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THIRD INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: commitments and actions for decolonization in the Non-Self-Governing Territories

**Managua, Nicaragua
31 May to 2 June 2016**

STATEMENT BY

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(FALKLAND ISLANDS (MALVINAS))*

*** A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falklands Islands (Malvinas) (see ST/CS/SER.A/42).**



FALKLAND ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

PRESENTATION BY MS KRYSSTEEN ORMOND, JP.

**FALKLAND ISLANDS GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS
GIVEN BEFORE THE PACIFIC REGIONAL SEMINAR OF THE C-24
MANAGUA, NICARAGUA, 31ST MAY – 2ND JUNE 2016**

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen:

I am pleased to be here in Managua for the Pacific Regional Seminar and I thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the Falkland Islands. I come to you as a representative of the Islands and address you all on behalf of the Falkland Islands Government.

The theme this year is the 'Implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism; commitments and actions for decolonization in the Non Self Governing Territories'. I find this personally a very poignant theme; at twenty-seven years of age, I am in the third decade of my life and it is a life I have lived not in the shadow of the Falklands War, but rather in the wake of it. I mean by this not simply the wake in the sense of the ripples which follow a boat, but also with the feelings of change and rebuilding after an unexpected event. In the 1980s the Falkland Islands woke up to a very different way of living and a new vision of how the future could, and should, be.

My grandfather was born in the Islands in 1926, and would have been 90 years old last month. My mother was born in 1962, and whilst I am certain she will not appreciate my telling this seminar her age, she is now 53. I, as I have described, am 27. You may be wondering why I am discussing three generations of my family tree with you all here today, but I beg your indulgence for a few moments more.

When my grandfather was born, the political status of the Falkland Islands was that of a colony of Great Britain. In 1962, and therefore when my mother was born, the Falkland Islands were referred to as a British Dependency. Finally, in 1985, a new Falkland Islands Constitution was enacted, and I was born in 1988. A change in nomenclature in 2002 allows me to speak to you all today as a citizen of a British Overseas Territory.

In just three generations of my family, the Falkland Islands have moved through a process of political growth, cultural development and decolonization.

I am sure many of you attending this seminar will have heard much about the Falkland Islands – some of it I hope is truthful and interesting, but, sadly, I would imagine some of what you have heard misrepresents the reality of my homeland.

The Falkland Islands are economically self-sufficient; we raise our own taxes, and we fund our own services. We don't send taxes or other funds to the United Kingdom Government, and nor do we receive large subsidies at the expense of the UK tax-payer as some might have you believe. You may wonder where these funds go. In a community just shy of 3,000 people, what could we possibly spend money on?

Firstly, we have an excellent public healthcare system, which is free at point of service for all entitled patients. In cases where our health services cannot support the acute or chronic care of a patient, we have systems in place and can fund the overseas care of that patient, including travel, accommodation and medical bills, at no cost to the patient themselves.

We have free universal education up until the completion of a Bachelor's degree. Our students travel overseas not only to the United Kingdom, but also to Canada and Australia, funded exclusively by the Falkland Islands Government. Recent studies suggest that between 70-75% of these students return to the Islands within five years of completing their studies. They are not contractually obliged to; the students simply want to contribute back to a community which funded their own personal development. This I can attest to, having studied overseas in the United Kingdom, Brazil and Argentina before returning home.

The strength of our economy allows us to provide such services to the people who live, work, raise their families and retire in the Falkland Islands. 60% of our GDP comes from the sale of fishing licences, and a group of independent scientists in 2008 described Falkland Islands fishery as 'one of the best-managed in the world' in terms of scientific research, investment into the industry and regulatory oversight and enforcement. Our thriving tourism sector sees in excess of 60,000 visitors per year to the Islands, largely from cruise ships. Few other places in the world can boast that they receive twenty times their own population in visitors per annum.

Agriculture has been the bedrock of the Falklands economy for the better part of 250 years. Innovations in bloodlines, pasture and grazing techniques and the operation of an EU-certified abattoir mean that the Falkland Islands are, year on year, exporting more, higher-quality meat products to the EU, and wool products to the rest of the world.

We recently saw the conclusion of an exploratory phase of hydrocarbons activity. It is still many years until the Falkland Islands are an oil exporting nation, but we have already invested heavily in marine research to enable us to develop an industry which compliments the fisheries and tourism sectors, rather than damages them. We pride ourselves on being custodians of nature, and the Falkland Islands goes to great lengths to protect our pristine environment and seas.

Ladies and gentlemen, I mentioned earlier my fear that you had, in the past, heard mistruths about my home. One of those mistruths, I put to you, is the suggestion that Falkland Islanders are an implanted population, and that we are merely a collection of White British citizens, sent from London, as a colonial placeholder.

