

THIRD INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

**Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade
for the Eradication of Colonialism: goals and expected accomplishments**

**Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
31 May to 2 June 2011**

STATEMENT

BY

H.E. Dr. Francisco Carrion-Mena

Permanent Representative of Ecuador

Chairman of the Special Committee

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

2011 Caribbean Regional Seminar

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Keynote address

by

**H.E. Francisco Carrión-Mena,
Permanent Representative of Ecuador,
Chairman of the Special Committee**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the first regional seminar convened under the auspices of the Special Committee on decolonization during the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and under my chairmanship. Under its approved agenda, for the next three days we will assess the decolonization process in today's world, including past contributions and fresh goals, as well as expected accomplishments of the Special Committee in the Third Decade. We will also address the areas of the Special Committee's communication and cooperation with administering Powers; the participation of Non-Self-Governing Territories; the status of self-government and level of socio-economic development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and assistance to them. Suggestions and proposals to enhance our work during the Third Decade will round out our discussions.

During last year's regional seminar and subsequent discussions in the Special Committee on decolonization a clear sense emerged that it is time for the Special Committee to assess, and where needed reform, its approach regarding the implementation of its decolonization mandate, on a case-by-case-basis, with a view to make progress on decolonization as mandated by the General Assembly.

Throughout the seminar, as we hear about the situation in specific Non-Self-Governing Territories, we will discuss how we can make progress in the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples contained in resolution 1514 (XV) adopted by the General Assembly on 14 December 1960, and other relevant resolutions, by which Member States proclaimed the necessity of bringing colonialism to a speedy end.

In today's world, fresh ideas are needed to carry out the United Nations mandate based on lessons learned from past experience and along the lines of pragmatic expected accomplishments.

1. Analysis and assessment of recent United Nations decolonization work

During the Second Decade there was only one actual achievement in our area of work, the independence of East Timor as Timor-Leste and thus its successful decolonization. Furthermore, there was some progress on the question of Tokelau towards a fully negotiated decolonization outcome.

At the same time, numerous intermediary activities mandated by the General Assembly were accomplished, including the consideration of reports to the General Assembly; the annual preparation of Secretariat working papers on each of the Territories; visiting missions; the organization of annual seminars in the Caribbean and Pacific regions in alternate years; and the enlisting of worldwide support for the objectives of the 1960 Declaration, *inter alia*, through the United Nations website on decolonization. As a result, Member States, the Special Committee as well as representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, experts, non-governmental organizations and civil society were afforded several opportunities to make their views known, analyze each Territory's situation, and make recommendations as appropriate.

That's all well and good.

However, these intermediary activities have not managed to move the decolonization process forward by one inch. The decolonization of 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories remains to be completed, and requires the concerted efforts of all concerned during the Third International Decade.

Crucial among these efforts are those of the relevant administering Power and the Special Committee. Formal and informal dialogue aimed at improving cooperation between the Special Committee and the administering Powers continues to be an essential element in efforts to move the process of decolonization forward. I will make below some proposals in that regard which the Special Committee could address during the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

2. Communication and cooperation with administering Powers on specific NSGTs

Over the years, the Special Committee has fully endorsed efforts that tried to strengthen communication and cooperation with the administering Powers in an

effort to identify with all concerned practical ways to implement the United Nations decolonization mandate enshrined in the relevant General Assembly decisions. During the Third International Decade these efforts have to be garnered and focused to bear fruit.

For instance, the **British Virgin Islands** and the **Cayman Islands** stand out as possible cases whose self-government status the Special Committee could examine in depth with a view towards exploring steps that could lead to their decolonization. Both, the British Virgin Islands after wide consultation and public approval, as well as the Cayman Islands after approval by referendum each recently adopted a new Constitution. **Bermuda** has had a form of extensive internal self-government for some time. There is also the case of **American Samoa**, which has repeatedly requested the Special Committee to remove it from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories because its status was akin to that of a fully self-governing Territory. The last such request was made at the 2010 Pacific Regional Seminar.

The situations in these Non-Self-Governing Territories are indicative of a unique reality whose relevance for their future international status cannot be underestimated – a reality that has to be appreciated by all concerned as an opportunity to advance decolonization and acted upon by the Special Committee as a matter of urgent priority.

