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SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Pacific Regional Seminar on the implementation of the Second
International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism:
priorities for the remainder of the Decade

Bandung, Indonesia
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Statement

by

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to the United Nations,

Chairman of the Special Committee

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to offer our deepest sympathy to the Government and people of China, through the distinguished Delegate of China, Mr. Tang Yin Long, for the recent earthquakes in Central China. Please accept our condolences and our best wishes for the speedy recovery.

Distinguished Participants,

In my opening remarks earlier, I alluded to the rich historical settings surrounding this year's seminar. I do hope that the Bandung spirit can contribute in our efforts to reinvigorate the spirit of decolonization, in our collective efforts to resolve the status of the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories (NSGTs), including in the Pacific.

Just as over half a century ago, the whole gamut of international relations was redefined in new, bold and creative ways, similarly in our context today, there is a need, an urgent need in fact, to explore innovative and pragmatic ways to move the decolonization agenda forward.

First and foremost, this means that the process of decolonization has to be accelerated if tangible progress is to be made in the implementation of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. We do not have much time left, as the Second International Decade shall be completed in 2 years time!

I do realize that decolonization has always been a delicate, and even emotional, issue to those involved, and therefore I believe that every effort needs to be pursued in a constructive and inclusive manner.

I also recognize that the process of decolonization promoted by the Special Committee has evolved over the years, leaving the Special Committee with the essential task of "de-listing" the remaining NSGTs, in accordance to the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960), subsequent relevant General Assembly resolutions, and the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

To achieve this task, and to reiterate what I stated on 28 February 2008 upon assumption of the task entrusted to me to Chair the Special Committee, we need to approach each case with an open-mind, to build on the available options and bring about a pragmatic, results-oriented evolution of positions to help move the decolonization process forward.

Distinguished Participants,

The current role of the Special Committee in facilitating the decolonization of the Non-Self-Governing Territories within the framework of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism can be said to be threefold:

1. Improving the cooperation of administering Powers;
2. Providing information to the peoples of the Territories about their status as designated within the United Nations, together with all that this implies; and
3. Identifying with all concerned practical ways to implement the United Nations decolonization mandate enshrined in the relevant General Assembly decisions, on a case-by-case basis.

The Special Committee needs to aim for tangible results on a case-by-case basis for each of these three major priorities for the remainder of the Decade, and let me briefly touch upon them.

Priority 1: Improving the cooperation with administering Powers

An integral part of the Special Committee's effort to move the decolonization agenda forward is to improve the cooperation of administering Powers. From our part, let us, members of the Committee, reaffirm our commitment for genuine and constructive dialogue with all stakeholders, including the administering Powers. As Chair of the Committee, I also intend to follow up on my recent efforts in New York in engaging with them.

It is to be hoped that all administering Powers will follow suit and involve themselves actively in facilitating the process of decolonization in tandem with the international community, and genuinely help prepare NSGTs to gain a new international status, free of the remaining stigma of colonialism.

One small yet very much appreciated indicator of progress is the "presence" of all the administering Powers at this year's seminar, both through attendance from most administering Powers as well as a position letter from the United Kingdom, which signifies that channels of communication remain open.

Another path that we may be able to explore, hopefully in the near future, is to send a visiting mission to the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

In this connection, we need to explore with all concerned modalities which could enhance information exchange between the administering powers, territorial Governments and the United Nations on decolonization matters.

The Special Committee also needs to continue promoting public education or outreach efforts consistent with Article 73 *b* of the United Nations Charter dealing with the development of self-government. In this connection, I would like to take the opportunity to highlight the availability of a brochure published by the United Nations in 2007 on the subject “What the United Nations can do to assist Non-Self-Governing Territories”, and available here today as well as on the Committee’s website. This brochure constitutes a useful addition towards the wider dissemination of information on decolonization and the various United Nations activities in support of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Priority 3: Identifying practical ways to implement the United Nations decolonization mandate

As with any cooperative endeavour, the Special Committee’s efforts to implement the United Nations decolonization mandate has to be based on goodwill, respect and a positive outlook by all concerned -- the administering Powers, the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the General Assembly.