In our 2012 Census, people of the Falkland Islands represented 36 national identities and 60 countries of birth. We are a truly multicultural society, with communities from the Philippines, Chile, Zimbabwe, Argentina and Russia (to name but a few) all living happily alongside one another. English is our official language, but as with any bustling capital city, a walk through the streets or the supermarket will lead to the sounds of other languages including Tagalog, Spanish, Georgian and Shona, mingling together.

This multicultural society is a clear representation of the organic nature of settlement; people will come from afar to a new place, build a life and build their home. There was no native population in the Falkland Islands prior to British settlement. Perhaps settling an empty archipelago has led to the accusations of an implanted population, but of course, any nationality arriving in the Falklands would have been settlers, in the absence of a native

population. And so the Falklands population has grown and thrived. We are a people with our own unique background, and our own unique culture which draws on the diverse, shared heritages of the nationalities that have settled here.

The United Nations Charter, the ICCPR and the ICESCR all safeguard the same key principle: *'All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.'* The people of the Falkland Islands are just that: we are a people. There are some, perhaps even in this room today, who might have you believe we are not a people; they may put forth the idea that Islanders are a group of people in a place, but that that does not equate to being a people.

This I challenge.

We are a people.

My own heritage is largely Scottish, although there is a little Scandinavian in my family tree. My godson is equal parts Malaysian, Scottish, Chilean and Falkland Islander. I do not identify with life in England because I did not grow up there; I do not identify as English because I was not born in England. I am a Falkland Islander. So, too, are my peers. We have a right to a say in our own future. Every man, woman and child in the world has that right.

The Falkland Islands are a fair and democratic society. General Elections are held every four years to elect our Legislative Assembly which is comprised of eight Members. They are chosen, democratically, from within the community they stand to serve. Constitutional reform in 2009 devolved more power for self-governance to the Legislative Assembly. These eight men and women pass our laws, determine our Government policies, and lead our country. Whilst the laws the Government writes and passes may follow the principles of other developed societies, they are ours, for our Islands and our community. The Government of the United Kingdom supports the Islands in terms of defence and foreign affairs only. Our Government is autonomous.

What I have described to you, ladies and gentlemen before me today, is a country with a free and fair democratic political system. A nation that is economically self-sufficient, and internally self-governing. A country that is proud to support its people and invest in its young people. A country that recognises and upholds international covenants and respects the principles of human rights. I have described to you a modern, thriving nation with a population who know what they want in life, and what they want for their future.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, does this sound like a colony? I don't think so.

Self-determination is more than a potentially abstract international principle - it is a basic human right. It is my right, the right of my family and the right of my peers in the community to freely choose our own future. It is the right to say, *'I choose this.'* It is the right to organise a free, fair and democratic referendum and show the world that our status as a British Overseas Territory is by choice and not by colonization.

The United Nations Decolonization Committee has an unenviable task of eradicating colonialism in modern times. The difficulties that accompany such a remit in no way undermine the importance of the mission. As a young person who has grown up shaped by the principle of self-determination for all peoples, the concept of colonialism in the modern age is difficult for me to take in. I do not live in a colony. Each dictionary I have painstakingly consulted (not just in English but in Spanish, for parity) makes reference to a colony being lands under the subjugation of another power, larger than the lands in question, and far away, with no freedom to determine one's own future. Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, let me reiterate, I do not live in a colony.

Members of this seminar, and members who attend the session in New York a few weeks from now, will have heard the case of the Falkland Islands described as a 'special and particular colonial situation', owing to the dispute

over the sovereignty of the Islands. This is a euphemistic way of saying that it doesn't really matter what the people of the Falkland Islands think about the decolonisation process, and it doesn't really matter that we've already been decolonised. Argentina maintains its claim to the Falkland Islands, and so it's just a little bit easier to say that the Falklands is a 'special colonial situation' that cannot be resolved until the sovereignty dispute is resolved, than it is to really address the facts: we are not a colony, self-determination *is* a right applicable to the people of the Falkland Islands and the work of the Special Committee on Decolonisation is done when it comes to the Falkland Islands.

The people of the Falkland Islands have spoken, have voted, have travelled to this seminar year on year to tell you all the very thing I have just done. We are not a colony. Our only wish now is that you accept this truth, and you allow us to continue to develop our country and our society the way we see fit, to determine our own future, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Mr Chairman, thank you for letting me address this seminar today.

Ms Krysteen Ormond, JP

Falkland Islands Government Representative to the United Nations Decolonization Committee