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Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism

Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: first quarter review of developments and trends

Quito, Ecuador

28 to 30 May 2013

Statement by the Chair

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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

Caribbean regional seminar 2013

Notes for a substantive statement

by His Excellency Mr. Diego Morejón Pazmino

Chair 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

Quito, Ecuador, 28 May 2013

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the General Assembly reaffirms every year, "the existence of colonialism in any form or manifestation, including economic exploitation, is incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights".[1]

This regional seminar is marked by new challenges, especially the General Assembly's decision of 17 May 2013 to place French Polynesia on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. That action shows that the elimination of colonialism remains one of the priorities of the United Nations, with the ultimate goal of reducing the list to zero.

The Committee and its working relationship with the administering Powers

Last year, during this same seminar, I talked about the "importance of frank, formal or informal discussions with the administering Powers" with a view to "devising creative approaches to overcome the difficulties associated with the decolonization process". Indeed, smoother communication between the Committee and the four administrative Powers would invigorate the Committee's work and could translate into concrete projects of assistance to the Territories, on a case-by-case basis, without undermining States' independence.

If we take into account the special characteristics of each case, including the criteria of other interested States, we may be able to initiate a process of constructive dialogue leading to the identification of concrete cases where we could initiate a process of reducing the number of Non-Self-Governing Territories on the list, "means for the immediate and full implementation of the

[1] General Assembly resolution A/RES/67/134, para. 2.

Declaration",[2] and "steps to enlist and make effective use of all possible assistance, on both a bilateral and a multilateral basis, in the strengthening of the economies of those Territories".[3]

Recent developments in some of the Territories

During this seminar, we will have the privilege of hearing first-hand about recent developments, thanks to the presence of representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, whose participation we very much appreciate and value. I also welcome the presence of the administering Powers and take note of the communication received from the Governments of the Cayman Islands, Pitcairn and Saint Helena, in which they indicated that they were unable to attend the seminar. We encourage them to join us on future occasions.

I also wish to make a special appeal to the administering Powers and the Governments of the Territories not represented at this seminar to make the necessary efforts to attend future seminars as well as the annual session of the Committee. The session of the Special Committee to be held in June and that of the Fourth Committee to be held in October will also give us an opportunity to keep track of and learn more about the situation in the Territories. Let me address the situation in a few of them.

Last year, during the regional seminar and the session of the Special Committee, we were informed that Anguilla was the last of the Territories administered by the United Kingdom to initiate a process of constitutional change and that a constitutional and electoral reform committee was preparing a new draft Constitution. In the past few weeks, we have learned from the Chief Minister, with whom I met last year, that a referendum might be held in Anguilla centred on two issues: complete self-determination or independence.

The Cayman Islands held elections on 22 May 2013. As mandated in the 2009 Constitution, in November 2012 the Legislative Assembly approved an order, to be signed by the Governor, that increased the number of elected members from 15 to 18.[4] Those changes entered into force following the legislative elections held last week.

According to the preliminary report of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's Elections Observers Mission which took place from 16 May 2013, led by the Honourable Mario Galea, "the 2013 general elections in the Cayman Islands met the international standards for democratic, genuine and transparent elections, and the results truly reflect the will of the people", at a time when they were expressing concerns about the inequality of the plurinominal system.[5]

The Committee is keeping a close eye on developments in that Territory closely and encourages the new Government of the Territory and the administering Power to participate in the next session of the Committee.

With regard to the United States Virgin Islands, we learned that there were a few difficulties with the constitutional revision process, after the Governor established a new body in September 2012 called the "Fifth Constitutional Convention", which was mandated to produce a final revised constitution to reflect the issues raised by the United States Federal Government. We echo the desire expressed by Governor Jongh to have a Constitution for the Virgin Islands and the

[2] General Assembly resolution A/RES/67/134, para. 7.
[3] General Assembly resolution A/RES/67/134, para. 12.
[4] Working paper A/AC.109/2013/8, para. 2.
[5] Elections Observers Report, http://www.gov.ky/portal/page?_pageid=1142,7392189&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL.

importance for the Special Committee to hear directly from the authorities about the state of that process.

We learned that, in Saint Helena, Governor Capes, in fulfilling his duties, dissolved the Legislative Council on 19 April 2013, well ahead of the elections which were expected to take place in November 2013. As a result, the Territory will hold elections on 17 July 2013, after the updated electoral register is published on 1 July. The Special Committee is following these developments with keen interest and hopes to hear first-hand about political, economic and social developments in Saint Helena.

