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FORTH INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: advancement of the Non-Self-Governing Territories through the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and beyond

Castries, Saint Lucia

11 to 13 May 2022

**STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE
OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA**



Statement by

**Mr. Fred Sarufa
Deputy Permanent Representative
of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations and
Head of Delegation**

at the

**2022 Pacific Regional Seminar of the Special
Committee on the Situation with regard to the
Implementation of the Declaration on the
Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries
and Peoples: “Advancement of the Non-Self-
Governing Territories through the Coronavirus
disease (COVID-19) pandemic and beyond”**

11 May 2022,

Castries, Saint Lucia

“Check against delivery”

Madam Chair, Excellency's and distinguished participants,

What a breath of fresh air it is, away from the cold concrete jungle of New York and to be charmed by the warmth of the Eastern Caribbean and the Atlantic Ocean, at the home of the "Helen of the West Indies" and the only country in the world named after a woman – Saint Lucy of Syracus. It is indeed an honour and privilege to join you all in this sister Small Island Developing State.

May I, therefore, at the outset, extend my delegation's warm congratulations and profound gratitude to the people and the Government of Saint Lucia, for not only hosting the 2022 Pacific Regional Seminar twice now but for proudly serving as C24 Chair several times. We are grateful for their generous island hospitality and friendship that makes my delegation feel not only home away from home in the Blue Pacific Continent but also rejuvenated for the Seminar.

Madam Chair and fellow participants;

Let me recognize and applaud your continuing leadership of the Committee and renew our commitment to work constructively with you and your delegation and all other Committee members.

Turning to the Pacific Regional Seminar for this year, it is regrettable that the Pacific region is not in a position to play host to the Seminar, for yet another year.

Papua New Guinea, however, warmly welcomes and appreciates our close neighbour Indonesia's kind offer to host the next Pacific Regional Seminar.

It is pleasing to note that amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic the impressive turnout of participants for this Seminar, from the far reaches of our global village, from the Blue Pacific Continent to the Atlantic Ocean and beyond, is indeed not only impressive but also a clear testament to the importance given to walking the talk of the Seminar theme, which is the “Advancement of the Non-Self-Governing Territories through the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and beyond” and the sub-topics set in place for our collective discourse.

The level of participation for the Seminar, in our view, bodes well for our meeting in further advancing in a meaningful way the important United Nations Charter mandate of this Committee, which is to rid the world of the scourge of colonization, which still sadly remain in our midst today.

Madam Chair, Papua New Guinea is honoured and pleased to assume, under your leadership, the important role of Rapporteur for this particular Regional Seminar. This will indeed be the second occasion since 2018 for my delegation to take up this mandate.

We value and appreciate the confidence and trust shown for my delegation and pledge to work in a spirit of constructive partnership with all participants for a successful conclusion of our important work.

For us, on a case-by-case basis, each and every participant and stakeholders with respect to the decolonization agenda have an important role to play and deserves to be heard, and in accordance with existing arrangements of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on Decolonisation, in particular and also the UNSC.

We must better harness the narratives brought before the Committee and leverage them in a meaningful and strategic way to bring closure to an agenda that still remains elusive to conclude.

Mr Chair, this Seminar's theme is most timely and pertinent.

Today, the world is awash with the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to pose serious challenges to whole of humanity. No-one is safe until everyone is safe!

In the context of this Seminar, the continuing dire impacts of COVID-19 on nearly 2 million peoples in the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories – in their lives and livelihoods, socio-economic development, human rights, freedoms and dignity and their natural resources and efforts to attain the Sustainable Development Goals are at serious stake. This cannot be taken for granted.

It is therefore incumbent, not only on the administering Powers but this Committee and the UN in general, to ensure that the colonized peoples and territories are not marginalized and left to fend for themselves.

For Papua New Guinea, as a longstanding C24 member, the practical challenges and realities regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic was brought to the fore by the December 2021 self-determination referendum in New Caledonia.

This was where the voices of the indigenous people of the Territory – the Kanak people, to whom the self-determination agenda is all about, was sadly not heard but overridden by the will of others.

Papua New Guinea, together with our Melanesian Spearhead Group members (Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and FLNKS of New Caledonia) were heartened by our distinguished Chair of C24 for being receptive to the call at the eleventh hour, of the indigenous people of New Caledonia through their FLNKS representatives to listen to them and consider how the Committee could work with them and all other relevant parties to address their concerns in the face of COVID-19 pandemic the most important question on their self-determination in December 2022.

The result of which, we know that, nearly 44% (43.87%) of eligible referendum voters in New Caledonia voted in the December 2021 self-determination ballot fundamental process. A large proportion of the voices were not properly heard, and this therefore calls into serious question the outcome of that self-determination process in New Caledonia.

Madam Chair, Excellencies and distinguished participants, it is important lessons such as this, that we, as a Committee, must learn from and work with all relevant stakeholders in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and also with the administering Powers to find lasting and peaceful solutions consistent with the C24 mandate we are entrusted to take carriage of. We must not fail the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and there is room to do better.

Noting that only about 44 % of eligible voters participated in last year's self-determination referendum in New Caledonia, the importance of an accountable and inclusive process cannot be overstated.

We welcome the efforts underway now in New Caledonia to strategise for the road ahead on their future status. We remain committed to work with

It is from this perspective that my delegation humbly suggests that under the UN Charter Article 73e, on the dissemination of information on developments in the Non-Self-Governing Territories by Administering Powers, the Committee consider requesting Administering Powers to provide specific information on the impact of COVID-19 on the Non-Self-Governing Territories and its people.

These could provide information, data and statistics on the health conditions such as how many have died from COVID-19, access to health care and services, the status on education and socio-economic opportunities and the impact on their human rights and how these issues are being addressed and where there are areas that require further support.

By doing so, the Special Committee can be better informed on the realities on the ground in the Non-Self-Governing-Territories and how we may need to lend support, as necessary, and within the mandate of the Committee, and on a case-by-case approach. This will also be a demonstration of how effective the Committee is in exercising its mandate.

For Papua New Guinea, I would reiterate our continued strong and steadfast commitment to play our part meaningfully in the work of the Special Committee on Decolonization.

I thank you all for your attention.