



Papua New Guinea Statement

**by First Secretary, Mr Peter Bonny
at the Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation
of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of
of Colonialism: the future for decolonization in the Non-Self-Governing Territories: what are the
prospects?,
to be held Saint Vincent and Grenadines, 16 - 18 May 2017**

Mr Chairman,

At the outset, I wish to extend my delegation's gratitude to the Government of Saint Vincent and Grenadines for hosting this seminar on this beautiful island country and the C24 Chair and Bureau for agreeing to have the meeting here. We wish to also particularly thank the local authorities for the generous hospitality and courtesies extended to my delegation.

Let me also take this opportunity to particularly welcome to this Seminar our friends from the Pacific Islands region and express our ongoing commitment to work closely with you all to find a mutually agreeable way forward in your respective quest for self-determination.

We would also like to acknowledge the Chair and the Bureau's efforts to lead our work, which often times, to say the least, has faced its challenges, but assure you of my delegation's interest to work with you and the other C24 member delegations as well as other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the outcomes of this seminar facilitates in a more focused, robust and concrete way the successful delivery of the mandate we are entrusted by the international community, under the UN Charter, which is to emancipate all people's still under the yoke of colonialism, which continues to be a perennial blight on the United Nations.

Mr Chairman,

As approved by the General Assembly Resolution 71/122 at its seventy-first session in 2016, this Committee is tasked to explore possible practical ways and means but within the ambit of its mandate to find options and approaches that are workable and conducive to further intensify and speed up the United Nations decolonization process.

This is an excellent opportunity for us to move away from the norm and consider the decolonization processes with fresh ideas for a much more speedy, transparent and collaborative efforts by all concerned relevant parties.

This should bring about positive changes to achieve the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of those territories for a desired political future they each want.

Increased C24 Annual Meetings

Mr Chairman,

My delegation recognizes the high political sensitivities of the decolonization agenda, which is why this process remains inconclusive and for over half a century. The imperative to unshackle the chains that continue to deny self-determination to colonized people worldwide demands that this Committee, in particular and UN, as a whole, need to do better. There is a need, in my delegation's view, to clearly identify on a case-by-case basis the existing weaknesses, major challenges and opportunities and focus on addressing them in a more objective and practical manner to find possible long-term solutions rather than the usual regular meetings annually that has proven to be inadequate. This Committee has had briefings and petitions, repeating time and again the various similar issues that stakeholders bring to every meetings of the C24 and which has unfortunately become a cyclical activity without much headway made for the future of the majority of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories.

It is in this spirit that my delegation deems it necessary that the C24 consider additional specific meetings in its annual work calendar with clearly defined parameters to concretely advance on a case-by-case basis to bring justice to the long-suffering people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. I will elaborate further, in a moment, Papua New Guinea's proposal.

My delegation is fully cognizant that in the UN, to undertake additional work outside of the Committee's approved work program requires additional resources and this also needs the approval of the General Assembly

We would therefore like to firstly, suggest that the Committee should consider holding two additional meetings in its annual work programme that will be specifically tasked and devoted to consider each of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territory on a case-by-case basis. This could be arranged in such a way, where, in each half of the calendar year, one Pacific, Caribbean and other Non-Self-Governing Territories, could be the subject of the Committee's focused attention.

The key objectives would be to clearly identify on a case-by-case basis the existing areas of institutional weaknesses of the Committee's work as it relates to each case; the major challenges faced by Non-Self-Governing Territories; the Administering Powers evolving perspectives; the opportunities that need to be harnessed; and focused work that must be done to address those specific issues in a more objective and practical manner to find a pathway forward to conclude the decolonization process.

A second and related proposal my delegation would like to propose for the Committee's consideration is to look at the merits of approving appropriate recommendations for the General Assembly to further consider, decide and fund a one-off Ad Hoc Seminar or Workshop, from time-to-time and as maybe necessary, that will not be at the UN political level but instead at Non-State actors level by inviting relevant participants from academia, CSOs, NGOs and the private sector, where high-level biased political perspectives could be minimized and for an objective, fresh out-of-box possible pathways or options could be proposed for C24 to consider and to present to the General Assembly, to take forward to an expeditious conclusion the decolonization agenda.

Decolonization Committee's enhanced dialogue with Administering Powers

Mr Chairman,

Another, important area of relevance, in my delegation's perspective, that could help the decolonization process forward, is to review the existing arrangements within the C24 and the UN General Assembly, in general, in the way the Administering Powers have been engaged in the decolonization process. Whilst we recognize and appreciate the ongoing submission of annual information on developments taking place in Non-Self-Governing Territories, as mandated under UN Charter Article 73 (e), and at the C24 process, my delegation believes that there is further scope to strengthen the dialogue between C24 and the Administering Powers

Papua New Guinea therefore suggests that the Committee take a critical look at enhancing the level of engagement with Administering Powers individually and on a case-by-case basis, on a regular basis, for a genuine and meaningful dialogue on the question of self-determination of the Non-Self-Governing territories under their jurisdiction. Presently, in our view, this is insufficiently done and many a times some Administering Powers deliberately refuse to engage with the Committee.

