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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: the future for decolonization in
the Non Self-Governing Territories: what are the prospects?**

**Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
16 to 18 May 2017**

STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF

THE MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD GROUP

Caribbean regional Seminar on the “Future of Decolonisation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. What are the Prospects??”

National Insurance Services Headquarters, Kingstown

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Statement of the Melanesian Spearhead Group

Mr. Chairman, I acknowledge the traditional landowners of these Islands and the Government and peoples of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. On behalf of the Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, Ambassador Amena Yauvoli, please convey our most humble gratitude to the government and people of St. Vincent and Grenadines for their kind hospitality and generosity in hosting us here albeit for a few days only.

I would like to note the decision to bring this important seminar to the islands of the Caribbean. The choice of venue highlights the urgency of the task ahead of us: namely when we bring the issue of decolonisation and couple it with the urgency of climate change: the reality cannot be any more stark than on an island like Saint Vincent.

In brief Mr. chairman, the Melanesian Spearhead Group is a sub-regional organisation in the Pacific region with 5 members, namely Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and the National Liberation and Socialist Front of Kanaky (FLNKS), and the Timor Leste, Republic of Indonesia and the United Liberation Movement for West Papua respectively as Associate members and observer of this organisation. Our history as a sub-regional organisation is steeped in political liberation movements in the Melanesian Sub-region. Since our establishment in the mid 80's, the political aspiration of our member countries was to advocate for the right to self-determination of all Melanesian sisters and brothers. As the one of the founder and first Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, the late Fr. Walter Lini stated; “We will not be free until all Melanesians are free”. Today Mr. Chairman, we continue to accompany our Melanesian sisters and brothers across the sub-region as they seek to fulfill their right to self-determination:

Mr. Chairman, our programme for political governance that was endorsed by our members at the Foreign Ministers Meeting in 2016 in Lautoka, Fiji, called for a 2-pronged approach focus:

- Accompaniment; and
- Constructive Engagement.

ACCOMPANIMENT

Mr. Chairman, the MSG Foreign Ministers conducted a mission to Kanaky New Caledonia from the 24th to the 28th of April, to assess the state of progress of the implementation of the Noumea Accord. I would like to highlight a number of observations from the mission. The mission's Terms of Reference was directly extracted from the outcomes of the last UN mission in 2014. This mission highlighted the vision and discernment of the Kanak leaders, the New Caledonian people of European descent and the French government in agreeing to the terms set forth by the Noumea Accord.

This mission noted the critical role played by the C-24 to accompany the process as stated in the Noumea Accord. In the 2014 UN mission, the concerns were raised regarding the registration of all Kanaks towards the General Electoral list is one of the key elements that remains outstanding. Mr. Chairman, to date the government of France is working closely with the government of New Caledonia to resolve this matter as the registration of all citizens is the responsibility of the Government of France. The mission noted the urgency in addressing this matter and concern was raised on the corroboration between the delays in registering the Kanak voters and the political aspiration of the non-independence political parties to remain part of France.

The mission noted the progress to date on the project by the FLNKS and other political parties to engage in the exercise of defining the elements that would constitute what is termed today as a "COMMON DESTINY" for the people of Kanaky New Caledonia. Common Destiny undergirds the referendum of 2018 for Kanaky New Caledonia as the Noumea Accord puts into place a process to hear the voice of the people through the proposed referendum. It is for this very reason that the list of eligible voters of all Kanaks is done before the referendum so that the result of the referendum is uncontested and incontestable.

One of its recommendation Mr. chairman is to call on the UN to conduct a mission to assess the progress to date BEFORE the referendum in 2018 so that the UN is informed of the progress or lack thereof of the implementation of the Noumea Accord.

FLNKS in collaboration with the MSG Secretariat is organizing a series of visits by the FLNKS to the other MSG member countries to study their transfer of sovereign

competences. The first of such a visit was made in March this year to Vanuatu and the exchanges highlighted the shortage of capacity that Vanuatu faced when deciding to access full independence in 1980. As stated by the representative of Dominica yesterday, the dilemma of accessing independence against being adequately developed was faced by Vanuatu. The aspiration for Independence and the right to determine a future that is theirs was too strong. In turn, there was some envy of the Kanak people that are given the opportunity, through the Matignon and the Noumea Accord to prepare for Independence.

One final point on the MSG accompaniment programme is the priority given by the leaders of the MSG to build the capacity of the MSG members around governance and administration skillsets through the provision of scholarships, employment and secondment opportunities for its members. This is done deliberately to alleviate the pressures on the shortage of skilled capacity in the accession to independence.

Constructive Engagement

Mr. Chairman, the second prong of the governance programme addresses what is termed: Constructive Engagement. This is all about engagement and dialogue. As noted in the outcomes of the Lautoka MSG Foreign Ministers Meeting in 2016, constructive engagement includes calls on the secretariat to develop platforms of engagement for its members and partners with a view to addressing the political aspirations of the peoples of Melanesia. When admitting the Republic of Indonesia and the United Liberation Movement of West Papua as members of the MSG respectively in 2013 and in 2015, the intention of the leaders of the MSG was to foster and develop a discussion around the issues and concerns on the rights of the peoples of West Papua.

The importance of dialogue was highlighted yesterday. MSG has taken on itself to create and institutionalise this dialogue, nurture it and develop it in the medium to longer term to address the concerns of the Republic of Indonesia and the United Liberation Movement for West Papua. Our efforts to accompany our members will be assessed in due course and adjustments will be made to further refine our accompaniment and constructive engagements with our members.

In terms of our theme, the added value that sub-regional organisation offer to monitor, accompany and even initiate constructive engagement and dialogue may be a way

forward for the C-24 to address its objective. This method of decentralized cooperation may allow the C-24 to have greater flexibility in being more in touch with the developments on the ground through sub-regional and regional partner organisations.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, the Melanesian Spearhead Group has taken on this daunting task as the matter of decolonisation is and will remain a political challenge for its members in the years to come. The MSG 2038 Plan make specific mention of the issue of Decolonisation as a critical issue that the group will need to address with some urgency. There is no doubt Mr Chairman that we will stumble and err, but to not act will not bring an end to colonialism in our sub-region, not in the world for that matter. One of the concepts currently being assessed by the MSG Secretariat is the establishment of a group of advisors that will accompany the efforts of the MSG members to find a way forward that will ensure that the rights to self-determination of all Melanesians are respected.