gathered guests in Pago Pago:

"You all look like happy campers to me. Happy campers you are, happy campers you have been, and, as far as I am concerned, happy campers you will always be."

I wonder just how Peter Coleman, the former Trust Territory High Commissioner from Samoa, must have felt at that moment listening to the latest version of the Kissinger quote by an American Vice-President?

I recite the words of my Vice-President in American Samoa recently not merely to bring a chuckle of laughter into the Council's chamber this morning, but rather to illustrate that, two decades later, the policy and attitude of Washington towards the people of the Pacific remains virtually unchanged.

This year marks the tenth year that I have appeared before this robust body to discuss the situation in the Trust Territory, and although some progress has taken place over the past ten years, fundamental issues - such as economic self-sufficiency, basic health care, adequate housing and a basic infrastructure with which to run a government effectively - are still woefully inadequate following 41 years of Trusteeship under the Administering Authority.

To set the current situation in the Trust Territory into a wider context, I cite an article from last week's New York Times concerning an unsuccessful launch of an unarmed Midgetman missile from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California that was intended to splash down in the so-called "catcher's mitt" lagoon of Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands, 4,200 miles away. It has been estimated that more than two billion dollars' worth of ultra-sophisticated missile launching and

(Mr. Alcalay)

tracking radars and other Pentagon paraphernalia are kept at Kwajalein. I mention this because I can think of no more concrete way of describing just exactly what the real priorities of the Administering Authority have been over the last four decades in the Trust Territory.

(Mr. Alcalay)

Following 66 - announced - atomic and hydrogen bomb experiments at Bikini and Enewetak, it is accurate to say that we still do not have a clear understanding of the full extent of radiation-induced damage, both to human health and to the fragile marine ecosystems found in the Marshalls. The recently created Nuclear Claims Tribunal in the Marshall Islands is currently coming to grips with that fact, and I truly sympathize with those Tribunal judges who must make the Herculean decision about what constitutes a radiation-related claim and what does not.

And, as the Administering Authority attempts to slip out the back door of its responsibilities to the people of Micronesia by stating that all matters of health and welfare are "internal affairs" of the respective Micronesian entities under the provisions of the Compact agreements, let us not forget the people of Rongelap, who have been forced to abandon their ancestral islands. Having received approximately one half of a lethal dose of radiation from the radioactive fallout from the 1954 "Bravo" thermonuclear explosion, I cannot think of any other group of human beings in the nuclear age who have suffered more from the terrible consequences of nuclear weapons. Since their evacuation to Mejato Island in the Kwajalein Atoll complex in the summer of 1985, the people of Rongelap have been completely uprooted, and the fragile social fabric of Rongelap is in danger of being further eroded as many people choose to live on Ebeye Island - itself a biological time-bomb - instead of at Mejato. The best estimates for a possible rehabilitation of Rongelap - provided the United States Congress releases the funds for a phase-II study and also an eventual clean-up - are three to four years away, at best.

It should be noted that the Senator from Utirik, Hiroshi Yamamura, has succeeded in having the Nitajela - or Parliament - endorse a resolution calling for an independent radiological survey of Utirik Atoll, because of the many ongoing concerns about adverse health effects on that atoll.

(Mr. Alcalay)

Undoubtedly, the Council has heard of the proposal to store solid waste from the United States mainland in the Marshall Islands. Senator Tony DeBrum, a leading critic of the plan, stated recently in an interview with the Christian Science Monitor, published on 4 May 1989, that

"The President [of the Marshall Islands] seems to think that any project to raise money justifies itself. There's some support within the Cabinet and Parliament. But the people as a whole will not support the project if it's explained to them. They are smart. We have had to suffer the brunt of nuclear testing. We have had enough of American garbage here".

And then there is the epidemic problem of youth suicide in the Marshalls and throughout the Trust Territory. I can vividly recall my Peace Corps experience in the mid-1970s on Utirik Atoll when two young Utirik men were brought back in wooden coffins to be buried on Utirik after having committed suicide while drunk on Majuro. Nearly all social scientists who have worked in the Trust Territory agree that suicide was relatively unknown prior to the period of United States rule in Micronesia. Professor Donald Rubinstein, now of the University of Guam, following on the admirable work of Father Francis Hezel of Truk, has thoroughly documented this very sad manifestation of Micronesian cultures in serious trouble.