The Special Committee needs to identify and reflect on positive developments in various Non-Self-Governing Territories that could help move the decolonization process forward. This will necessitate a willingness to think outside the box and perhaps even the ability to place the decolonization mandate in today’s context.

The Special Committee also needs to continue its effort in pursuing action-oriented approach in support of NSGTs in their quest for self-governance. In fact, one of the areas where the Special Committee made tangible progress last year was in making one of our core resolutions, namely Resolution 62/118B, more action-oriented. This year again, practical options have to be spelled out and operationalized in ways that are meaningful to a specific Territory, on a case-by-case basis.

Often, a great deal of our discussion is very much focused on political aspect of decolonization. While political aspect is of fundamental importance – decolonization is indeed a political process – the Committee’s support for NSGTs must also extend to areas of direct relevance to the peoples of NSGTs – their livelihood and development.

Many of the NSGTs, for example, are facing environmental, economic, and social vulnerabilities due to their geographical characters. The Special Committee needs to identify ways and means through which it can play a supportive role for sustainable development in NSGTs, hence enhancing their capacity for self-governance.

On this note, the Special Committee looks forward to the views of representatives of NSGTs as well UN specialized agencies and regional commission present in this seminar on how this can be enhanced even further.

Having said that, I would like to commend the efforts played by UNDP and regional Commissions, particularly UN-ESCAP and UN-ECLAC, for various technical cooperation projects they have been exerting to some NSGTs.

Finally, in order to facilitate the Special Committee's substantive work, there are also a number of elements which the Seminar might wish to explore. For instance, concrete steps might be taken in several areas:

(1) The Special Committee will continue to fully support Tokelau's and New Zealand's cooperative efforts towards decolonization.

(2) Through its Chairman, the Special Committee will continue its informal dialogue with the administering Powers to explore how best to approach the inter-related issues of political status-related processes in specific Territories and "de-listing" within the context of UN decolonization agenda.

(3) The Special Committee will continue to explore how to enhance information exchange between territorial Governments, the administering Powers and the United Nations on decolonization matters.

I look forward to discussing these priorities and related issues with you over the next three days. It is my conviction that we can achieve positive results from our deliberations and again spell out action- and goal-oriented steps for the way forward.

Thank you.

Bandung, Indonesia
14 May 2008

While we are on the issue of cooperation with administering Powers, let me also briefly touch upon developments regarding several internal constitutional review processes underway or completed in various NSGTs. These processes often touch on status-related questions which aim to redefine the relationship between one NSGT with its respective administering Power, and the Special Committee has been observing closely these developments.

In this context, we are hopeful that in due course there will be substantial developments in **American Samoa** and, in the Caribbean, the **United States Virgin Islands**, Territories administered by the United States.

Positive developments may also be expected by the end of the decade in **Anguilla**, **Cayman Islands**, and **Montserrat** all of which, as you know, are administered by the United Kingdom and are in the process of actively considering internal constitutional and status-related issues.

Further, there is opportunity for the parties concerned to build on completed internal constitutional review exercises such as those in the **British Virgin Islands** and the **Turks and Caicos Islands**, which each have a new constitution, or to build on the Nouméa Accord process in **New Caledonia**, where France is the administering Power.

The aforementioned internal constitutional or status review exercises by-and-large tend to endorse the current relationship between the Territory and the respective administering Power. Against this backdrop, the Special Committee will need to be assured that the people concerned are in fact on a path to self-determination. The international community has to be satisfied that the people of the Territories are in a position to express their will in a free and unequivocal manner.

Finally, **Tokelau** remains the beacon of hope for progress in decolonization, even though the Territory and its administering Power are in a period of reflection following the results of last year's referendum. The decisive element here is the continued political will on both sides to cooperate on what had been agreed upon in free negotiations: to build on the current relationship, including continued support to the Territory by the administering Power, and to expand self-governance to the greatest extent possible. It is to be hoped that this cooperative approach will be emulated in other Territories, in years to come.

Priority 2: Informing all those concerned about the Territories' status

In order for the peoples of the NSGTs to be able to exercise the right to self-determination, the Special Committee will continue its efforts to monitor developments on the ground and reach out to the Non-Self-Governing Territories to keep their peoples informed about decolonization matters.