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SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Caribbean Regional Seminar on the implementation of the Second
International Decade for the Eradication of
Colonialism: next steps in decolonization

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DISCUSSION PAPER

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Madam Chair,

I am happy to join with others, in my capacity of a representative of a civil society organization, the Grenada Education and Development Organization, GRENEDE, to offer you warm congratulations on your election as Chair of this important UN ^{Decolonization} committee. We are proud of you as a diplomat, a Caribbean diplomat and a Caribbean woman diplomat.

St. Vincent
must be
proud of
you!

GRENEDE also thanks you and all others associated with the invitation to us. We are two. My colleague is Gloria Payne-Banfield, a former Cabinet Secretary from Grenada and a woman who served as a delegate to the United Nations, 1982 – 1989, working in the Third Committee. I myself also served at the United Nations and attended the seminar of this Committee on Decolonization held here in Grenada in 1992. We hope that together we bring some knowledge and contribution to the meeting and we wish you and all participants every success over the next two days. We and we are pleased to be participants with our Government of Grenada at this Seminar.

Madame Chair, Distinguished colleagues:

Self-governing states continue to accept responsibility for decolonization: moral duty, political solidarity and of course the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations direct this. Grenada, a self governing state within the Caribbean and the United Nations system, accepts this responsibility on all of the above ground. The opening statement of Grenada's Foreign Minister, Hon. Elvin Nimrod, affirmed that this morning and we associate ourselves with that position. Indeed, kind remarks have been made on this regard towards Grenada from delegates on this seminar and we say it was and remains Grenada's satisfaction to have supported self determination of the people of South Africa and East Timor to mention two now self-determining states. Now, Western Sahara and of course, non-self determining states right here in the Caribbean we expect our work to continue.

Grenada has been self governing since February 1974, but we, and no doubt other states, continue to face challenges to our political independence, many of them economic. We consider, therefore that our decolonization is ongoing. GRENEED keeps a keen eye on the subtle and creeping forms of colonialism and neocolonialism arising and we do that from the vantage point of a NGOs. By definition NGOs remain responsible to that large body called civil society because NGOs come from and belong to a civil society. A rich foundation of ideas and actions abound in civil society and it enjoys freedoms that may not exist in the more constrained arena of highly regulated political parties or government. We Civil Society and NGOs - give ourselves the discipline of thinking constructively, freely and deeply, always seeking to analyse what unfolds in seemingly disparate sectors of society.

Madam Chair, we posit the following:

That the next steps on the work of this committee must include efforts to vigorously re-conceptualise and re-define decolonization to include economic consideration, and with equal vigor to undertake a relevant action programme of work, including public education and peoples participation, with partnerships from NGOs, academia and the wider Civil society.

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Why is re-conceptualisation necessary? The passage of five decades since the United Nations first conceived the Committee's work of decolonisation (1946) and at least four decades since resolution No.1541 (1960), what constitute colonization and decolonization have changed, for indeed the world has changed. The changes include the impact of many evolving economic forces. To name a few: the emergence of an economically and politically powerful Caribbean Diaspora whose members participate actively in the affairs of their Caribbean territories; from the metropolitan and from the territories, the actions of transnationals and foreign investors which continue to impact not always comfortably on the life of small economies and societies, the power of global financial institutions and the continuing independence of many territories on global trade even as it becomes less hospitable to national and political interests of the least powerful members of the

international community. In sum, environmental economic factors in diverse social forms, have risen to the fore.

Climate change is literally wreaking havoc on the entire range of human activity and the very concepts of territory, security and independence are being redefined.

Madame chair, from the conversation of the last few days, we have heard evidence of how more complex is the quest for decolonization. For example, we heard that some non-self-governing territories have to make direct financial payment for the political presence of the administering power.

Madame Chair,

With an eye to attracting and pleasing the supposed hordes of international guests attending World Cup Cricket matches in several Caribbean territories earlier this year, , many regional governments were forced to compromise our Caribbean Cricket; culture in the end this presumed foreign trades did not come, our people felt culturally silenced so and some stayed away external economic bonanza did not occur.

There are just a few of the examples of the dominance of economic factors, many externally controlled, I might add, to the life of societies facing decolonization or who may already enjoy formal political independence.

This reminds us, Madam Chair, that political independence does not complete decolonization.

Political independence still remains the hallmark of decolonization. How wonderful it still is to have a new constitution and a national anthem, a flag and great national pride which emanate from the formal end of colonialism! But time and experience have shown us and some testimony have illuminated, that formal political independence is a necessary and not a sufficient condition for decolonization

So we raise these question, Madam Chair, from the perspective of pursuing decolonization: We have heard before and at this seminar, that some (Caribbean) non-self-governing territories seem reluctant to pursue decolonization as political

independence¹ because of the fear of economic loss. So we ask: is economic viability possible or even enhanced by continuing colonial status? Conversely is economic security disrupted, or threatened by political and economic independence? We have also heard that some populations in non-self governing territories are persuaded that they should restrain themselves toward full political independence because they believe that real or preserved benefits from the administering power will be lost.

For self governing states: is their political independence compromised by economic factors outside their national (domestic) control?

What then is decolonisation if at least one valid option —political independence—and possible forms are not freely available? What then is independence, especially when self governing territories (in the Caribbean regions) are so handicapped by global investment, trade and finance and their populations seem to be loosing rather than gaining footing in their efforts at well-being and development? What then is And as we embark on this 21st century leg of decolonization, what are we to do with these realities? No doubt these questions and reflections will influence us all and so we offer three concrete suggestions by way of framing a way to engage with them.

Three recommendations:

That the C-24 publish a status report of the 16 territories, including recent constitutional developments and up-coming actions.

That, given the repetitive references by representatives of non-governing states, experts and other invited guest such as non-governmental organizations, to the varied and dynamic interplay of political independence and economic independence, that the C-24, undertake and or recommend appropriate United Nation bodies (include the transnational

¹ We do not presume that independence is decolonisation. Rather we recognized the full range of three options: free association with the administering power, integration with an administering power and independence.

Centre) to undertake, a vigorous research on economic colonization and decolonization, beginning with references to this topic made at this seminar.

That the C-24 alone or with the relevant UN agencies and other partners, expand public education on decolonization, especially within the 16 territories as well as within the regions of Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific, and to engage grass-roots community organizations and non-governmental organizations.

I thank you, Madame Chair.