I turn now to Palau. If there is any doubt about what the current Compact impasse translates into from a Pentagon perspective, the testimony of Admiral William Crowe - the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff - leaves little room for speculation. While testifying at a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on 9 March 1988, Crowe said that Palau would be "one of the first or priority areas that we would have to look at" in the event the Philippine bases are not renegotiated beyond the 1991 expiration date. Admiral Crowe went on to say

(Mr. Alcalay)

that "We are very interested" in proceeding with the military arrangements with Palau, and he added, "We would like to see it" - that is, the Compact - "approved and march forward".

Just yesterday in this Chamber we heard the eloquent statement by Palau's Vice-President Nakamura, as he detailed his great concerns stemming from the International Power Systems Company (IPSECO) power plant scandal that has practically caused the Palauan economy to become bankrupt, as well as the increase in drug abuse and drug trafficking now rampant in Palau. According to the Vice-President, it is unfair to terminate the trusteeship until the Administering Authority has met all of its obligations under the United Nations Charter. When one compares how economically vibrant Palau was under the Japanese administration with the current situation in Palau, one must ask some very hard questions about the intent over four decades by the Administering Authority. Surely, if Palau could be a net economic exporter in the 1930s and 1940s, the current economic malaise must be the result of political decisions made by the Administering Authority.

In fact, when we examine United States policy in the Trust Territory, which was outlined in great detail in the so-called Solomon report of 1963, we find that Micronesia was never meant to be developed economically but, rather, economic dependency was actually the modus operandi of the Administering Authority. In a very real sense, then, we can say that the Administering Authority's policy of creating economic dependency was intended to create a great asymmetry between the eventual negotiating partners at the time of the termination of the trusteeship. I am certain that Anthony Solomin - the author of the infamous Solomon report - would be delighted to learn that his blueprint for incorporating the islands of

(Mr. Alcalay)

Micronesia into the United States strategic game plan across the vast reaches of the central Pacific was a smashing success. In this high-stakes game of territorial aggrandizement, the Administering Authority has left nothing to chance.

Similarly, in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, many of the inhabitants are learning the painful lesson that what may have been negotiated in 1976 bears little resemblance to the realities of 1989. As the delegation from Palau has asked that the trusteeship not be terminated until the Administering Authority lives up to its obligations, we are hearing the very same message from the members of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands delegation.

In conclusion, when I first appeared before the Council in 1979, my focus was limited primarily to the ongoing radiation-related problems in the Marshall Islands. In the 10 years' duration since, I have come to see the much wider ramifications associated with 41 years of rule by the Administering Authority. When one looks at the suicide epidemic among Micronesian males, alongside the tragic deaths of Palau's first two elected Presidents and the murder of Bings Bedor, one notes an ugly pattern of Micronesian cultures run amok. Indeed, as a social scientist, I can say that the prognosis for Micronesian societies looks rather bleak. I sincerely hope that my analysis will prove to be overstated, but I honestly do not think so.

Finally, I request that the Trusteeship Council honour the desires of our Micronesian friends in this Chamber by delaying final termination of the trusteeship until such time as the Administering Authority has faithfully lived up to its obligations under the United Nations Charter.

The PRESIDENT: I propose that members of the Council should have an opportunity to ask questions of petitioners when we have heard the four petitioners that I have named this morning. I therefore ask Mr. Alcalay if he would mind remaining with us while the Council hears the next three petitioners.

I now call on Mr. Roger Clark of the International League for Human Rights.

Mr. CLARK: I appreciate this opportunity to appear before the Council on behalf of the International League for Human Rights, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

This March, the Council met in special session and agreed to send a visiting mission to one part of the Territory - Palau - but not to the other three entities. Seeking information on Palau is a worthy endeavour; ignoring the other entities is not. As we have noted in previous interventions, the Trusteeship Agreement is still in force in the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands. The Administering Authority seems determined not to report on those parts of the Territory. We should have thought that this Council might generate just sufficient shame about that to insist on seeking its own information.

In the League's petition last year we referred to the serious breakdown in the rule of law in Palau which had occurred in the events surrounding the illegal efforts to amend the nuclear control provisions of the Palau Constitution in August of 1987. Those events have been carefully documented in the report by the International Commission of Jurists, entitled "Palau: A Challenge to the Rule of Law in Micronesia". We are relieved to note that the brave plaintiffs who challenged the 1987 referendum in the Palau courts were ultimately able to prosecute their proceedings through the trial and appellate stages without further bloodshed. Two Palauan organizations whose membership encompasses those plaintiffs

(Mr. Clark)

have indeed been nominated by a large group of organizations and individuals for the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize. As we predicted, the Appellate Division of the Palau Supreme Court agreed with the trial judge that the constitutional amendment was "null, void and of no effect" and that the Compact had once again not been approved, although the Appellate Division reached its decision on somewhat narrower grounds than might have been expected.

