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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 HONOURABLE  
PHILIP J. PIERRE  
PRIME MINISTER OF SAINT LUCIA**

**DRAFT STATEMENT**  
**By**  
**Prime Minister Hon. Philip J Pierre**

**To Open the United Nations C-24 2022 Regional Seminar on the Implementation of the  
Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism**

Madame Chair of the Special Committee on Decolonization, Members of the Bureau, and other members of the Committee, representatives of other United Nations Member States, representatives of non-self-governing territories, experts, delegates from civil society, officials of United Nations agencies, members of the United Nations Secretariat, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, other distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the government and people of Saint Lucia, I wish to extend to you a warm welcome to our beautiful country. For those delegations from Africa, I wish to welcome you home to the sixth region of Africa. For those of you who are visiting the Caribbean for the first time, I also wish to welcome you to our region and to a country that advanced through a process of self-determination and independence under the watchful eye of the United Nations including this Special Committee on Decolonization.

It is now forty three years since our independence here in Saint Lucia, and during those four decades we have given honour to our act of self-determination by growing and protecting our democracy. General elections have been held freely and fairly, in accordance with the electoral calendar established by our Constitution; and the will of the people has regularly changed governments as the people have so desired. But decolonisation for us has to be more than raising the flag of independence. It must mean that our people know, understand and appreciate our history and our heritage and so my Government will be making the teaching of African and Caribbean history an integral part of our school curriculum. Beginning this year too, we will give more meaning to our independence by commemorating the anniversary of our emancipation from slavery in August on a grand scale for the first time; and let me add that in keeping with this, we will be expanding our diplomatic relations with countries of Africa.

My address here this morning at this opening ceremony of the 2022 “Pacific Regional Seminar on the Implementation of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism,” is of special significance because it is another milestone in Saint Lucia’s close relationship with the Special Committee of 24. In 1999, Saint Lucia, for the first time, hosted a Caribbean regional seminar which produced a number of important recommendations for the consideration of UN member States. But more importantly, since then, four of our Permanent Representatives to the UN have served as Chair of the Special Committee on Decolonization-

.Ambassador Sir Julian R Hunte (2001,2005-2006); Ambassador Earl Stephen Huntley (2001-2003); Ambassador Anthony Severin (2006); Ambassador Donatus St. Aimee (2010). Their chairmanship of the Special Committee is part of Saint Lucia's contribution to the political, socio-economic and constitutional development of non self-governing territories globally and an affirmation of its firm support for the work of the C-24.

The regional seminars have been highly useful in assessing the special characteristics of small island territories. They have provided a unique opportunity for vital inter-regional contacts amongst representatives of small island non-self-governing territories as well as for sharing experiences and challenges along the path toward the full measure of self-government.

Distinguished participants,

The Caribbean has a special interest in the successful self-determination process of the small island territories in our region. Their advancement to full self-government is a core issue for the Caribbean for we regard the non-self-governing territories as integral parts of the economic, political and social fabric of the Caribbean. Both independent and non-independent Caribbean countries enjoy a high level of economic and social integration within our regional institutions.. This is evidenced in the associate or full membership of three non self-governing territories (Anguilla, British Virgin Islands and Montserrat) in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) headquartered here in Saint Lucia. Both Montserrat and Anguilla share our Eastern Caribbean dollar as its official currency, and both are members of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank. Five of the seven Caribbean non self-governing territories Bermuda, Turks and Caicos Islands, Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands and Anguilla are associate members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) while Montserrat enjoys full membership. Most benefit from assistance from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB).

These six territories are joined by the seventh, the US Virgin Islands, as associate members in the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and its subsidiary body the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee. I am advised that there is a similar integration of non self-governing territories in Pacific regional institutions such as the Pacific Islands Forum, the Pacific Community, the Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), among others. All of this is evidence of the importance of the integration of the territories within the regional context.

As in the case of regional institutions, the United Nations has an important statutory role to play in the future development process of these territories. The successful decolonization of over 80 territories since World War II reflects the effectiveness of this historical role. These advancements in decolonization were successful, in large measure, because of the adherence to the parameters of self-determination set forth by the United Nations General Assembly, in its

landmark Resolution 1541 of 1960, which defined the three legitimate political options for non self governing territories based on the fundamental principle of absolute political equality. It is understood that that these principles, set forth in Resolution 1541 (XV) as a companion resolution to the Decolonization Declaration, must continue to be the guiding standards applicable to the small island non-self-governing territories, just as they were the standards used to decolonise former colonies.

