

Distr. RESTRICTED
CRS/2009/CRP.12

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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

THE HONOURABLE GALMO W WILLIAMS

PREMIER OF THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

STATEMENT

BY

THE HONORABLE GALMO W WILLIALMS, MP

PREMIER OF THE TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS

TO THE UNITED NATIONS

SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE

ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM,

CARIBBEAN REGIONAL SEMINAR

ST KITTS AND NEVIS

12 - 14 MAY 2009

CHAIRMAN OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

H.E .THE GOVERNOR OF ST. KITTS & NEVIS

PRIME MINISTER DOUGLAS AND MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT

**HEADS OF STATE FROM ALL THE TERRITORIES REPRESENTED HERE TODAY
OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVE**

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

GOOD MORNING.

I would like to thank the organizers of this important seminar for their warm invitation for me to speak here today. I am humbled and encouraged by the work this body has been able to accomplish with the collective input of all the non-self governing territories acting as partners in progress for our native lands. I also would like to extend greetings to you on behalf of my Government and the people of the beautiful Turks and Caicos Islands.

Firstly, I wish to provide you with a little background of my coming to power.

On February 12, 2009, I resigned as Minister of Home Affairs from the Misick administration and announced my bid to run for leadership of the Progressive National Party. On February 28 2009, by stalwart nomination and vote, I was elected the new Leader of the Progressive National Party (PNP). On March 25th my predecessor the Honorable Michael Misick resigned as Premier of our Islands, and I took the oath of office as Premier of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

I would like to add, that the process of our party's election, and the way it was conducted, is a sign of our political maturity and not a lack therefore. My arrival at this point, is also a salute to my fellow citizens for a decorum that is in the best traditions of representative democracy.

I believe that my election to the office of Party Leader and thereby Premier demonstrates, a degree of political maturity that has been difficult to attain in many nations. That the people of Turks and Caicos, including my political colleagues, have not only the audacity to remove a popular, politically savvy Premier, but also, to reject a highly regarded, but politically damaged Deputy Premier, evinces an intention to insist upon the rule of law for the peace, order and good governance of TCI. This demonstrates that if allowed to the systems can work and that they should, in this case, be allowed to work.

I assume this position at a critical time in our Island's and the world's history, and a crucial time in the relationship between Britain and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

My years of experience as a politician and businessman, has equipped me well to provide the strong, mature leadership that is necessary to guide our country through the political, economic, and social issues that the country is currently facing. It is going to be a tough challenge, but it is one that I embrace.

Looking at the topic for discussion today, I am well aware of the continued challenges and opportunities that we face in the Turks and Caicos Islands and the Caribbean as a whole as it relates to the process of decolonization in the region. The challenges are not small but we are not fearful. The challenges may seem daunting at times but I am of the firm belief that together we can achieve them.

I believe the region is showing promise and potential in these uncertain times, particularly economically.

History has taught us that our ancestors met the challenges they faced with vigor and strength and yet they overcame greater barriers to their freedom and self-determination.

But when examining the challenges and opportunities, we must particularly pay attention to three main areas: the economic, political and social. Firstly, there is still much work to be done in providing capital to nation states and its peoples to create more small businesses for home ownership and to overall stimulate their economies.

The decolonization process must not leave behind the local people in the quest of building a nations identity but rather the local people at all sectors of the society must be key partners in the process. I believe that we have an obligation as a body here today to really look at how we empower the people in our respective countries, particularly in the region economically in this current global economic meltdown. If we do not address this issue head on, the decolonization that we speak of will leave behind the most vulnerable: the less fortunate.

The lack of access to financial resources is the major impediment facing the less fortunate in many of our countries today, but I believe by creating opportunities for people to generate a moderate income; we can reduce the burden of poverty. In addition to generating incomes, micro-finance programs opens up opportunities for the less fortunate to both establish and retain their control over the development process, thus allowing them an important voice in the decolonization process.

Regionally, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) has been a key partner to countries who seek to advance their people economically. My government and country has benefitted from their financial assistance and expertise for a number of years now and look forward to a continued good working relationship.

At this moment in my country's development, the issue of preparedness with regard to self-governance is a lively debate that is occurring. I can only speak of my government's position and where we see it is necessary to prepare our people for self-governance. But in that same breath, I believe the recent activities that have occurred with regards to the United Kingdom Government passing an Order in Council to suspend the Constitution of the Turks and Caicos Islands is completely draconian.

