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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: assessment of decolonization process in today's world

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

STATEMENT

BY

Faipule Kuresa Nasau

(ULU O Tokelau)

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF
INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES**

QUESTION OF TOKELAU

STATEMENT BY

FAIPULE KURESA NASAU

**ULU O TOKELAU
(TITULAR HEAD OF TOKELAU)**

**PACIFIC REGIONAL SEMINAR
NOUMEA, NEW CALEDONIA**

WEDNESDAY 19 MAY 2010

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM: ASSESSMENT OF DECOLONISATION PROCESS IN TODAY'S WORLD

Chairman
Distinguished Members of this Seminar
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

I thank the Almighty for His guidance and protection to all of us here this morning. Through you Mr Chairman I would like to convey our appreciation to the Government and people of New Caledonia for hosting us in their beautiful home. Thank you for the kind support and hospitality – *Malo ma fakafetai!* I would also like to take this moment to thank the French High Commissioner for the fine Reception last night which we did enjoy. *Merci beaucoup!*

As the Ulu o Tokelau I convey warm greetings from the Council of Elders of each of the 3 villages of Tokelau, the General Fono, and the Council for the Ongoing Government and the people of Tokelau.

Mr Chairman, like you, we are very much aware that the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism is about to end and likewise the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The 2nd Decade in regard to the Eradication of Colonialism witnessed 2 Referendum for Tokelau which the Government of New Zealand provided its full support and commitment. The continuing close cooperation between Tokelau and New Zealand is vital in our path towards decolonisation. This relationship of trust was not built overnight. It is a result of good faith and patience from earlier leaders of both countries to ensure the commitment to the development of Tokelau's capacity for self-government through the strengthening of its economic, political and social wellbeing.

The *Joint Statement of the Principles of Partnership between Tokelau and New Zealand* which was signed in 2003 to confirm principles of shared values and the partnership agreement was visionary in its expectation to create a framework within which both parties maximise the benefits of the relationship. The

partnership provides a firm foundation for ongoing and constructive dialogue between the partners.

Mr Chairman, as most of you are familiar with Tokelau has twice organised an exercise of its right to self-determination but did not achieve a final act of decolonisation. The first Referendum took place in February 2006 and the second in October 2007. In February 2006, 60% of registered Tokelauan voters voted in favour of self-government in free association with New Zealand. That percentage, however, was not sufficient to meet the required two-thirds majority. In October 2007 the proposal remained the same as the 2006 Referendum. There was an increase of votes supporting the proposal to 64.4% of registered Tokelauan voters however, for the second time this did not meet the 2/3 majority that was set by the General Fono to determine an outcome for self government.

Mr Chairman, many may ask and question Tokelau's path following the result of the 2 Referendum. I have thought long and hard about this for my people. In 2007, following the 2nd Referendum the question was raised whether the 2/3 majority requirement was too high. There is a school of thought in Tokelau that promote a simple majority rather than a 2/3 majority. There were also questions in regard to whether Tokelauans understood the proposal posed during the Referendum. There was some concern that self determination meant severing ties with the Government and people of New Zealand. This was not something Tokelau wanted and it was clear from the initial stages of preparation for a Referendum that Tokelau wished to retain the warmth of its relationship with New Zealand.

This year the Tokelau National Strategic Plan 2010-2015 (TNSP) was endorsed by the General Fono as the key guide for a *'Healthy and Active Communities with Opportunities for All'* under 4 key policy objectives: (1) Good Governance; (2) Infrastructure Development; (3) Human Development; and (4) Sustainability. Together with the TNSP, and with the support of the Government of New Zealand, Tokelau also has a Constitution, a National Flag, a final proposal for a national anthem and process has already started for a national symbol. We are proud of these achievements but at the same time we are challenged with real issues pertaining to Tokelau as a living community, the minimal standard for education and health care, a safe reliable and efficient shipping service, climate

change, waste and disaster risk management, and the pressing issues pertaining to our young people, women and children.

Mr Chairman and Members of the Special Committee Tokelau remains on your list. Tokelau is very conscious of its right to self-determination. We value that right and aspire to revisit this with the intention to exercise it again at some time in the near future and then, by achieving the fullest measure of self-government, to be no longer on your list.

Tokelau has, as you know, a substantial degree of autonomy in the management of its affairs and for this we acknowledge our gratitude to the administering power the Government of New Zealand. However, having substantial autonomy is however not the same thing as "being ourselves" and being fully answerable to ourselves for our government. The aspirations of self-determination remain and at the present, a future in free association with New Zealand appears a more likely option than either integration or independence but that is for another day.

For the time being, self-determination considerations must take second place to our pressing infrastructure and development needs. Our infrastructure is inadequate to enhance the vision that Tokelau aspires for the future. Tokelau knows of the economic pressures that are being experienced world wide as a result of the recession. Those pressures have impacted on New Zealand and therefore on the delivery of services to Tokelau. We are working with the Government of New Zealand to ensure the maintenance of support to Tokelau in the key areas of Health, Education and Transport. The building of classrooms, better island health care facilities, and new shipping arrangements to address our unique needs have all been on the agenda for some time and are now very urgent.

Dialogue with the Government of New Zealand has continued to ensure that New Zealand is aware of our needs. The current economic support arrangement 2007/2010 is coming to an end and we hope that, in the course of the negotiations for the economic support arrangement for the next period of years, New Zealand will see its way clear to address those needs.

In conveying our needs I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of the UNDP Office in Samoa for their continuous support for Tokelau in the decolonisation process and its development needs under the emblem of collaboration, cooperation and understanding.

Thank you again Mr Chairman, to you and the Committee, for your support and understanding to Tokelau and all territories like us. Tokelau wishes to acknowledge the support and assistance from Ambassador Robert Aisi from Papua New Guinea and encourage support of all the distinguished members of the Special Committee as flagged by Ambassador Aisi yesterday. Your efforts over many years have maintained for us the goals we wish to achieve. You have been an inspiration to us. We trust that in the future you will continue to be there to assist and support Tokelau both directly and through the many agencies of the United Nations.

I convey best wishes to the Special Committee and Distinguished Guests to this seminar in all your deliberations. May our Almighty God continue to guide you throughout this seminar and that you return safely to your home.

Mr Chairman, Thank you for the invitation and the opportunity given to Tokelau to address the Seminar.

Ke fakamanuia e te Atua te Komiti ma ke ola ia Tokelau....