Participation of the Territories in regional organizations

It is acknowledged in reports of the Special Committee that most of the Territories, like small island developing States, "suffer handicaps arising from the interplay of such factors as size, remoteness, geographical dispersion, vulnerability to natural disasters, fragility of ecosystems, constraints in transport and communications, great distances from market centres, a highly limited internal market, lack of natural resources, and vulnerability to drug trafficking, money-laundering and other illegal activities".[6]

Last year I noted that "the difficulties affecting sustainable development in the 16 Territories must be addressed in a comprehensive manner. The Special Committee, the administering Powers and the Territories have a role to play in that regard",[7] as do other interested States.

In a meeting organized jointly by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in Bangkok, in April this year, the international community was called upon to put the priorities of those countries and territories at the front and centre of the development agenda beyond 2015.

I should recall that only a few of the Non-Self-Governing Territories are included on the list of small island developing States as "non-Members of the United Nations and associate members of regional commissions": American Samoa, Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Guam, Montserrat, New Caledonia, French Polynesia and the United States Virgin Islands.[8] American Samoa, Guam and the United States Virgin Islands are observers to the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), which functions primarily as an ad hoc lobby group and negotiating voice for small island developing States (SIDS) within the United Nations system.[9]

While we welcome the fact that some of the Territories were able to participate in and express their opinions at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, it is vital that those Territories also be heard at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in Samoa next year.

[6] Report of the Special Committee, A/67/23, para. 55.
[7] Statement delivered at the 2012 Pacific regional seminar, held in Quito, Ecuador.
[8] List of Small Island Developing States (Non-UN Members/Associate Members of the Regional Commissions) http://www.un.org/special-rep/ohrlls/sid/list.htm.
[9] Alliance of Small Island States, http://aosis.org/members/.

The Special Committee must be more proactive to "follow up on the General Assembly's request that the participation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the work of relevant meetings and conferences of the agencies and organizations be facilitated so that the Territories can benefit from the related activities of the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system",[10] in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and through the appropriate mechanisms.

Each year the General Assembly requests "the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system and international and regional organizations to examine and review conditions in each Non-Self-Governing Territory so as to take appropriate measures to accelerate progress in the economic and social sectors of the Territories".[11] Support provided to the Territories is presented in an annual report prepared in consultation with the President of the Economic and Social Council providing information on activities carried out by organizations such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Food Programme. It is my intention to request that these organizations become more involved in the work of the Special Committee and participate actively in its regional seminars and annual sessions.

Offers by Member States of study and training facilities

On behalf of the Special Committee, I wish to express our gratitude to the Member States that have offered scholarships for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories. As indicated by the General Assembly, "the continuation and expansion of offers of scholarships is essential in order to meet the increasing need of students from Non-Self-Governing Territories".[12]But we must also endeavour to disseminate more efficiently the opportunities offered, which in many cases are missed owing to a lack of information. We have noted with satisfaction that the format of the decolonization website has been amended to facilitate access to the report on scholarship offers. However, we can do more. The regional seminars are an excellent opportunity to disseminate this information and to work together with the administering Powers "to take effective measures to ensure the widespread and continuous dissemination in the Territories under their administration of information relating to offers of study and training facilities made by States and to provide all the necessary facilities to enable students to avail themselves of such offers". I therefore propose that, in the future, consideration of this important aspect be included on the agenda of the seminar as a mechanism for monitoring offers and seizing study opportunities.

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

Last week the General Assembly decided by consensus to increase the responsibilities of the Special Committee. With the addition of French Polynesia to the United Nations list of Non-Self-

[10] Report of the Special Committee, A/67/23, para. 57.
[11] Report of the President of the Council on consultations with the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, E/2012/47, para. 2.
[12] General Assembly resolution A/RES/67/128, preamble.

Governing Territories, the Special Committee faces new challenges and needs renewed impetus to take on the task of putting an end to colonialism.

I echo the sentiment expressed by the Secretary-General at the opening of the 2013 session, when he said "the risk of movement is … preferable to the status quo". I therefore call on the Committee to intensify its work on and commitment to the cause of decolonization.

I count on your cooperation and continued support to make progress towards our objectives.

Thank you.

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