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FOURTH INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

**Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Fourth International Decade for the
Eradication of Colonialism: pathways to a sustainable future – advancing socioeconomic
and cultural development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories**

**Dili, Timor-Leste
21 to 23 May 2025**

**STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF
GUAM**

LOURDES A. LEON GUERRERO
GOVERNOR



JOSHUA F. TENORIO
LT. GOVERNOR

UFISINAN I MAGA'HÅGAN GUÅHAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF GUAM

Melvin Won Pat-Borja (Designee)
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Special Committee on Decolonization, United Nations
May 21, 2025

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 continues to stand before this Committee to share with you our island's current predicament, assert our people's endowed right of Self-determination, and to seek this Committee's assistance in rectifying Guam's antiquated colonial status through the achievement of a full measure of Self-government.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the signing of the Organic Act of Guam, which serves a proxy for a Guam constitution. While the Organic Act of Guam has provided for statutory U.S. citizenship and a civilian-led government, it remains a fact that it was a unilateral, non-democratic act by the U.S. Congress. Because the people of Guam had no participation in creating it and we did not vote on it, the Organic Act of Guam cannot be used to legitimize our ongoing colonization by the United States.

With the recent change in presidential leadership of our administering Power, the Government of Guam has taken note of their focus on territorial expansion for the purposes of national security. This is of great concern and we urge our administering Power to prioritize their obligation to usher political and social resolution for its existing territories, including Guam. We look forward to continuing work with our administering Power and this Committee to advance our island's quest for full Self-government.

Recommendations for Updates on the Question of Guam

My administration remains concerned and questions the removal of historical language within Guam's annual resolution. Our concerns were previously expressed to the Fourth Committee in a letter submitted on September 6, 2024, and in my statement delivered on October 7, 2024, during the 79th Annual Session. The excluded language recognizes "that the most acute threat to the legitimate exercise of the decolonization of Guam was the incessant militarization of the island by its administering Power."¹ and has been included within Guam's resolution since 2016. The removal of this language within Guam's annual resolution last year is of great concern to my administration as our island is in the midst of a period of rampant U.S. military expansion.

¹ United Nations General Assembly (2016). *Question on Guam*. A/RES/78/92.

My administration has and will continue to be a cooperative actor in military activities conducted in Guam's lands and waters by our administering power with an aim towards mutually beneficial collaborations. However, military activities on Guam are effectuated through our inferior political status and the terms of our relationship are based on consultation and not consent. Activities involved with this current period of military buildup on Guam include the ongoing transfer of U.S. Marines and their dependents from Okinawa, the start of a decade-long program of air- and land-based missile tests, and the pending installation of a 360-degree missile defense system across our island. The United States Congress authorized the funding of the missile defense system without appropriate collaboration with the people of Guam, which is indicative of the inequitable nature of Guam's political status.

The prioritization of national security interests posited by our administering Power on Guam should not be at the expense and degradation of our island's natural resources, perpetuation and preservation of our indigenous culture, and human security. As our administering Power exponentially increases the value of its military use of our island, our people are becoming more entrenched into a deepening dependency on economic factors related to military development. This is in stark contrast to our administering Power's obligation to assist our island towards avenues of sustainable development in preparation for achieving a full measure of Self-government.

I would like to remind the members of this esteemed Committee that a joint letter sent by three Special Rapporteurs to our administering Power in 2021 stated that the "military build-up directly impairs the ability of the indigenous Chamorro to Self-govern and threatens to cause additional and irreparable harm to the land and sea environments on and around Guam."² This reference has been utilized in Guam's annual resolution since 2021, and I entreat this Committee to reinstate this critical language, referencing the impediments placed upon Guam attributed to our island's militarization by our administering Power.³

Support for a United Nations Visiting Mission to Guam

As we consider the current geopolitical conditions within the Pacific region and growing military presence of Guam's Administering Power, I would like to highlight a recent resolution by the United Nations Third Committee, which expressed grave concern for "acts or threats of foreign military intervention and occupation that are threatening to suppress...the right of self-determination of peoples and nations"⁴ Current actions by Guam's Administering Power within the island threaten the ability of our people to genuinely express their aspirations through an act of Self-determination.

