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FOURTH INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

**Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Fourth
International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism:
pursuing goals and addressing needs of
the Non-Self-Governing Territories**

**Caracas, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
14 to 16 May 2024**

STATEMENT BY

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(GUAM)

LOURDES A. LEON GUERRERO
GOVERNOR



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LT. GOVERNOR

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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF GUAM

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Special Committee on Decolonization, United Nations
May 14, 2024

Håfa Adai, Your Excellency Madam Chair and Honorable members of the Committee.

My name is Melvin Won Pat-Borja. I am the Executive Director of the Commission on Decolonization. I come before you today to deliver the following testimony on behalf of the Honorable Lourdes A. Leon Guerrero, the Governor of Guam. Thank you for this opportunity to provide an update on Guam's recent progress and ongoing challenges in our pursuit of Self-determination and decolonization.

Guam has stood before this Committee over the course of 40 years to share Guam's current predicament, assert our right of Self-determination, and seek this Committee's assistance in rectifying Guam's colonial status through the attainment of a full measure of self-governance. Guam, as a colony of the United States and one of the seventeen remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories (NSGT) in the world, is in a compromised position amidst international tensions and at the frontlines of climate change impact. Despite the formidable forces in front of us, the people of Guam have not been passive bystanders but active participants advocating for the rights and interests of our people.

In recent years, we have experienced increased engagement with the Bureau, members of this Committee, and our administering Power, for which we are grateful. Yet, we cannot be satisfied with the status quo. We urge this Committee to help create a genuine impetus for change. While the task is daunting, my administration and island remain committed and ask you to join us in our movement toward full self-governance and sovereignty. I will now endeavor to outline the actionable steps that can be taken by this Committee to help Guam on our journey.

Recognition of International Obligations by our Administering Power

As previously reported to this Committee, Guam is in the midst of another period of rapid and expanded U.S. militarization of its lands and waters. The proposed construction of several installations via the Enhanced Integrated Air and Missile Defense System (EIAMDS) across Guam and the ongoing transfer of U.S. Marines and their dependents from Okinawa to Guam are causes for concern. In an era of geopolitical tensions, Guam and its people have been imposed upon with the burden of facing potential conflict from our administering Powers' adversaries alongside various environmental and cultural impacts associated with the increased military presence on our island.

Our administering Power has consistently cited their sovereign right to conduct military activities in Guam and has insisted that our local government is a legitimate partner in these actions. However, so long as our island remains an NSGT, our relationship will always be based on consultation and not consent. This is not an equitable arrangement; the only legitimate solution is a full measure of self-government. Under any internationally recognized option for political status, Guam would be empowered with dignified engagement as equals and partners. Instead, we cannot negotiate; we are merely informed of proposed actions and forced to mitigate the impacts on our island and our people.

In recent years, we have experienced greater communication and collaboration with the U.S. federal government via the U.S. Permanent Mission in the United Nations. Inviting Guam to join this space of communication and collaboration between the Bureau and USUN has been mutually beneficial. We entreat this Committee to maintain the momentum my administration has been fostering with our administering Power to create a clear path forward for Guam to obtain a full measure of self-governance.

Support for a United Nations Visiting Mission to Guam

Spanning back to 2006, Guam has consistently requested a UN Visiting Mission to provide an opportunity for the Committee to ascertain the progress Guam has made and the obstacles it faces hindering the achievement of self-governance. We recognize that in our pursuit of a visiting mission, the primary obstacle has been the approval of our administering Power. However, as of March 2023, the United States Mission to the United Nations (USUN) confirmed its support for a visiting mission. Guam's ongoing request was also recognized in official correspondence between the USUN and Chairwoman Rambally. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Biden Administration, Her Excellency Chairwoman Rambally, and the Bureau; with your support, Guam is one step closer to achieving a goal we have pursued for almost two decades.

