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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 MR. MICHAEL VICTOR SUMMERS

(FALKLAND ISLANDS (MALVINAS))<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

## **Presentation to the C-24 Seminar, Quito, 29 May 2013**

I had the opportunity yesterday to thank the Government of Ecuador and the UN Committee for the efficient and friendly organisation of this seminar. That sentiment remains with us.

There was much interesting reflection yesterday on the responsibilities and achievements of the C24. The call by Member States for solidarity with the NSGT's, and the call by the Chair for the people of the NSGT's to be treated with dignity and respect is much appreciated. It is as it should be. But there remains the question as to why the C24 has signally failed to reduce the number of listed territories, and what to do about it.

Colonialism in all its form are abhorrent to us all. Some of us actually remember those days well – though for most it is a distant memory passed down the generations. So why is it that the list has not changed, with the sole exceptions of the de-listing of East Timor and the adding of French Polynesia. Is it that the C24 lacks the will to remove countries from the list, or is it that it does not have the mechanism. The answer I believe is both.

It lacks the will because the interests of Member States has been put above the interests and wishes of the NSGT's. The call by Cuba and others for a decade of solidarity with the NSGT's might begin to show the way forward, but only if the Members of the C24 examine their consciences about where their responsibilities lie as a Members of the C24, and think first about those people for whom they have assumed responsibility, the NSGT's.

And it lacks the mechanism because it has not truly adopted the “fourth way”, it has not gone out to the territories to understand the issues and realities, and it is not clear in its thinking about the roadmap to delisting. The list was created over 50 years ago, when the world was a very different place, but the thinking about those of us left on the list has not evolved with time. A cursory glance at the list will tell anybody that several of listed territories are not ready for independence, and many have found an accommodation with a so called administering power that suits them and that they wish to continue with. I fully accept this is not the case for some, but as has been said so many times, let us look at the territories on a case by case basis.

And nor is it the case that the NSGT's are in the same position as we were 50 years ago. We have all developed both economically and socially, we are all better educated, we have, most of us, modern constitutions that reflect the Charter of the UN and basic human rights, and we are many of us largely self-governing. Even the term NSGT's is anachronistic, and shows that the C24 has not moved with the times.

If a territory has reached an accommodation with another country with which they are satisfied, what place has the C24 to tell them they should not be satisfied? If a people has decided of its own free will that it does not wish to seek independence or integration, who is the C24 to tell them they must? If a territory wishes to be removed from the list of NSGT's free of coercion from others, why should that not be permitted to happen? There are concerns in the NSGT's that you are simply not listening to us, and what we wish for our countries.

There were calls to think outside the box. But this issue requires not just thinking outside the box, and many years of fine words and speeches, it requires action. It requires action by all parties involved, the NSGT's, the administering powers and the C24, with the wishes and interests of the NSGT's at the forefront and supported by the C24. Solidarity with the NSGT's means just that, in some cases Member States setting aside their own interests to respect the wishes and dignity of the people of the NSGT's. And if you really want to think outside the box, why not reform the membership of the Committee, and add some representatives from the NSGT's from the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Atlantic regions, and be guided by those of us who work at the coalface. Who really understand what it is like to be not independent.

Now let me also deal briefly with the particular case of the Falkland Islands. Our Islands had no native population, and in that respect we are unlike most colonial situations of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. But the reality is the the Falkland Islands has been continuously and peacefully settled under British administration for over 180 years. I am a sixth generation Falkland Islander, I have 8<sup>th</sup> generation grand children, and there are now families in the Islands who can trace 10 generations. Settlers arrived and departed of their own free will (well, perhaps excluding those who were shipwrecked) and arrived from many different parts of the world. At recent censuses Islanders have identified themselves as coming from over 40 different ethnic backgrounds. Until the invasion of the Falklands in 1982 there were no immigration restrictions. Those that exist now under Falklands law are non partisan and non discriminatory.

But we are Falkland Islanders, and the Islands are what they are now because of the work and commitment of our pioneering forefathers. As a non-independent territory there is no Falkland Islands nationality as such, but like the other UKOT's we have British nationality. But be in no doubt, we are Falkland Islanders first and British second.