The intention of the exchanges is for improved and better understanding between C24 and for that matter the UN General Assembly and the Administering Powers with regards to the Non-Self-Governing Territories future.

Such an approach could prove useful to facilitate future Visiting Missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories under their respective jurisdiction, which at present is few and far between.

Another potential element in this regard could be for the Committee to explore calling on the Secretary-General, through the General Assembly, to deploy his Good Offices to initiate or strengthen existing arrangements for dialogue with Administering Powers on the Non-Self-Governing territories under their jurisdiction. The objective is to enhance the level of appreciation and the practicalities of what could be done to address the decolonization agenda in a meaningful and result-oriented way.

A further dimension could be the consideration for the C24 members and the General Assembly to endorse the C24 Chair and the "Friends of the Chair" – this does not necessarily need to consist of all C24 Bureau members but a limited number of interested Committee members – to engage with Administering Powers individually and on a regular interval and on a case-by-case basis to have a constructive and meaningful dialogue on each of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories under their respective jurisdiction. This is an area that remains untapped and deserves serious consideration and attention.

Bilateral engagement between concerned parties to resolve issues disputes

Mr Chairman,

My delegation appreciates the utility of bilateral dialogue between concerned parties over Non-Self-Governing Territories in question. We continue to welcome and support the strident efforts made by respective concerned parties in this regard and would further encourage this useful engagement.

On the issue of Falkland Islands or Malvinas Islands, Papua New Guinea is encouraged by the recent past efforts made by the United Kingdom and Argentina to address the issues involved. Whilst my delegation recognizes the important challenging and sensitive issues involved, we encourage both parties to continue to engage and

maintain dialogue at all levels to find lasting political solutions to this territory. The Committee's work will only be made much more easier and complementary if both parties help this important process reach a mutually amicable solution satisfactory to all concerned parties.

Mr Chairman,

Similarly, with regards to the Question of Western Sahara, Papua New Guinea recognizes the sensitivities involved, including the relevance and importance of engaging in an inclusive manner all relevant stakeholders in this process. My delegation has also taken due note of the most recent information circulated to the C24 membership by the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Papua New Guinea therefore urges all concerned parties to engage in peaceful bilateral dialogue as well as strengthen their support for the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to engage with all relevant parties to seek a lasting and peaceful solution to determine the future status of Western Sahara.

Regional Groups to engage with C24

Mr Chairman;

We believe regional and sub-regional organizations could contribute to the work of the decolonization process under the ambit of C24. Tapping into their knowledge and experiences in engaging with local authorities and peoples in Non-Self-Governing Territories and the administering powers could be useful for the Committee.

In this regard, consideration needs to be given for invitations to the relevant regional bodies that could play some useful role at future Decolonization Committee meetings to share their views on the decolonization processes taking place in various Non-Self-Governing Territories. Their in-depth knowledge of local or regional politics could play an important role in this process.

Strategic Approaches to Concluding Self-Determination Process

Mr Chairman,

In order to reduce the outstanding number of Non-Self-Governing Territories in the process we have embarked on, Papua New Guinea would also propose for the Committee's consideration to establish a strategic approach to how this could be done. We suggest that focused and special attention be given to those Non-Self-Governing Territories that have made substantive progress and are on the verge of the final stage of self-determination.

In the context of those Non-Self-Governing Territories that have progressed to a level of readiness for self-determination referendum, it is the responsibility of this Committee to ensure at all times that the referendum process, including its conduct and the final outcome, is just, fair, transparent and reflects the genuine will of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. There must also be respect from all the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territory, the Administering Power and the UN membership, for the referendum's final outcome should all due processes are done above board.

A fundamental issue that C24 must pay particular focused attention to is the high importance of the way the question(s) are framed in the self-determination ballot. This must be easy and clear to be understood by all the people, particularly those eligible to cast a vote, in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

These need to form an integral part of the public awareness and advocacy arrangements in the Non-Self-Governing Territories as it pertains to their future destiny.

When questions set during self-determination ballots are not appropriately framed and not easily understood and less clearer to the voting population of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the potential results could lead to the self-determination process being prolonged.

In closing, Papua New Guinea would reassure this meeting that we remain steadfastly committed to remain an integral part of this Committee and more importantly, remain flexible to consider all potential and meritorious options and approaches that will yield rendering the future that the existing 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories want for their respective peoples.

I thank you.