In 1996 the Special Committee on Decolonization noted that "visiting missions provide a means of assessing the situation... and ascertaining the wishes and aspirations of the peoples" within Non-Self-Governing Territories and stressed the "need to dispatch periodic visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories."⁵ On this note, I would like to commend the Committee for holding a successful visiting mission in the British Virgin Islands. It is truly encouraging to see our partners in the

² AL USA 7/2021

³ Please note that my Administration's recommendations for updates to the annual resolution on the *Question of Guam* is included as an attachment.

⁴ A/RES/79/164

⁵ A/AC.109/2031

Caribbean take steps towards ending their colonial status. It is my hope that Guam is on that same path forward.

Since 2006, petitioners from Guam have recognized the need for a visiting mission and have made the request to this Committee. A visiting mission would allow a third party to assess the situation and outline steps needed to move forward. In 2023, Guam's Administering Power provided an initial approval for a visiting mission. To ensure that our Administering Power holds true to this commitment, I ask this Committee to aid in facilitating communication between Guam and the United States Permanent Mission to the United Nations to advocate for a visiting mission to be held in Guam by 2026. Furthermore, I encourage the members of the Committee to make a commitment to funding the Visiting Mission to Guam.

Support for Non-Self-Governing Territories to Conduct External Engagement

As a Non-Self-Governing Territory, Guam remains in a preparatory phase as we advocate for our right to move into a full measure of Self-government. While our Administering Power offers support, ultimately the onus to prepare the people of Guam remains squarely on our shoulders. One form of advancement is the ability to adeptly advocate and negotiate Guam's interests in both regional and international settings. As a Non-Self-Governing Territory, opportunities to advocate for our unique interests are pertinent as they may not be represented by an external power over six thousands miles from our island whose experiences and interests may not always align with those of our people.

My Administration recognizes the importance of building and maintaining connections to foster collaboration and advance shared interests, most especially to build a sustainable future. Guam's commitment to the region was recently exemplified with our elevation to Associate Membership in the Pacific Islands Forum and recent Chairmanship of the Micronesia Islands Forum, where we remain dedicated to active participation in both coalitions.

As we seek greater opportunities to expand our engagement in external affairs, my Administration recognizes that the first step is to increase local capacity in those equipped with the skills and knowledge to engage in regional and international forums. As all current Non-Self-Governing Territories remain in a preparatory phase, promoting the development of diplomatic skills will yield long-term benefits in developing individuals who can advocate for the interests of their nations, most especially advancing interests related to socioeconomic and cultural development. Therefore, I ask members of this Committee and Guam's Administering Power to provide funding and technical assistance to support a diplomacy training program for all Non-Self-Governing Territories. I envision that by supporting such a capacity building program, both the Committee and all Administering Powers can make a concerted and collaborative move towards aiding the development of all territories.

I sincerely thank the Committee and the Bureau for the continued opportunity to engage with the United Nations. This avenue of advocacy has allowed the people of Guam to carry on with our quest for Self-determination and decolonization and foster partnerships with those who share our belief in a future where no nation is subjected to colonial rule and all people are allowed to choose their own path forward. Only through genuine partnership can we achieve such an endeavor.

Cognizant of the importance of the administering Power's implementing its programme of transferring surplus federal land to the Government of Guam,

Noting a call for reform in the programme of the administering Power with respect to the thorough, unconditional and expeditious transfer of land property to the people of Guam,

Aware that the federal lawsuit by the administering Power over the CHamoru Land Trust programme was filed in September 2017, and noting the ruling⁸ issued on 21 December 2018,

Recalling the expressed desire of the territorial Government for a visiting mission by the Special Committee, as renewed during the 2024 Caribbean regional seminar,

Aware of the existing concerns of the Territory regarding the potential social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of the planned transfer of additional military personnel of the administering Power to the Territory,

