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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: challenges and opportunities in the process of
decolonization in today's world**

**Frigate Bay, Saint Kitts and Nevis
12 to 14 May 2009**

STATEMENT

By

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Ministry of National Security, Immigration and Foreign Affairs

Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis

Statement to the Opening Ceremony of the Caribbean Regional Seminar

It is my honour to welcome you to the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis on this occasion of the 2009 Caribbean Regional Seminar on Decolonisation. We are pleased to serve as host of this seminar – the last scheduled activity of critical importance for the Caribbean under the present *Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism*.

It is significant that this seminar is being convened in this part of our region, as this small geographic space, known as the north-eastern Caribbean, arguably encompasses one of the widest varieties of governance models. In our sub-region are former colonies which became independent states, such as Antigua and Barbuda, and my own St. Kitts and Nevis, which were once part of a multi-island free associated statehood arrangement with the United Kingdom before attaining full independence.

The issue of decolonization continues to engage the interest of the eminent scholars of the region such as Sir Fred Phillips, Dr. Carlyle Corbin, Sir Howard Fergus and others who continue to work towards bringing clarity to the dynamic of the “new millennium colonialism” that we are witnessing today. Their critical analysis of the options of political equality available to the remaining small island territories is especially valuable to how the international community moves the decolonisation process forward. The invited experts to this seminar should shed considerable light on these issues over the next few days.

Distinguished delegates,

Given the geographical proximity and cultural ties of the people of the Caribbean, it should not be surprising that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) continues to regard the decolonisation process of the remaining territories as fundamental to Caribbean regional integration. Indeed, seven of the remaining sixteen (16) listed non self governing-territories are in the Caribbean, and the people of the CARICOM region recall

the decolonisation exercise they underwent not that long ago. In fact, St. Kitts and Nevis achieved its independence in 1983, and this was the last territory in the region to do so.

Our membership on the Special Committee on Decolonisation, together with sister countries of the OECS, signals our understanding of the process. As we reflect upon our own experience, as former island territories, the elements of the free associated statehood model which obtained between the *West Indies Associated States* and the United Kingdom was of particular value to us.

CARICOM has also endeavoured to include the non self-governing territories in its regional institutions. Accordingly, three territories are members or associate members of the OECS, one is a full member and five are associate members of the *Caribbean Community* (CARICOM). Additionally, five territories are members of the *Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)*, while the official currency of Anguilla and Montserrat is the same Eastern Caribbean currency used by their independent neighbours. Further, six listed territories are associate members of the United Nations *Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee*, and a number of the territories enjoy formal status with United Nations bodies such as UNESCO, ECLAC, FAO, UNDP and others. This continued integration of the territories in regional and international institutions serves to further inform their decision on self-determination, and the discussion at this seminar on this item of territorial participation in international institutions should be most revealing.

Distinguished Delegates,

The thrust of your discussions will no doubt be guided by the mandate of the Committee and notwithstanding the perception that the process of decolonization is not progressing at the desired pace, I am confident that your collective views will give focus to the debate on the issue.

We take note of the internal reforms enacted for several Caribbean territories which have sought to modernise aspects of their respective dependency arrangements, and we also

acknowledge that these reforms were not intended to bring the dependency status to an end. Thus, it is the attainment of full self-determination for these territories which will remain in sharp focus according to the mandate of the General Assembly resolutions

It has been opined that the issue of implementation continues to be the “Achilles heel” of the decolonisation process, especially in light of the Caribbean-inspired *Plan of Implementation of the Decolonisation Mandate*, endorsed by the General Assembly in 2006, but which has not been fully operationalised. I have no doubt that the expert analyses and robust work plans, in addition to seminar like the one hosted here this week, will guide the steady advancement of the work at hand and ultimately give rise to the desired outcome.

Distinguished delegates,

St. Kitts and Nevis, along with our Caribbean colleagues continues to monitor the situation in the Turks and Caicos Islands with much interest. The CARICOM position on this matter calls for *“deeper reflection by all involved in order to arrive at a solution that will minimize constitutional disruption.”*

Distinguished Delegates,

We should, therefore, regard this regional seminar in St. Kitts and Nevis as a mechanism to devise recommendations on the way forward to ensure that this right to self-determination, as a fundamental human right, is realised by the people of all of the remaining non self-governing territories so that their people can achieve full political equality consistent with recognised international standards.

As you embark on this important work over these next several days, I invite you to take some time to enjoy the beauty of our country and the warm hospitality of our people. I therefore wish you, the participants, much success in your important deliberations.

Thank you.