However we must be pragmatic and recognise that it was in 1998, that the UN declared the period 1990 to 2000 as the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and that we have now entered a fourth decade and the decolonisation process is yet to be completed. In fact it has been said that we are witnessing a period of “decolonization stagnation”. This has been compounded by the fact that that the present non-self-governing arrangements do not meet the recognised criteria of full self-government. It is an ironic, but timely, reminder to the C 24 of the unsatisfactory nature of these non self governing arrangements, that this Seminar is being held during a Governance crisis in the British Virgin Islands, in which the UK has indicated its intention to impose direct rule on the BVI.

This has been soundly condemned by The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and in reaffirming Saint Lucia’s support for this position, let me quote from the statement of the OECS Authority on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2022: “The OECS has noted the position taken by the duly elected Government of the BVI which, while welcoming the recommendations arising from the Inquiry, rejects the intention of the British Government to impose direct rule on the BVI. It is clear to us that, in principle, it is ill advised to impose direct colonial rule and the history of such imposition in the Caribbean has never delivered the desired result.

The OECS concurs with the elected representatives of the people of the BVI that abolition of Parliament with direct rule from London represents a retrograde step in the evolution of the democratic process that is inconsistent with the United Nations Proclamation of Human Rights to be free of colonial rule. The UN Declaration on granting independence to colonial countries and peoples - Resolution 1514 of 1960 is an international commitment to which Britain is itself bound.”

The theme for this 2022 Regional seminar is “Advancement of the Non- Self governing territories through the Corona virus (COVID 19) disease pandemic”. As we all know the COVID 19 Pandemic has been devastating. Neither the governance status of countries nor the political colours of their peoples have mattered in its rampage; and it would have made the process of decolonisation a tougher task. It has taken ingenuity, hardiness, patience and an acceptance of new modes of doing things for countries to recover from and successfully cope with COVID 19. If decolonisation is to be advanced in this COVID 19 environment, then the C24 must adopt these same approaches.

There is therefore much work ahead, some of it quite complex, if there is to be a successful decolonisation for the remaining non self governing territories. We can no longer afford the continued “repetition of process” which finds continual reaffirmation of the mandate without

accountability for implementation. As a former Chair of this Committee from Papua New Guinea - Ambassador Renagi Renagi Lohia – famously said in the 1990s, we must begin to think “outside the basket” to find solutions to advancing the decolonization process.

In this regard, I want to recognize the work of St. Lucia’s former Chairs of the C- 24. In 2001 – 2003 Ambassador Earl Stephen Huntley caused the Special Committee to act “outside the basket”. In 2002, Ambassador Huntley organised the first visit in a decade by the Special Committee to a non self-governing territory- the New Zealand territory of Tokelau in the South Pacific. That mission eventually led to a process of a referendum in Tokelau on its status. Of greater historical import was the agreement he reached with the UK in 2003, for the C 24 to hold a regional seminar in one of the UK’s non self governing territories in the Caribbean for the first time. This was done in Anguilla and one of the hallmarks of its success was the interaction between the members of the Special Committee and the people of Anguilla at a town hall meeting. Since that time the C24 has held only one other regional seminar in a non self governing territory- that was in New Caledonia in 2010, again under a Chair from Saint Lucia- Ambassador Donatus Keith St. Aimee. To do so only twice in three decades is not thinking outside the basket.

In 2010, then UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, declared that the “successful conclusion of the decolonization mandate requires creative solutions”. This and Ambassador Lohia’s advice is still applicable. In this early stage of the Fourth international decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, in this COVID 19 world, the C 24 must not shirk from exploring innovative approaches for full decolonisation.

Distinguished participants,

It is our fervent hope that the recommendations that will be derived from these proceedings will be integrated to the extent possible in the decolonization resolutions with the accompanying financial and professional resources made available for their implementation. Of course, within the framework of your deliberations, we encourage you to take the time to enjoy your visit to St. Lucia - the land of the two Pitons, the birthplace of two Nobel Laureates, and an island noted for our rich, vibrant culture and traditions, an island for you to savour.

I wish you well in your deliberations, and formally declare open this 2022 Pacific Regional Seminar on the Implementation of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and the advancement of the Non Self-Governing Territories through the coronavirus pandemic and beyond.”

I thank you.