Since the Court's decision, the people of Palau have continued on their tortuous quest for a consensus about their future. On 13 January 1989, a working group of members of the Palauan executive and legislative branches which had been mandated to draft a unified position on the Compact of Free Association submitted a position paper to the President and the legislature. Subsequently, the legislature created a Commission on Future Palau/United States Relations.

The working group's January paper was no doubt made available to the Visiting Mission and will be the subject of some comment as this session develops. I draw your attention, however, to one aspect of that document. It reads:

"What is more, the international trusteeship obligations of the United States towards Palau to prepare Palau to achieve self-government or independence as may be appropriate to circumstances of the people of Palau fell far short of expectations and will now have to be accommodated under the terms of reference of the Compact of Free Association. In that regard, it is the Palau consensus that any reconciliation of any possible conflict or inconsistency between the Palau Constitution and the Compact with the United States and any proposal to accommodate changes by effecting amendments to the Palau Constitution will not be considered."

(Mr. Clark)

The first sentence I have quoted is apparently a reference to the embarrassing lack of infrastructure and economic development in Palau, a matter to which numerous members of this Council have referred since at least the early 1960s. In this respect, the writers of the unified position seem to agree that the Administering Authority has fallen short in its efforts to carry out its trust.

Ironically, perhaps, the second sentence I have quoted suggests that one American export - a written constitution - has achieved considerable acceptance as a powerful part of the fundamental understanding of the people of Palau.

The drafters of written constitutions have a pesky habit of doing what the drafters of the United States and Palauan Constitutions have done - making them difficult to amend in such a way as to entrench some of the original understandings upon which the body politic is organized. In the case of Palau, part of those understandings had to do with the land and with matters nuclear. In turn, these understandings relate to the Palauan view of the earth and the sea - of the environment. By making it difficult to alter such fundamental positions by the constitutional amendment process, the founders gave protection to future citizens - even a minority of them - against some moves that a subsequent executive, legislature, and even a simple majority of the people in referendum might wish to make. The fundamentals of the United States Constitution, adopted in the aftermath of one of the world's first exercises in self-determination, made comparable arrangements, although the precise details of change are different. Further difficult-to-change fundamentals were established in the United States in the 1860s following one of the world's bloodiest of civil wars.

One might reasonably expect that a nation with an experience like that of the United States would be sympathetic to what the Palauans have been groping for with their own constitution. Yet the view still seems to abound in Washington that the

(Mr. Clark)

Palauan instrument is a mere inconvenience to be slid around. Previous Palauan executives have sometimes espoused a similar view. The Palauan consensus document indicates that this is no longer the way it is viewed in the Western Pacific. The constitutional provisions are to be taken as a given.

Where does that leave us? The Commission on Future Relations is given broad power to examine possible parameters for a revised free association arrangement with the United States. The United States hints that the present deal is pretty much on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. We would submit that the United Nations Charter and the Assembly's resolutions on decolonization provide at least the basis for an obligation on the part of the United States to bargain in good faith with the Palauans.

Moreover, if Palau does not want nuclear material or the use of its land for military purposes - "contingent" or actual military purposes - the Charter and general international law give Palau that right. Neither the Charter nor the Trusteeship Agreement binds the Palauans in permanent servitude to some view of security as seen by the Administering Authority.

In view of its inadequacies during the trusteeship period, the United States has a legal and a moral obligation to assist Palau in the next stage of its development - even if Palau sees its future security in terms that do not include the placement of personnel and hardware that would be most favoured in Washington.

The PRESIDENT: I now call on Mr. Charles Scheiner of the National Mobilization for Survival.

Mr. SCHEINER: I am speaking today on behalf of the National Mobilization for Survival, a 12-year-old organization which includes about 150 local peace and justice groups throughout the United States, and for the War Resisters International, a 60-year-old international pacifist organization with sections in more than 20 countries. I am also involved with the international Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific movement. The views I will express are shared by those groups and by many other people throughout the world concerned with issues of justice, peace and self-determination.