We have developed our Islands over the decades, and have become economically self sufficient and internally self governing. Our economy is based historically on farming, but more recent developments in fishing and tourism, have through careful stewardship brought us to a position where we have no borrowing, and reserves three times annual recurrent expenditure. We pay no taxes to the UK, nor does it benefit from any of our natural resources, and we receive no income from them. We have a modern constitution which guarantees the right to self determination, guarantees that

the natural resources of the Islands belong to the Government and people of the Falkland Islands, and guarantees full internal self government, with foreign affairs and defence being the responsibility of the UK Government, as it is with all its remaining OT's.

This is a relationship we have developed over many years, and one which suits our current state of development, and suits the people of the Falkland Islands. We are not a colony, and have not been a colony for many years.

It has been an onerous task for the Government of the Falkland Islands over the last decade to protect ourselves from the unwanted attentions, economic blockades and covetous eyes of our nearest neighbour. It has become necessary for us to engage in the international debate about the Falkland Islands, and our right to choose the Government that best suits us. To separate the truth and reality from the myths and slogans used by Argentina to try to persuade others we have no rights has not been easy. At various times we have been described as squatters, at other times we do not exist. Well I can assure you we do exist, we have over 180 years of heritage in the Falkland Islands, we are a people in our own right, and we have the basic human right to determine our own future.

Many have asked over the years how we can demonstrate to them the real will of the Falklands people. So the Falkland Islands Government (not the UK Government) decided last year to hold a referendum to publicly, and in an open and transparent manner, demonstrate to the international community the views of Falkland Islanders. The referendum was supervised by a team of 8 experienced reputable independent election observers from Brazil, Chile, Mexico, New Zealand, Uruguay and the USA. The mission concluded that the process was free and fair, and was executed in accordance with international standards and Falklands law, and was technically sound.

The question put was "Do you wish to remain an overseas territory of the United Kingdom". Yes or No.

Turnout for the referendum was 92%. The result was that 99.8% of the vote was for Yes.

We have subsequently gone to the international community to explain why the referendum was held, what the results were, and asked them to support the fundamental human right of Falkland Islanders to choose their own form of Government for themselves. To be absolutely clear, we are not asking countries to support the UK position any more that we are asking them to support the Argentine position. We are asking them to support the basic human right of Falkland Islanders to self determination.

Such a demonstration of the will of a people should be sufficient to persuade

Members of the C24 that the Falkland Islands are not a colony, and are free to choose. Whilst Member States may or may not wish to choose sides in a dispute between the UK and Argentina, as Members of the C24 in solidarity with the people of the NSGT's, your duty is to the people of the Falkland Islands.

And finally Chair, let me deal with the issue of negotiations about the future of the Falkland Islands. The UN and its Committees are rightly committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes, as are we all. Argentina calls for negotiations with the UK on the Falkland Islands, but refuses to include the legitimate Government of the Islands in any talks or discussions. The UK has repeatedly stated there will be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until the Falkland Islanders so wish. And this is not our wish. Recently in London the Foreign Minister of Argentina refused to meet with the UK Foreign Secretary because Falkland Islands Government representatives were to be present for discussions about the Islands.

The Falkland Islands Government has written to the Government of Argentina on two recent occasions proposing discussions on matters of mutual interest. These letters have been ignored. The Argentine position is that it only wishes to negotiate with the UK Government, and only about the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, over the heads of the people of the Islands. They implicitly and explicitly deny Falkland Islanders the right to self determination. This should be anathema to this Committee and to all people who support basic human rights. Any resolution that come from this Committee that does not acknowledge the rights of the people is a disgrace, and should not be supported.

Mr Chairman, we will meet again in June and speak about these issues more formally. I wish the Members of the C24 good fortune in the mean time, and trust that discussions on the way forward for the C24 can be shared with all of us, since it is our lives and our livelihoods that you are discussing and determining.

Mike Summers  
29/5/13