One of the obligations and responsibilities of the British Government under the United Nations Treaty is to prepare its colonies for an eventual independence, allowing a nation and its people to determine its own destiny. Today, I am here not to say that the United Kingdom have failed, but, a severe blow has been dealt to achieving that goal and this saddens not only me but also my people.

In a statement to the Dependent Territories Association in London, on Wednesday 4 February 1998, the then Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, – said:

“ Your democratically-elected governments of the Dependent Territories have the right to govern, to be consulted by Britain on any constitutional changes affecting you,…”

We submit, that the UK Government have not consulted the People of the Turks and Caicos Islands on the proposed suspension of TCI's Constitution, and we call on the Special Committee of 24 to urge the UK Government to cause a referendum to be held or a general poll be taken on the wishes of the people before the UK Government proceed with suspension of TCI's Constitution at May 31st 2009.

The 1999 White Paper chief objective was to modernize the relationship between TCI and the UK. It is against this backdrop and in keeping with a modern relationship that we submit that the democratically elected government should not be displaced, the will of the people should not be silenced. This is not modernization.

My Government and I have not sat quietly on the decisions being debated and made in the United Kingdom Parliament as it relates to the welfare of my country, where persons can govern themselves and have proven to be effective in doing so for many years without fear or favor in the process.

Today when we look at the development that has occurred in the Turks and Caicos Islands, it is questionable whether it would have occurred with members of the Her Majesty's Government at the helm or its British appointed Governor in the islands.

We are the ones in the region who know our history, our dreams and aspirations. We are the ones who have dreams for our children and grandchildren.

Under the Declaration of 1960 that began this movement and the reason why we are here today, it stated that "All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

I believe that it is only us who can bring the development, advancement and change needed in our own countries. It is we in the final analysis that should determine our destiny not anyone from the outside looking in.

But my friends let me also say that we in the Turks and Caicos Islands are aware of the challenges and opportunities that we face politically. Our country has grown significantly and there has been a continued need to ensure good governance in our chain of islands. Therefore, my government has recently passed legislation referred to as the Integrity Commission, which now strengthens accountability and transparency not only of elected officials but also those at senior levels in the civil service. We must be accountable to our people, ourselves and to the positions that we hold in office.

With the support of the United Nations we must also work to ensure that elections are continued to be free and fair. The United Nations has been a leader in this and I commend the organization for being at the forefront of this important issue that protects democracy around the world.

Social challenges and opportunities:

The decolonization process in itself presents challenges to us on how we enhance the lives of our people through opportunity and academic innovation. We have worked hard in the Turks and Caicos Islands to create social empowerment and change for our people. Today, my government has made significant investments in education and healthcare, two fundamentals in the growth of any small developing country, with just under 1000 students awarded tertiary level scholarship and two brand new hospitals, these are some of the major projects that my government is most proud of and sees as progress towards full self-governance.

The keystone to any successful society is a trained and educated work force with access to proper healthcare facilities for all. Now let me be fair and say that there are some big challenges that we face, such as how do we maintain these programs and institutions without placing a bigger burden on our people. But the opportunities in the decolonization process are boundless because of the groundwork we have laid. We have opened new doors for our people by providing access to education and healthcare as I mentioned earlier but there is also more to be done. My government is committed to achieving the self - governance for our country in the face of adversity.

In closing, I want to stress that together as a region and together as a body here today, we must work hand in hand to break with the imperialist agenda of those that seek to maintain this era of modernize colonization.

On Sunday, May 10th 2009, the United States Vice-President said: For those who tell you, you are doing too much, be smart enough to ignore them. For those who say what we dream can't be done, be naïve enough to give it a shot. For those who say now is not the time, say "if not now, When?"

I want you all here today and those who will leave this seminar to ask yourselves, your government your people, neighbors and friends that same thing. We have the opportunity to move in a new direction of self-determination.

My country might be challenged in its current state but I call upon all of you to make representations to HMG on the behalf of the Turks and Caicos Islands and its people. We have a democracy that is still alive and a government that is capable of running the affairs of the country. There is no need to resort to old colonial behavior when there are better alternatives that will not erase our democracy.

Once again, I want to thank you for the invitation for me to speak here and I look forward to continuing this important discussion. We can learn so much from each other and it is through forums such as these that true, long lasting change emerges.

Thank you.