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FOURTH INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

**Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Fourth International
Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism:
innovative steps to ensure the attainment of the Sustainable Development
Goals in the Non-Self-Governing Territories**

**Bali, Indonesia
24 to 26 May 2023**

STATEMENT BY

MR. JOHN BIRMINGHAM

(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)**

Statement by John Birmingham Member of the Falkland Islands Legislature

Madam Chair, Distinguished Members of this Committee, Honoured Guests.

It's an honour to speak to this forum and congratulations to you on your election to the Chair of this long-established committee. It's a pleasure to visit such a beautiful island and I would add my thanks to the Indonesian Government, and the people of Bali in particular, for their hospitality.

It's been 18 years since I was last at a meeting of this Committee, and yet it's so familiar it's difficult to see too many advances in its aims. Its very name seems archaic and shows a lack of the realities of some territories in the 21st century. However, I can only speak on behalf of the Falkland Islands. It's now 41 years since, what we consider to be, our liberation. In that time we have become a successful financially independent, if small, democracy and, in the words of a visiting Argentine journalist, "City State". We have an "Islands Plan" and we are confident we can deliver to our electorate.

Previous speakers this week have stated on more than one occasion that there is not one size or solution to fit all of those 17 territories remaining on the list of what are termed "Non Self-Governing Territories".

We heard this week that New Caledonia had 3 referendums in a row. This year the Falklands celebrated the tenth anniversary of our independently verified referendum which had a simple question.

" Do you wish to remain an overseas territory of the United Kingdom."

Madam Chair over 98% of the answers were YES. We have a very diverse population with many coming from South America.

A recent survey in Argentina stated that at least 40% of the population are living below the poverty line and this year's inflation of over 100% is eye watering.

If we had a rerun of the referendum now today, I believe the outcome would be no different.

Our "Islands Plan" which is fully funded by the Falklands, with no outside money, has as its priority, the environment; from increasing our green energy output - which is currently just over 30% - to continuing to trying to persuade other South American countries to join together with us to do something about the uncontrolled and unsustainable over exploitation of the South West Atlantic Ocean, by people who give not a second thought to the future.

Never in recorded history has so much been known, not only about the eco-system, but also about the damage the human race is doing, leaving future generations the problems. Nature knows no political boundaries. It is with sadness that the "Political Elite" in Argentina refuse to allow their scientists to work with our scientists for the benefit of all.

At a time when the world needs to come together, Argentina plays games. Only this week an article was published boasting of a so-called undercover investigation of fauna and flora in the Falklands. This is part of an Argentine Government funded project called "Picto 21" to undermine and damage

the islands; it's not even sophisticated and is costing a huge amount of money at a time when so many are struggling.

Madam Chair, if this committee wishes to be seen less as a talk shop, and restore some credibility, then when a territory on the list of 17 invites a delegation to visit - to look, to listen, and to learn - then they should go! And maybe understand that the world has changed since 2005, and who in this room doesn't know just how much it has changed.

Madam Chair I thank you and this Committee for allowing a Falkland Islander to speak to this Forum.