I have closely followed the Pacific Island Trust Territory for several years. Although I have attended previous Trusteeship Council meetings, I have never before presented a petition, primarily because the issues we are concerned with were ably presented by such petitioners as the Micronesia Coalition and the United Methodist Office at the United Nations. Since neither of those groups is presenting testimony at this session, I felt that it was important to speak.

Yesterday the Ambassador from the People's Republic of China spoke of the increasing role of the United Nations in supporting human rights and settling international disputes. I join with him in applauding the work of the Secretary-General and others in resolving some very difficult crises, and I join with the Governments represented here in welcoming China's participation in the Trusteeship Council.

It is lamentable that the United Nations dramatic and effective recent record is not matched by the Trusteeship Council. As the United Nations provides invaluable services in the Middle East, South-West Asia and southern Africa, it has sadly neglected the Pacific. The disgraceful record of the United States

(Mr. Scheiner)

Government in the Trust Territory has never been seriously reviewed or criticized by this Council.

Under the Trusteeship Agreement, the Council is charged with overseeing the administration of the Trust Territory by the United States, which is responsible for the political and economic development of the Territory, leading to eventual self-government. Unfortunately, the Trusteeship Council's oversight has been primarily in the "disregarding" rather than the "supervising" sense of the word. I hope that recent changes in international relations, the new self-confidence of the United Nations and your own consciences will change that as the last Trust Territory in the world approaches dissolution.

For 42 years the United States has extracted political and military advantages from the Territory. Under the proposed Compact of Free Association for Palau, and under the Compacts and Commonwealth agreements now in effect for the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Northern Mariana Islands, this situation will continue well into the twenty-first century.

For 42 years the United States has sorely neglected the economic development of the Territory. It would appear that the United States has pursued a deliberate policy to create economic dependency on the United States dole, so that the people of the Territory would have little choice but to accede to United States demands. As Vice-President Kuniwo Nakamura told you yesterday, the Republic of Palau sorely needs a new hospital, drug prevention assistance, support for education and health care and major infrastructure improvements. Instead, Palau is saddled with a debt of \$3,000 per person for an overpriced power plant they do not need and which should never have been built. In the Vice-President's words, "fundamental needs have not been met by the Trustee" (T/PV.1661, p. 21).

(Mr. Scheiner)

For 42 years the United States has been responsible for fostering the political development of the people of Micronesia. This responsibility has, on the surface, been met. Palau probably has more governmental officials per capita and has held more elections over the past decade than any other country on the planet. But much of the democracy is a sham - a facade which hides major infringements on on Palauans' control over their own lives.

Palau's people overwhelmingly adopted their Constitution nearly 10 years ago, but it has never been acceptable to the Administering Authority. After a few years of trying to overturn the Constitution, the United States has tried to run around it. Several versions of the Compact of Free Association - all contradicting Constitutional provisions regarding land use and nuclear materials - have been imposed on the people of Palau. Although Palauans have rejected these Compacts in six national referenda, they have been subjected to repeated violence, harassment and pressure to conform with United States wishes.

For the past three years the United States has insisted that the January 1986 version of the Compact of Free Association is not negotiable. Although this Compact clearly violates Palau's Constitutional ban on nuclear weapons, various Palauan and American officials have insisted that it does not, often claiming that it was approved by the Palauan people, even though it has never achieved the requisite 75 per cent vote. Fortunately, although sometimes belatedly and at great human cost, Palau's courts have upheld their Constitution and invalidated Compact approval every time. But the pressure continues to escalate.

Following President Salii's tragic suicide and last year's Palauan elections, a new mood exists in Palau. Formerly disparate Palauan factions are united in refusing to amend their Constitution to accommodate the wishes of the United States. Instead, Palau's government is negotiating with Washington to extract as

(Mr. Scheiner)

much economic assistance as possible on top of what is already included in the Compact. If they get a good enough offer, they feel that they can persuade 75 per cent of Palau's voters to support the Compact, ending the long and painful stalemate and putting the best face on an embarrassing and intolerable situation that has dragged on for half a generation.

Palau's government learned the art of extortion from the United States. While the new Koror administration - in contrast with the previous one - appears to give priority to the economic interests of the Palauan people, it would sacrifice their self-respect, autonomy and, most importantly, control over their land for a few pieces of silver.

