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THIRD INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: first quarter review of developments and trends

Quito, Ecuador
28 to 30 May 2013

STATEMENT BY MR. EDWARD A. ALVAREZ

(GUAM)

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STATEMENT

OF THE

NON-SELF GOVERNING TERRITORY OF GUAM

TO THE

PACIFIC REGIONAL SEMINAR ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THIRD DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

IN

QUITO, ECUADOR

FROM 27 MAY TO 30 MAY 2013

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PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY: EDWARD A. ALVAREZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COMMISSION ON DECOLONIZATION

HAFA ADAI CHAIRMAN DIEGO MORE'JON PAZMINO! ON BEHALF OF OUR HONORABLE GOVERNOR EDDIE BAZA CALVO AND OUR WONDERFUL PEOPLE, I PRESENT AN UPDATE ON GUAM'S EFFORTS TOWARD DECOLONIZATION OVER THE PAST YEAR.

OUR COMMISSION HAS BEEN HEAVILY ENGAGED IN REINFORCING THE PUBLIC AWARENESS, FINDING CREATIVE WAYS TO RAISE MONEY FOR THE EDUCATION PROGRAM, AND COMPLETING THE ARDUOUS TASK OF FORMATTING THE THREE TASK FORCE'S POSITION PAPERS SO THAT THEY ARE EASY TO COMPARE, CONTRAST, AND UNDERSTAND BY OUR VOTERS. IT'S NO SECRET THAT GUAM, LIKE MANY ISLANDS IN THE WORLD FACE TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES, WHICH HAMPERS OUR ABILITY TO FORGE AHEAD ON ALL LEVELS TOWARD A PLEBISCITE VOTE. SO WE CONTINUE TO MEET AND DISCUSS HOW BEST TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS.

ONE THING FOUND TO BE VERY EFFECTIVE HAS BEEN PUBLIC OUTREACH, AS THE COMMISSION CONTINUES TO MEET AND SPEAK TO PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS, CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS, AND CULTURAL GROUPS IN REINFORCING THE CORRECT MESSAGING TO THE MASSES. THIS HAS GOING ON FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS AND HAS BEEN LARGELY SUCCESSFUL. DECOLONIZATION HAS MADE ITS WAY INTO THE DAILY LIVES OF OUR PEOPLE AND IS KEPT ALIVE BY ISSUES SUCH AS THE MILITARY BUILD-UP, THE CURRENT LAW SUIT FILED BY MR. ARNOLD DAVIS, WHO IS CHALLENGING A CHAMORRO ONLY VOTE, AND MOST RECENTLY ANOTHER LAW SUIT FILED BY FORMER GUAM RESIDENT..MR.NEIL WEARE, WHO FEELS ALL THE PEOPLE IN THE U.S. TERRITORIES ARE U.S. CITIZENS AND DERSERVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE FOR PRESIDENT AND HAVE REPRESENTATION IN CONGRESS AND SENATE. ALSO CONTRIBUTING TO THE MOVEMENTS GROWTH ARE THE FEDERAL MANDATES IMPOSED BY CONGRESS ON GUAM, WHO HAD NO REPRESENTATION AT THE TIME THESE MANDATES WERE BEING DISCUSSED AND DECIDED UPON. SOME EXAMPLES ARE THE COMPACT IMPACT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES OF MICRONESIA, THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT PROGRAM, AND THE WAR REPARATIONS ISSUE, WHICH HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR SO LONG NOW! THESE MANDATES HAVE COST GUAM HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS THAT THE PEOPLE HAVE HAD TO SHOULDER WITHOUT ANY RECOURSE TOWARD PROPER AND FAIR REIMBURSEMENT. AS FOR THE WAR REPARATIONS EFFORT, GUAM REMAINS THE ONLY VICTIM OF WORLD WAR TWO, YET TO RECEIVE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FOR ALL ITS SUFFERANCE! ALL OTHER VICTIMS HAVE BEEN PAID!

IN THE AREA OF FUNDING THE PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAM, THE COMMISSION HAS PROPOSED TO CHANGE THE LOCAL LAW RELATIVE TO TAX CREDITS. WE SEEK TO AMEND THIS LAW AND ALLOW THE COMMISSION TO GIVE TAX CREDITS TO PEOPLE OR BUSINESSES WHO DONATE SERVICES, TANGIBLE AND REAL PROPERTY, OR ANY ITEM SUITABLE FOR TAX CREDIT ALLOTMENT. SOON, A JOINTLY SPONSORED BILL BY OUR GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATURE IS PROPOSED TO BE INTRODUCED AND TAKE ITS COURSE IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS! AS I REPORTED LAST YEAR, THE COMMISSION SOUGHT A $250,000.00 GRANT PROPOSAL FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, SUBMITTING IT IN NOVEMBER 2012. I REPORT TODAY THAT WE STILL HAVE NOT RECEIVED A STATUS ON OUR REQUEST EVEN THOUGH THIS MONEY HAS BEEN IN CONTINUING RESOLUTION FOR QUITE SOMETIME. SO WE WONDER, WHEN WILL IT BE RELEASED. REALISTICALLY, IT MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE IN LIGHT OF THE CURRENT SEQUESTRATION ISSUE LOOMING IN THE UNITED STATES.

THE COMMISSION ALSO PLANS TO USE FREE PUBLIC TELEVISION AND ACCESS CHANNELS TO PRODUCE PROGRAMS THAT WILL FURTHER REINFORCE THE MESSAGING TO MORE OF THE MASSES AND GIVE A SIMPLE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT EACH POLITICAL OPTION BRINGS TO THE TABLE AS FAR SELF-GOVERNANCE. PLANS WILL BE UNDERWAY AND THE COMMISSION WILL SOON ADDRESS HOW TO USE THIS MEDIUM TO ITS FULLEST.

