

Distr. RESTRICTED
PRS/2010/CRP.7

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: assessment of decolonization process in today's world

**Nouméa, New Caledonia
18 to 20 May 2010**

STATEMENT

BY

H.E. Donatus St. Aimee (St. Lucia)

**Chairman of the Special Committee on the
Situation with regard to the Implementation of the
Declaration on the Granting of Independence to
Colonial Countries and Peoples**

Elements for a Substantive Statement by the Chairman

When the United Nations was founded in 1945, some 750 million people, nearly a third of the world's population, lived in Territories that were dependent on colonial Powers. Today, fewer than 2 million people live under colonial rule in the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. The wave of decolonization, which changed the face of the planet, was born with the UN and represents the world body's first great success.

Affirming the principle of self-determination, the Charter describes the responsibility of States for the Territories under their administration as "a sacred trust" in which the interests of their inhabitants are paramount. As the process of decolonization continued to advance, the General Assembly, in 1960, adopted its landmark Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The Declaration affirmed the right of all people to self-determination and proclaimed that colonialism should be brought to a speedy and unconditional end. Soon after, a Special Committee on decolonization was established to monitor its implementation. Since the creation of the United Nations, 80 former colonies have gained their independence. This includes all 11 Trust Territories, which have achieved self-determination through independence or free association with an independent State.

In 1990, the Assembly proclaimed the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (1990-2000), which included a specific plan of action. In 2001, it was followed by a Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Today, the Special Committee continues to monitor the situation in the remaining 16 Territories, working to facilitate their advance towards self-determination.

In 2010, the challenge for everyone is to think within the context of present realities and sustainable future. It is not for the UN to determine the best outcomes – the GA is primarily concerned with whether choices are made freely by the people, based on appropriate information and understanding. So the Committee wants to listen closely to what the peoples concerned have to say, in the hope of offering proposals to the General Assembly, on a case by case basis, taking into account the requirement of free consent.

The value of Seminars like ours is to provide a venue for various views and opinions by the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, experts, members of civil society, and other stakeholders in the process of decolonization to be expressed in an open and constructive manner. The Committee attaches great importance to hearing the voices of the people from the Territories whom it supports in the search for the appropriate ways of self-determination.

Each NSGT still on the UN decolonization list has a unique mix of circumstances, often involving quite complex political issues. It is essential that 'creative thinking' that is sensitive to the circumstances is used by all concerned in addressing these issues, as there is no 'one size fits all' solution. For instance, the wishes of small island states need to reflect their unique vulnerabilities in terms of survival in the modern world. 60 years down the track from GA Resolution 1541, the world has changed – today, major issues of sustainability (in economic, environmental and social terms) confront everyone, but especially smaller, more vulnerable societies.

The challenges of climate change will require significant international cooperation, often relying more closely on neighbors and long-established relationships. There are wrongs that need to be corrected. This is extremely important - it applies to all peoples, even in the biggest of the states.

Hence it is important for the UN to hear the views of NSGTs on how they see their own future in an interconnected world. The choices of current generations require thinking ahead and considering the interests of future generations as best as possible.

Regional and sub-regional organizations such as the EU, the OAS, the AU, CARICOM and the Pacific Islands Forum today play a far more important role than they did in the past. The growing importance of such organizations can provide a significant focal point for participation and interaction of the NSGTs and "creative discussions" of decolonization options.

The fact that 16 NSGTs, including some in the Pacific, remain on the list, suggests the need for "creative solutions", provided such always reflect the core principle of free choice - and it is primarily up to the people and the relevant administering Powers to come up with proposals and ideas about

what future political status they would like to have. But the United Nations has a mandate, within the framework of the Charter and the key GA resolutions, to assist. That is the point of this discussion in New Caledonia.

At this seminar we are going to assess the socio-economic and political developments in the Territories with a view to working out, in cooperation with the administering Powers and representatives of the Territories, a realistic, action-oriented program of work on a case-by-case basis for the way forward in advancing the decolonization process. To this end, we need to look again at the merits of comprehensive reviews of the situation in each of the Non-Self Governing Territories as provided for by the Plan of Action for the Second Decade.

The implementation of the Plan as a whole requires a thorough consideration. Within its framework, we are going to assess the progress of decolonization actions at the international level, measures undertaken by the United Nations in cooperation with the administering Powers, as well as the impact of developmental activities and programmes carried out by the United Nations specialized agencies and other organizations of the UN system and non-governmental organizations in the Territories.

But first and foremost, we are going to review the actions of the Special Committee in analyzing the progress and extent of the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People in each Territory. We also need to evaluate the Committee's role in following the impact of the economic and social developments on the constitutional and political advancement of the NSGTs, as well as its efforts aimed at ensuring the full cooperation of the administering Powers in this matter.

I trust that after these deliberations we can come up with a plan for the way forward, as neither the work of the Special Committee or the process of decolonization end with this Seminar or with the 2nd Decade.

Now, I open the floor for the discussion of the above issues.