Conducting a visiting mission in Guam provides a unique opportunity for this Committee and our administering Power to obtain a deeper level of understanding of the obstacles we currently face as a non-sovereign and non-fully self-governing entity. Doing so will also allow the Committee to "make suggestions and recommendations on the progress and extent of the implementation of the Declaration," as stated by UN Resolution 1654, Article 4. Although we acknowledge that funding remains a hindrance to action, this cannot impede the fulfillment of a decades-old obligation by this body and our administering Power. I urge all administering Powers to remember the sacred trust placed upon them to fulfill such requests from their respective NSGTs and to provide the necessary means to fulfill this obligation. Therefore, I ask this Committee for an immediate commitment to support and allocate funding for a visiting mission to Guam.

Recognition of *Giha Mo'na: A Self-Determination Study for Guåhan* Resolution on Guam

My administration recognizes that education is crucial to prepare the people of Guam for our eventual shift to a fully self-governing political status. Despite the challenges to our political status plebiscite, the Commission on Decolonization has persevered with its public information program. The Commission on Decolonization has sustained the most comprehensive and aggressive education campaign in the last decade, and local awareness and interest are higher than they have been in years.

At the foundation of Guam's public information program is *Giha Mo'na: A Self-Determination Study for Guåhan*. This first-of-its-kind comprehensive academic study examines Guam's current levels of self-governance. It explores what our future may look like under each of the three political status options. *Giha Mo'na* is more than an academic exercise - it is the manifestation of our desire to lead the conversation in the true spirit of decolonization and a full measure of self-government.

In 2022, I requested that the study be recognized in the annual resolution for Guam at the Caribbean Regional Seminar, the C-24 Regular Session, and the Fourth Committee Regular Session. Furthermore, physical copies were hand-delivered to members of the Bureau. Despite these attempts, Guam's annual resolution has failed to formally acknowledge the study. Again, we ask this Committee to support the official recognition of *Giha Mo'na* within Guam's annual resolution.

A direct link to Giha Mo'na: A Self-Determination Study for Guåhan for dissemination to this Committee can be found here:

https://decol.guam.gov/sites/default/files/giha_mona_a_self-determination_study_for_guahan_full_study.pdf

Support for a Diplomacy Training Program

As an NSGT, Guam exists in a precarious space in which our ability to exercise diplomacy and engage in foreign relations is dependent upon the approval of our administering Power. While we desire more significant opportunities, we are reminded of the limitations of our inferior status. In recent years, the Government of Guam has taken it upon itself to exercise a higher level of Self-governance through engagement in regional forums such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the Micronesian Islands Forum (MIF). Guam is seeking associate membership in PIF to join the members in their collective effort to foster a Pacific region that is resilient and prosperous. I am happy to report that Guam will be hosting the 26th Micronesian Islands Forum on its shores from June 4th and 5th of this year. This opportunity will allow Guam and the MIF members to collaborate and strengthen our existing partnerships and commitments to the people of Micronesia.

In anticipation of a political status resolution, we recognize the need to foster the growth of skills and knowledge within the people of Guam so that we can adeptly navigate the international realm and advocate for our island's interests by building meaningful partnerships. I believe it is pertinent for members of this Committee and our administering Power to support a diplomacy training program for Guam and all NSGTs. It is my hope that the United States and all administering Powers are sincere in their commitment to end the scourge of colonialism around the world – and diplomacy training would be tangible and meaningful progress toward that end.

My petition to this committee and our administering Power for a diplomacy training program for Guam and the other NSGTs aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which call for global partnerships. I look forward to garnering support from the Committee and our administering Power to assist Guam in establishing a diplomacy training program. It will provide a needed avenue of advocacy and partnership via trained diplomats rooted in Guam and the other NSGTs.

Invitation to Host the Pacific Regional Seminar

Finally, I commend this Committee for your consistency in hosting the annual Regional Seminar and providing all NSGTs with an avenue for advocacy. Yet it is notable that fourteen years have passed since a seminar has been held in any of the seventeen remaining NSGTs. I ask this Committee to sincerely consider Guam as the next host for the Pacific Regional Seminar in 2025. Affording Guam the opportunity to be the third NSGT to do so will provide members of the Committee with a better understanding of the dynamics at play for our island and the region of Micronesia.

I sincerely thank this Committee and the Bureau for your continued support and efforts to fulfill the Declaration. I look forward to our continued collaboration in the years to come. Only through genuine partnership can we turn the tides and change the trajectory of history.