In the longer term, around mid-Decade or beyond, the constitutional convention exercise in the **USVI**, the period of reflection in **Tokelau** and the negotiated Nouméa Accord process in **New Caledonia** are expected to mature and provide further new opportunities for the exploration of realistic decolonization action appropriate to each Territory's situation.

Any such exploration may benefit from informal exchanges between members of the Committee and the relevant administering Powers under my chairmanship.

Let us, then, explore together the desirability and feasibility of gradually moving towards specific decolonization action, together with the administering Power and the territorial Governments concerned, where appropriate. As Chairman of the Special Committee, I fully intend to continue to explore pragmatic ways of moving our agenda forward. For this to happen, the Committee is dependent on the cooperation of the administering Powers, and I intend to follow up on my recent efforts in New York in engaging with them.

3. Participation and views of the Non-Self-Governing Territories

Decolonization requires the participation of Non-Self Governing Territories and their peoples, on a case by case and in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions on decolonization. This has become more essential than ever in today more democratic governance- and human-rights-oriented world than it was perhaps perceived in the past. In this context, the tenets of resolution 1514 (XV) remain as vivid ever to declare that “the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and cooperation.

The Special Committee has consistently welcomed the Non-Self-Governing Territories’ internal constitutional review and modernization exercises, where appropriate. The current or recently concluded internal constitutional or status reviews in the aforementioned United Kingdom and United States-administered Non-Self-Governing Territories by-and-large endorse the current relationship between the Territory and the respective administering Power.

Against this backdrop, the Special Committee, and upon its recommendation the General Assembly will have to have solid reasons to believe that the people concerned are in fact on the path to decolonization and the attainment of a full measure of self-government. The international community has to be certain that the people of these Territories are in a position to express their will in a free and unequivocal manner that is actionable for the Special Committee.

Since the early years of the United Nations, the General Assembly has grappled with the question of the principles to be followed in evaluating situations indicative of the attainment of a full measure of self-government. Its resolution 567 (VI) of 18 January 1952, on factors which should be taken into account in deciding whether a territory is or is not a territory whose people have not yet attained a full measure of self-government, indicates two essential factors: (i) political advancement of the population and (ii) opinion of the population. This day and age, for a Territory where there is no dispute over sovereignty, there is no doubt that the opinion of the population will guide the way towards successful decolonization action.

In this connection, the Special Committee could explore with all concerned practical assessment modalities that are expected to help ascertain in a preliminary but representative fashion the will of the people in a given Territory. [*Relevant modalities would include local general elections, plebiscite questions, referenda, polls, etc. carried out by the territorial Government*]. I also think it is important in the Third Decade to define the information strategy for the Committee. It would thus be useful if the programmes of information on decolonization were addressed in view of needs from a Non-Self-Governing Territory’s point of view.

4. Development challenges and socio-economic advancement

Last but not least, a fresh approach is needed to address the numerous developmental and socio-economic challenges faced by the Non-Self-Governing Territories, most of which are comprised of small islands.

Since the Special Committee holds that such factors as the size of territory, population, geographical location and limited natural resources should in no way delay decolonization action, it would be useful to examine the historical record of how these and other factors helped or hindered the process of decolonization.

One of the experts present will make later on a special, interactive contribution towards such an examination, which would include the exploration of steps by which the key principles of the 1960 General Assembly resolutions could today be applied to the remaining small island territories to comply with the intent of the resolutions and so make progress.

A focused discussion is needed of how to make progress with the small islands Territories - and if that could be connected to further concrete action towards addressing their self-government status, and thus their decolonization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, all of this means first and foremost, that the process of decolonization has to be accelerated if tangible progress is to be made during the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism in application of 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.

Based on the results of our work at this seminar, the Special Committee will continue its dialogue with France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and United States. Through its Chairman, the Special Committee will explore how best to build on the various internal constitutional and political status-related processes in specific Territories to advance their "de-listing".

I look forward to discussing with you over the next three days the various ideas shared and proposals made as well as related issues. It is my conviction that we can achieve positive results from our deliberations and spell out action- and goal-oriented steps for the way forward in decolonization.

As in recent seminars, our discussions should be free-flowing, frank and candid- and not be held to the often sclerotic standards of formal intergovernmental meetings. Let us work together in that spirit and let us together elaborate pragmatic and achievable expected accomplishments for the upcoming period.

Thank you.

15 April 2011