THE MESSAGING IS SO IMPORTANT BECAUSE HISTORICALLY, AND DUE TO THE MEDIA, THE MESSAGING HAS BEEN DISTORTED AND NOT FAIR AS FAR THE ENTIRE POLITICAL STATUS ISSUED IS CONCERNED. FOR EXAMPLE, ONE ITEM MANY PEOPLE BELIEVED WAS THAT IF GUAM CHANGED ITS POLITICAL STATUS, IT WOULD MEAN THAT WE MIGHT LOSE ALL PRIVILEGES TO FEDERAL PROGRAMS. ANOTHER WAS THAT WE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO TRAVEL FREELY TO THE UNITED STATES. EVEN MORE, MANY PEOPLE THOUGHT "CHAMORROS" WERE FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO VOTE FOR THE POLITICAL STATUS CHOICE, WHEN IN FACT IT WAS GIVEN TO THEM BY VIRTUE ON THE UN CHARTER. FINALLY, ALL THOSE WHO HAVE MIGRATED TO GUAM ARE NOW FINDING OUT THAT THEY ARE NOT EXCLUDED FROM THE SELF-DETERMINATION PROCESS AND THAT THEY WILL PARTICIPATE AND VOTE ON THE CONSTITUTION WHICH FOLLOWS THE PLEBISCITE VOTE. SO IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THESE PROGRAMS ARE IN PLACE IN ORDER TO SET STRAIGHT WHAT THE POLITICAL PROCESS ENTAILS AND HOW EVERYONE ON GUAM IS INCLUDED!

THUS, THE MOST IMPORTANT ASSISTANCE THAT THE UNTIED NATIONS CAN OFFER TO TERRITORIES LIKE GUAM IS THE TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTIONS IT HAS ADOPTED THROUGHOUT THE DECADES. WITHOUT A CONCERTED EFFORT TO IMPLEMENT TO THE DECOLONIZATION MANDATE, THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE PEOPLE ARE SERIOUSLY DASHED, AND THE RELEVANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS TO OUR DECOLONIZATION PROCESS IS EVEN MORE SERIOUSLY QUESTIONED.

OF THE NUMEROUS ACTION ORIENTED RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDED IN THE RESOLUTIONS IS THE LONGSTANDING IS THE CALL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR THE TERRITORIES AS CLEARLY DEFINED IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 1541(XV), WHICH IS TO BE DONE COLLECTIVELY BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEMS, THE ADMINISTERING POWERS, AND THE TERRITORIES AS WELL.

THESE ARE SOME KEY AREAS WHERE IMPLEMENTATION BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE DECOLONIZATION MANDATE OF OUR NON-SELF GOVERNING TERRITORIES. I RECALL NUMEROUS SOLUTIONS BEING SUGGESTED, SOME AT THIS VERY SEMINAR, BUT THEY SEEM TO GET DISMISSED SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY, EVEN WITH THE ENDORSEMENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. OUR DELEGATION BELIEVES THE UNITED NATIONS MUST BE MORE PRONOUNCED AND ENGAGING WITH THE MANDATES IT ADOPTS. WHILE PEACE MAKING AND PEACE KEEPING IS TIMELY TO BE THE ORDER OF THE DAY, THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM IS WELL DESERVING OF EQUAL PRIMACY TO COME FULL CIRCLE WITH RESOLUTION AND SELF-GOVERNANCE FOR ALL OF US LEFT ON THE LIST!

IN LIGHT THIS, WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING:

1. THAT THE ELECTORAL OFFICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS BEGIN TO SUPPLY INFORMATION ON THE POLITICAL STATUS OPTIONS, SINCE THE LACK OF THIS INFORMATION IS WHAT IMPEDES THE TERRITORIES FROM UNDERSTANDING MORE ABOUT THE THREE STATUS OPTIONS. THIS FUNDAMENTAL INFORMATION STYMIES GUAM AND THE OTHER TERRITORIES AND IMPEDES OUR PATH TO DECOLONIZATION. AND THE END RESULT WILL BE TERRITORY HAVING TO TAKE THIS ON THEMSELVES WITH LIMITED RESOURCES.

2. THAT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ENDORSE A WORK PROGRAM FOR THE DECOLONIZATION OF EACH TERRITORY. THIS CANNOT GO FORWARD WITHOUT THE ADMINISTERING POWER FURNISHING INFORMATION ON THE TERRITORY , THUS THE PROCESS BECOMES QUITE LIMITED, AND IN THE END, NEVER IMPLEMENTED.

3. THAT THE CONDUCT OF PERIODIC ANALYSES BE UNDERTAKEN ON THE PROGRESS AND EXTENT OF THE DECOLONIZATION DECLARATION IN EACH TERRITORY. WHILE WORKING PAPERS ARE INFORMATIVE DOCUMENTS, THEY ARE NOT THE TYPE OF DOCUMENTS CALLED FOR IN THE RESOLUTIONS. WITHOUT SUCH ANALYSES, IT'S DIFFICULT FOR MEMBER STATES TO UNDERSTAND HOW NON SELF-GOVERNING HAVE TAKEN OVER TIME DUE TO THE LACK OF IMPLEMENTATION OF DECOLONIZATION RESOLUTIONS.

4. FINALLY, WE CALL ON THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AND IMPLEMENT THE EARLIER OUTLINED RECOMMENDATIONS AS A MATTER OF URGENCY. OTHERWISE, THE ROLE OF OUR DECOLONIZATION WILL FADE INTO LESSER IMPORTANCE, AND THE TENDENCY TO LEGITIMIZE THE UNEQUAL TERRITORIAL RELATIONSHIPS MAY BE TOO DIFFICULT TO RESIST.