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THIRD INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Non-Self-Governing Territories: social, economic and environmental challenges

**Saint George's, Grenada
9 to 11 May 2018**

STATEMENT BY

MS. AMANDA BLAS

(GUAM)

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, Dignitaries, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Buenas yan Hafa Adai. I na'anhu si Amanda Blas, guahu y Direktot Kumision Decolonasion. My name is Amanda Blas and I am the Director of Guam's Commission on Decolonization.

Last year, I came before the Committee to speak of the burdens Guam experiences as a territory of the United States of America. Unfortunately, those challenges have not changed. Guam is still plagued by unfunded federal mandates that are meant to help states and territories meet the goals of the U.S. government, such as the Earned Income Tax Credits and the Compact of Free Association. Most recently, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that was approved by U.S. Congress, a body that Guam has no voting representation in, placed a strain on our island's finances. This is Guam's reality as a non-self-governing territory.

Our local government is still appealing a federal court ruling that stated Guam's self-determination plebiscite was unconstitutional. In November, the U.S. Department of Justice involved itself in the appeal, supporting the court's original decision that the plebiscite violated the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments of the Constitution. And while this case has not only put a strain on our native rights but on our ability to choose our political future, our island cannot remain stagnant in its pursuit of self-determination. Today, I will tell you of the strides Guam has made towards decolonization since last year's regional seminar.

Last August, Governor Eddie Baza Calvo sent a letter to the United Nations inviting a visiting mission to Guam, something that hasn't happened since the 1970s. The visiting mission would shed new light on the island's pursuit for self-determination, acknowledging the new challenges Guam faces when it comes to decolonization.

In October, Guam's largest delegation appeared before the United Nations' Special Political and Decolonization Committee. This delegation included Governor Calvo, making him the first Governor in at least two decades to speak before the United Nations. During that trip to New York, the Guam delegation also met with numerous UN ambassadors to provide insight on Guam's self-determination efforts; and in December, when the General Assembly approved the resolution concerning Guam that

called upon our administering power to take into consideration the expressed will of the native inhabitants, it was considered a major milestone in our island's quest for self-determination.

Just last month, the topic of decolonization was included as part of the agenda of the 23rd Micronesian Islands Forum at the request of the Governor. The Micronesian Islands Forum is an annual summit that brings together the six governors and three presidents of Micronesia to collaborate and strengthen ties within the region. While decolonization for many of the islands in Micronesia have become a reality, Guam has not reached self-governance – and the addition of Guam's decolonization on the forum's agenda encouraged conversation that could help guide Guam in its self-determination efforts.

In addition to those milestones, the Commission on Decolonization has moved forward with a self-determination study that discusses the impacts each political status option would have on Guam and is currently discussing the use of social media as part of its education plan. The Commission has also participated in numerous outreach events and presentations, and the task forces charged with educating the public on each political status option has conducted their own efforts as well.

The University of Guam has also played a role in decolonization education efforts. In March, the University held a forum on decolonization in Guam's native language, Chamorro; and just two nights ago, the University of Guam held the first gubernatorial debate in Guam's history centered on decolonization. This historic debate highlighted the importance of our island's leadership's involvement in self-determination efforts.

For the last 72 years, Guam has been on the United Nations' list of non-self-governing territories. Despite the challenges we face, the burdens we bear, and the obstacles we encounter, Guam will continue to move forward in pursuing its self-determination, and we hope to see Guam take its next steps in decolonization.

Un dungkulu na si yu'os ma'ase and thank you for all of your support in Guam's quest for self-determination.