Much of the discussion of conflicts between the Compact and the Constitution has focused on the nuclear issue. But Palau's Constitutional framers had even more important concerns. Although they allowed the nuclear materials ban to be overridden by three-fourths of the voters, they provided no such exception to article XIII, section 7, which states that the power of eminent domain "shall not be used for the benefit of a foreign entity". In section 8 of article XIII, the Constitution states that "Only citizens of Palau and corporations wholly owned by citizens of Palau may acquire title to land or waters in Palau".

If the Palauan government and the United Nations Trusteeship Council allow the proposed Compact to come into effect, you will be planting a time bomb in the Republic. Sooner or later, the United States military's thirst for land will come into conflict with the Constitution of Palau. The Compact's article II, section 322 (b) states that when the United States Government covets any new defence site it "shall inform the Government of Palau, which shall make the designated site available to the Government of the United States". If the trusteeship has been

(Mr. Scheiner)

terminated when the confrontation occurs, there will be no authority to protect the Palauan people from a country whose armed forces are 200 times as large as Palau's entire population.

United States assertions that the Pentagon has no current military designs on Palau's lands have a hollow ring. My country is beginning to understand that its destiny lies with the nations around and within the Pacific Ocean. As increasing nationalism and anti-militarism jeopardizes American bases in the Philippines, Japan and Korea, the Pentagon will desire Micronesia as a convenient, strategic and achievable substitute. The United States Government is either unwilling or unable to comprehend the possibilities for peace raised by the new thinking in Moscow; they are planning PACEX - the largest peacetime military exercise in history for the northern Pacific this September.

I do not presume to tell the people of Palau what to do. Acceptance of the Compact, with additional dollars, may indeed be their best choice at this time. But they cannot make that choice freely. Every time they reject the Compact, it comes around again. Defenders of Palau's Constitution must feel like Sisyphus, condemned to repeat the same unsuccessful struggle for eternity. Unless the Trusteeship Council suddenly becomes responsible, most Palauans can see no escape from their perpetual burden. Even the Nobel Peace Prize will be little compensation.

In spite of this, there are Palauans who still try to preserve their scarce, precious lands after years of pressure from corrupt Palauan politicians and an avaricious Administering Authority that sees only its own strategic desires. Some of them will speak to you today and tomorrow. Please listen closely to what they have to say.

(Mr. Scheiner)

I have not seen the report of last month's Visiting Mission to Palau. I do not know if the Trusteeship Council is distressed by the 10 years of relentless pressure exerted by the United States Government against the brave and beautiful Palauan people. I do not know whether the Council shares my sorrow at the apparently imminent success of that strategy, or at the erosion of the Palauan people's ability to outlast the United States and insist on an uncoerced choice of their political status.

But I do know that if the Compact does take effect and the Trusteeship is dissolved, it will be a sad day for the inalienable right of peoples to determine their own future. It will be a signal to the United States military that, if they push long enough and hard enough, they can get whatever they desire. It will be a signal to the people of the world that the Strategic Trusteeship was a fraud, a cosmetic cover which the Administering Authority was able to use to assemble a perpetual neo-colonial relationship. And it will be a signal to the people of Micronesia that the international community has written them off as being too small and too remote to be worried about.

If the Council does not want to send this signal, there are several specific steps that it can take. First, it can rescind General Assembly resolution 2186 (LIII), which puts pressure on the people of Palau to accept the 1986 version of the Compact as their only political status option, and let the people of Palau have time and flexibility to determine their own future. Secondly, the Council can insist that the Administering Authority meet its economic responsibilities to Palau, both for long-term sustainable and self-sufficient development, and for day-to-day operating expenditure. Thirdly, it can encourage development and other economic assistance to Palau from the United Nations and other sources not controlled by the United States. Fourthly, when economic self-sufficiency is in

(Mr. Scheiner)

sight, and only then, the Council can provide the supervision and the framework for Palau to determine its future political status in a pressure-free environment. It can then ensure that all options are put forward, including independence, free association, and commonwealth status, and that the Palauan people are involved in developing any proposals put before them. Finally, the Council should not begin to terminate the Trusteeship until the previous steps have been accomplished.

Last year, the people of the Northern Marianas Islands informed the Council that the United States was not respecting their rights under the Commonwealth, and they are attending the Council session again this year. Who will listen to them next year if the Council dissolves the Trusteeship and allows the Compact to come into effect in Palau? Who will listen to the Palauans when the United States military demands lands that they do not want to surrender?