Noting the concerns most recently expressed by the Territory on this subject before the Special Committee at its 2024 session and the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) at the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 57/140 of 11 December 2002, in which it reiterated that military activities and arrangements by administering Powers in the Non-Self-Governing Territories under their administration should not run counter to the rights and interests of the peoples of the Territories concerned, especially their right to self-determination, including independence, and called upon the administering Powers concerned to terminate such activities and to eliminate the remaining military bases in compliance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly,

Recalling also its resolution 35/118 of 11 December 1980 and the territorial Government's concern that immigration into Guam has resulted in the Indigenous CHamorus becoming a minority in their homeland,

Stressing the importance of regional ties for the development of a small island Territory,

Recalling the general elections in the Territory that were held in November 2022,⁹

Expressing its concern at the devastating damage and impact caused in the Territory by Typhoon Mawar in 2023,

1. *Reaffirms* the inalienable right of the people of Guam to self-determination, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), containing the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples;

2. *Also reaffirms* that, in the process of decolonization of Guam, there is no alternative to the principle of self-determination, which is also a fundamental human right, as recognized under the relevant human rights conventions;

3. *Further reaffirms* that it is ultimately for the people of Guam to determine freely their future political status in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter, the Declaration and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and in that connection calls upon the administering Power, in cooperation with the territorial

Request the re-inclusion of language from A/RES/78/92:

"Recalling the statement made by the Speaker of the thirty-third Guam legislature before the Fourth Committee at the seventieth session of the General Assembly that the most acute threat to the legitimate exercise of the decolonization of Guam was the incessant militarization of the island by its administering Power and noting the concern expressed regarding the effect of the escalating military activities and installations of the administering Power on Guam."

⁸ District Court of Guam, *United States v. Guam et al.*, decision of 21 December 2018.

⁹ See A/AC.109/2023/9, paras. 2-4.

13. *Also calls upon* the administering Power to facilitate a visiting mission to the Territory, and requests the Chair of the Special Committee to take all the steps necessary to that end;

14. *Reaffirms* the responsibility of the administering Power under the Charter to promote the economic and social development and to preserve the cultural identity of the Territory, and requests the administering Power to take steps to enlist and make effective use of all possible assistance, on both a bilateral and a multilateral basis, in the strengthening of the economy of the Territory;

15. *Takes into account* the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹¹ including the Sustainable Development Goals, stresses the importance of fostering the economic and social sustainable development of the Territory by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion and promoting the integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems that supports, inter alia, economic, social and human development, while facilitating ecosystem conservation, regeneration, restoration and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges, and strongly urges the administering Power to refrain from undertaking any kind of illicit, harmful and unproductive activities, including the use of the Territory as an international financial centre, that are not aligned with the interest of the people of the Territory;

16. *Requests* the Territory and the administering Power to take all measures necessary to protect and conserve the environment of the Territory against any degradation and the impact of militarization on the environment, and once again requests the specialized agencies concerned to monitor environmental conditions in the Territory and to provide assistance to the Territory, consistent with their prevailing rules of procedure;

17. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to report on the environmental impact of the military activities of the administering Power in the Territory, as relevant information becomes available;

18. *Calls upon* the administering Power, the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system and regional organizations to provide all the assistance necessary to the Territory, support the recovery and rebuilding efforts and enhance capabilities for emergency preparedness and risk reduction, in particular in the aftermath of Typhoon Mawar that impacted the Territory in 2023;

19. *Requests* the Special Committee to continue to examine the question of Guam and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its eightieth session and on the implementation of the present resolution.

47th plenary meeting
4 December 2024

Request the inclusion of language to recognize and take action on the 2021 Special Rapporteur reports:

"Urges the Secretary-General and the administering Power to acknowledge the filings by the Special Rapporteurs on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, and the Special Rapporteur on the implications of human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and waste, which asserts the direct threats the United States military build-up imposes upon "the ability of indigenous Chamorro to Self-govern and threatens to cause additional and irreparable harm to the land and sea environments on and around Guam" (AL USA 7/2021).

¹¹ Resolution 70/1.