

Distr. RESTRICTED
PRS/2025/CRP.32

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**FOURTH INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF
COLONIALISM**

**Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Fourth
International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: pathways to a
sustainable future – advancing socioeconomic and cultural development
of the Non-Self-Governing Territories**

**Dili, Timor-Leste
21 to 23 May 2025**

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 Falkland Islands (Malvinas) (see ST/CS/SER.A/42)**

Madam Chair, Excellencies, distinguished guests,

Thank you. I'd like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to our hosts Timor L'este for their warm hospitality, and to all the honourable delegates here today for making the time to listen to the voice of the Falkland Islanders. My name is Teslyn, and I am a democratically elected Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Falkland Islands.

Yes, I'm a real person and my people are real. My people have existed longer than this committee, longer than the UN.

We wish to be respected on our own terms. Our accent sounds British, and yes, this is how I speak, this is how I look — but no, I'm not from the south of England. I'm a seventh-generation Falkland Islander, and some families can trace their heritage back nine, ten generations.

I sound like this because my people choose to be British, and we maintain close links. We have our own law and constitution, and the democratic progress we have made in creating a prosperous economy and society, post-colonialism is astounding for a people so small in number.

Even today, our society still feels like a village running a country. We are governed through the election of 8 political leaders — it is we who design and ascend our laws, our policies, our finance. It's a lot of work, but it fosters deep care, resilience, and community.

The journey of Timor L'este is an inspiration, the recognition of the people's choice and self-determination at its heart. Each society has its own journey, sometimes violent challenges, and while some experiences may appear similar, they cannot be directly compared.

However, the right of all peoples to self-determination — are values we all deeply share. It is our firm belief that only the people of a land have the right to shape their political future. Our central challenge is maintaining our people's freedom and improving self-governance. Not including our wishes also exposes us to likely colonisation from Argentina. And a loss of post-colonial progress for our people.

One of the best reflections of how we care for each other is in our response to health and education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Falkland Islands Government worked relentlessly to protect our people. We lost no lives to the virus. We came up with creative ways to support tourism and mental well-being — offering travel vouchers to every resident so people could rest, reconnect with the islands, and support local businesses. We even vaccinated our fishing crews and visiting foreign workers, and helped repatriate stranded cruise passengers when other ports closed their doors in South America.

The Falklands Government develop our economy, and care for our people. We fund our students' flights and tuition to pursue education abroad — something we're especially proud of, as educational opportunities used to be far more limited.

Our commitment to the environment is equally strong. We demand the highest environmental standards for our economic activity, always striving to connect business to community benefit, worker safety, and sustainability.

We manage our own finances. We don't take aid from the UK. we stand on our own feet. The only support we require is in defence, because of the active threat from Argentina who wish to colonise our homeland.

And, while on that point, let me be clear: **we do not want to be a colony again**

Our incredible journey — built on fortitude and community — is under threat by those who see our home as a prize.

I will labour this point because there is also **no** bilateral question here. Only the voice of the people of the Falklands, our wishes are the only ones that matter. It is not the Government of the UK, and it is certainly not the Government of Argentina.

I'm deeply proud to be a Falkland Islander. For us, the Falklands is not some abstract idea about territory, or a geopolitical trophy. It is the soil under our fingernails, the rocks our homes were built from, the peat we cut to keep warm during brutal 19th-century winters. We built the towns, the roads, the schools — a way of life shaped by our unique identity and history.

Madam Chair, I would like to thank the members of this committee that have acknowledged already that it is for the people to decide their future.

To make our voice unmistakably clear, we held a referendum in 2013, where only the Falkland Islanders could vote. It was validated by independent observers from six countries, who confirmed it was in line with international democratic standards. The result was **99.8% voting in favour of remaining a self-governing British Overseas Territory**. This is our free choice.

Yet we continue to also be a threatened people. The Government of Argentina wants to remove our rights to reside in our homeland. They come here to this committee to ask for support to colonise our homeland. The only real path to resolution is for Argentina to abandon its colonial ambition to eradicate the people of the Falklands.

The very notion that two other governments should negotiate our future, is colonialist — particularly when Argentina's constitution includes the claim to our home, mandating their goal of any discussion. And make no mistake — the elected Falkland Islands Government speaks for our people, not the UK, not Argentina. Ignoring our voice while debating our fate is dehumanising.

Our humanity persists and we remain open to good neighbourly relations despite the atrocities caused to our people. Because cooperation is urgently needed in our region if we wish to achieve sustainability— especially on high seas governance and ocean health, and colonialist attitudes from our neighbours shouldn't prevent progress. The South Atlantic remains the only major region without a high-seas agreement. Lawlessness and

environmental exploitation thrive in the region, and our unique expertise to help solve this is ignored. This is a loss for everyone. As the UN Secretary-General has said, colonialist attitudes are a barrier to progress.

We know these waters. We live this land. We conduct the science, we gather the data, and we understand the ecosystems better than any other.

We are also proud to lead on **human rights at sea**. Our sustainable fishery practices are globally respected — using seal-exclusion devices and waste management protocols that reduce interactions with mammals and birds. We enforce licensing which is tied to human welfare and environmental protection. These are not just policies — they are our values in action.

Yesterday, countries made an excellent points to highlight that decolonisation is a route to more sustainable future. We have achieved this under our own stewardship and not the UKs.

Our islands may be small, but they are full of innovation, and our achievements prove that sustainable practice and prosperity can coexist. Our isolation has bred self-sufficiency — All experience, including ours is invaluable to developing sustainable small communities.

In closing, I hope I've shown that the Falkland Islands are more than you have often been told. Our diversity, our history, and our resilience are strengths — and we believe the world can learn from us, too.

I ask this committee: Please see us. Hear us. Our political journey is real and it must be recognised and not side-lined due to competing agendas. Because self-determination is not just a right — it is our reality.

Thank you.