Under the Trusteeship, both the United States and the United Nations have specific, interrelated responsibilities. The United States has fallen far short of meeting its obligations. I urge the Trusteeship Council to validate the confidence expressed by the representative of China, and to discharge its responsibilities towards the people of Palau.

The PRESIDENT: I call now on Ibedul Yutaka Gibbons, High Chief and Governor of Koror, to deliver his petition.

Mr. GIBBONS: It is indeed a privilege and honour to to address the Trusteeship Council on behalf of the traditional leadership of Palau. With me today are Mr. John O. Ngiraked, Acting High Chief Reklai and former Minister of State; Mr. Alan Seid, Member of the Palau National Congress representing the State of Koror; and Mr. Francisco Ngirailemesang, my special assistant.

(Mr. Gibbons)

Sir, in extending to you my warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of the Trusteeship Council, I am confident that under your able leadership in carrying out the responsibilities of this Council Palau will receive special attention, as it is the last remaining Trust Territory in the world.

First of all, let me say that the relationship which has evolved between Palau and the United States under the United Nations Trusteeship system is a unique and special one. Throughout the last 41 years of its Trusteeship, Palau has grown to understand and adopt new means of livelihood, and, through other changes that time has wrought, it has established a democratic system of constitutional government that has withstood the test of time.

Let us take a close look at the last 10 years of the negotiations relating to the Compact of Free Association and the many referendums intended to decide our future political status and thus to terminate the Trusteeship Agreement. It seems apparent that, in anticipation of the implementation of the Compact as far back as 1981, Palau's basic infrastructure needs have been left aside. In this context, I would like to echo the comments made by the Vice-President of Palau yesterday on the inadequate provision being made to meet the Territory's basic infrastructure needs.

There are two basic ingredients of a successful democratic society: a functioning political system, and a sound economy to support that system. As we all know, one key element in economic development is a reliable source of power generation. Palau has incurred large debts in order to provide power. We seek the assistance of the Administering Authority and this Council in resolving this financial obligation, which will restore Palau's international financial credibility and integrity.

(Mr. Gibbons)

One of the primary objectives of the Trusteeship Agreement is the economic advancement of Palau. I believe it would be a very significant step towards meeting that objective, if Palau were to be recognized by and become eligible for collaboration with international financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and the like. We request the United States and the Council to exert their influence on behalf of Palau in this regard.

Palau's economic growth is highly dependent on foreign investments. We would like to see the United States play a more active role in this regard and take the initiative of promoting American investment in Palau.

I would request the Administering Authority to assist Palau to expand and improve its airport facilities to accommodate larger aircraft in line with the promotion of tourism, which is our primary industry. In a related area, we seek the assistance of the Administering Authority and the Council, so that Palau can negotiate and enter into agreements relating to air traffic routes between Palau and other international destinations.

Another matter of concern that I wish to share with the Council is the problem we constantly face from illegal fishing by other countries in our waters. We request the Administering Authority and the Council to assist Palau in providing surveillance and security to protect the Territory's resources.

The matters that I have brought to the Council's attention today along with similar matters raised by representatives of Palau over the years all sum up the purpose of my presence here, which is to share these views with the hope of obtaining adequate assistance so that Palau can become less dependent on financial grants and ultimately attain economic self-sufficiency and political stability.

(Mr. Gibbons)

The Compact of Free Association between Palau and the United States has become a sensational issue which has captured the attention of the international community. The architects of this unique concept had a great vision: a vision that would grant the people of Palau their rightful sovereignty and heritage; a vision that would provide us with a system of democracy and liberty; a vision that would provide us with the means for greater prosperity; a vision that would provide the United States with defence rights in Palau in its endeavour to promote and achieve world peace. That vision would provide Palau with the opportunity to contribute its part towards those common goals. Whilst it is a vision with great intentions, it is a vision created by human beings and as such is subject to changing with the times.

In fulfilling its obligations under the Compact, Palau recognizes the United States requirement for defence sites and will do its best to make specific sites available for such use. In so doing we ask the United States no less and no more than fair compensation for our lands. While on the issue of land, I also ask the United States to support the expeditious return of public lands to their rightful owners through technical assistance. Without clarification of the titles of ownership, I will not be able to assure the Administering Authority of smooth acquisition of lands for defence sites. The attachment of our livelihood to our land gives that land more than just commercial value: It contains our tradition; it provides continuity to our culture and our daily lives.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to state our appreciation of the important role the Trusteeship Council has played over nearly half a century. In these final hours, as the Council addresses the last remaining Trust Territory, the Republic of Palau, I seek the Council's special attention in helping Palau take the next important step in the process of becoming a full-fledged member of the world community.

(Mr. Gibbons)

I now turn to the United States, the Administering Authority, in a spirit of genuine friendship. We have grown together in many respects, combining our different cultures and giving birth to new understanding between a small country and a noble and mighty nation. In that context, I request a new and fresh outlook with regard to the Compact of Free Association by the leaders both of the United States and of Palau, in the spirit of rectifying any oversights that may have occurred in the past decade.

Over 200 years ago a genuine friendship was born between Great Britain and Palau as a result of Captain Wilson's unfortunate shipwreck in the islands of Palau. Recently I paid my respects at the grave of Lebuu, the son of Ibedul, who was taken to England. As I reminisce I cannot help considering it a good omen that in these final days of the Trusteeship Council the representative of the United Kingdom should have been elected as President of the Council and that once again the cherished friendship between our countries should have been renewed. That friendship was born out of mutual needs and respect for one another, not based on contracts and wheeling and dealing.

In parting I wish to leave behind me that concept of friendship and association based on mutual needs, respect and trust. I hope members will find it in their hearts to assist my young country in its quest to achieve a place in the world community. May the relationship between Palau and the United States light a fire that will shine forevermore.

The PRESIDENT: It appears that no member of the Council wishes to put questions to any of the petitioners.

I thank the petitioners for being with us today and for delivering their petitions.

(The President)

We have had a request for a further petitioner to be heard this morning, and I propose that we should hear him now.

I therefore call upon Mr. José R. Lifoifoi, who will speak on behalf of Mr. Benigno R. Fitiaf of the Northern Mariana Islands Task Force on the Termination of the Trusteeship, whose request for a hearing appears in document T/PET.10/734.

Mr. LIFOIFOI: Unlike last year, our appearance today will be brief. I shall mention first that we are a Commission set up by law to represent the people of the Northern Mariana Islands before the Trusteeship Council.

We ask the Council to take note of our testimony of last year, a copy of which I have appended to my written text. We shall not repeat what we said, but wish to say that nothing has changed. The United States is attempting to create the "Colony", not the Commonwealth, of the Northern Mariana Islands. In section 103 of our Covenant we were promised self-government on local and internal matters; the United States has authority over foreign affairs and defence.

We are being given not self-government but colonial status, under which the United States Government controls local and internal matters, in violation of Article 76 of the United Nations Charter, article 6 of the Trusteeship Agreement and section 103 of our Covenant. As the Council is aware, our people have no vote in the Government of the United States. Therefore, any law governing the internal affairs of the Northern Marianas is being enacted without any democratic representation at all.

None of the people enacting or enforcing laws are elected or appointed by the people of the Northern Marianas or their elected representatives. That is not the relationship contemplated by the United Nations Charter, the Trusteeship Agreement or the Covenant. Terminating the Trust by creating a colony is not permitted.

(Mr. Lifoifoi)

The United States has only two choices: It must grant us an equal vote in the House and Senate of the United States, and a vote for United States President, or it must refrain from legislating on local and internal matters. That is required by the Charter. The United States cannot make the Northern Mariana Islands into a Non-Self-Governing Territory.

Unfortunately, our message of last year on this subject fell on deaf ears. In its report to the Security Council, the Trusteeship Council did not mention our serious problems. We were totally ignored. We hope the Trusteeship Council will not abandon us until democracy and self-government are realized.

(Mr. Lifoifoi)

We request the Council not to let the Trusteeship terminate by default. We request a clear statement that the Trusteeship is not and cannot be terminated until the requirements of Article 76 of the Charter are complied with. We wish to remind the Council that the people of the Northern Marianas will be voting this year on whether to reject the Covenant. This is as important a decision as the one we took 10 years ago. Our people are committed to the cause of democracy and self-government and believe our cause is just and right, and we hope that the Trusteeship Council will not ignore us in this year's report.

The PRESIDENT: Does any member of the Council wish to put a question to the petitioner?

Mr. BEREZOVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): I have a question to ask, not of the petitioners, but of you, Mr. President. Given the importance of the statements made today by the petitioners, could copies be provided to Council members so that we could give those statements more detailed consideration in connection with our future work at this session of the Trusteeship Council?

The PRESIDENT: The Secretariat informs me that copies of the text in English will be provided this afternoon.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.