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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 THE REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD GROUP

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Remarks of the Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Mr Leonard Louma, OBE

To the Pacific Regional Seminar on the Implementation of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism with the theme “Innovative steps to ensure the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Non-Self-Governing Territories”.

24-26 May, Grand Nusa Dua Hotel, Bali, Indonesia

Introduction

Madam Chair

Let me firstly thank you for the invitation to attend this Regional Seminar.

I join others in extending to the Government and people of Indonesia, an Associate Member of our MSG family, our gratitude and thanks for hosting this Regional Seminar and for the exemplary administrative arrangements and the warm hospitality accorded to all participating delegations.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) is happy to attend this Seminar. One of the members of our MSG family, the FLNKS, consists of and represents the indigenous and colonized people of New Caledonia – a Non-Self-Governing Territory within the meaning of the UN Charter and Resolution 1514 (XV) and, may I hasten to add, entitled to the ultimate objectives of the decolonization process – that of independence.

We are here to support the FLNKS and Kanaks call for New Caledonia to be released from the shackles of colonialism.

I acknowledge the presence of authorities from New Caledonia and leaders of the affected colonized peoples of that Non-Self-Governing Territory at this Regional Seminar – with whom we maintain very close relations. I look forward to hearing further accounts of the developments surrounding, and the challenges concerning, implementation of Resolution 1514 (XV) as it relates to New Caledonia, and how all of us might be able to help them in their crusade for self-determination and independence.

For us at the MSG, that were in the vanguard of action to have New Caledonia re-inscribed on the Committee of 24 list in 1986, we value the recognition by the UN family of New Caledonia’s continuing status as a Non-Self-Governing Territory and by that virtue affording its colonized people’s an entitlement to aspire for independence.

Madam Chair

, I am aware that even as I speak in this hall today, many opponents of New Caledonia’s independence cause are promoting the idea that the result of the Third Referendum in New Caledonia has delivered the death knell or coup de grace to the issue of Independence. Far from it, the Kanaks desire and yearning to attain full sovereignty has not been extinguished and, experience of past strongly suggest that we would all do well to help them achieve that goal.

As a party and signatory to the Noumea Accord, FLNKS continues to engage, in good faith, with the Administering Power to achieve its aspirations of full sovereignty. The spirit and intent that went into the framing of the Noumea Accord embodies the “irreversibility” of the process towards this end.

At the risk of repeating what many have highlighted before, let me just state here that the circumstances and manner in which the Third Referendum in New Caledonia was conducted in December 2021 during the height of Covid 19 challenges, and despite calls to defer the referendum by the FLNKS, leaves much to be desired. This has inevitably called to question the credibility of the process and the legitimacy of the results when 56.13% of the registered voters did not participate in the referendum. We remain ready to assist FLNKS in its efforts to seek legal validation of its position on the Third Referendum and the questionable validity of its results.

MSG subscribes to the view that in the absence of a decision by the General Assembly that New Caledonia, a Non-Self-Governing Territory, has attained a full measure of self-government in terms of Chapter XI of the UN Charter, the administering power has the obligation to faithfully discharge its responsibilities to prepare New Caledonia for independence within the spirit and meaning of the UN Resolution 1514 (XV).

MSG countries are committed to do whatever they can to help New Caledonia through the FLNKS vehicle attain its aspirations of sovereignty through peaceful means.

The Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

Madam Chair

In seeking to effectively implement the rights of Non-Self-Governing Territories and Peoples to self-determination and independence as espoused in the UN Resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960, the General Assembly declared 2021-2030 as the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

The basic intention is to intensify efforts and help accelerate progress towards full implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

We note the various UN Resolutions calling on the Administering Powers and the UN System and family of organisations to redouble their efforts in all fields to eradicate colonialism. We urge that concerted efforts are made to implement these Resolutions.

Let us all utilize the opportunity provided by the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism to re-examine our efforts and inject more vigour in our commitment to end colonialism. In some cases we may require to correct course in our strategies and efforts.

Specific Contribution that MSG can make to advance the decolonization agenda concerning the remaining territories on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories (New Caledonia)

Madam Chair

I note from the invitation letter to participate in the Regional Seminar was predicated on the belief by the Committee of 24 that the MSG can make a contribution to advance the decolonization agenda. We thank you for this vote of confidence.

In this regard, let me acknowledge with pride the contribution of two (2) MSG Members, namely Fiji and Papua New Guinea, for their unremitting involvement in the work of the Committee of 24.

We at the MSG recognize our responsibility to assist with the efforts to prepare the Kanaks and New Caledonia towards the genuine exercise of their right to self-determination and eventual accession to independence status.

The MSG's recalibrated strategy and plans include, but not limited to, the following areas:

- Human Resource Development to assist the training of Kanaks in fields and skill-sets useful to assume responsibilities of political and administrative authority. To effect this, we will be arranging attachments to the Public Services of our Member countries, a scholarship programme will be set up to study at our Members Higher Institutions of Learning.
- At the specific request of the President of the New Caledonia Congress, we are facilitating greater cooperation between the MSG Legislatures and the New Caledonia Congress.
- In response to our MSG Leaders directives, we are aggressively looking at ways and means of having New Caledonia participate in the MSG Trade Agreement and its successor agreement—the MSG Free Trade Agreement.
- New Caledonia continues to enjoy invitations from the MSG to participate in our sporting and cultural events. They continue to be allowed to participate in our flagship cultural event the Melanesian Arts and Culture Festival (MACFEST), and the MSG Prime Minister's Cup Football Tournament.
- MSG countries continue to have FLNKS representatives attached to their UN MSG Missions for short periods of time to expose them to the work of the UN and to assist them pursue their cause, personally, at the UN.
- MSG countries have also Included FLNKS Representatives on their Delegations to International Meetings as part of the diplomatic efforts to solicit support for New Caledonia's independence.
- We at the MSG Secretariat have created an FLNKS Desk, to be occupied by an FLNKS personnel, for the sole purpose of having a full-time person managing the issues surrounding New Caledonia and coordinating MSG actions in support of FLNKS efforts towards independence.
- MSG Secretariat is examining options on the best approach to prosecute the desire by FLNKS to seek an Advisory Opinion from the ICJ on the Third Referendum.

Proposals to building transformative pathways to advance the Fourth International Decade for Ending Colonialism

Madam Chair

In relation to proposals to building transformative pathways to advance the Fourth International Decade for Ending Colonialism, we offer the following comments.

We are happy to acknowledge that much has been achieved under the Matignon and Noumea Accords. Due credit must be given to the Administering Power for this.

The period of the Noumea Accord has been characterized by concerted efforts towards "rebalancing", positive changes to the electoral roll and empathy towards the Kanaks rights as a colonized people.

We urge the Administering Power to recommit itself to the ideals and principles espoused in the Noumea Accord which has resulted in the peaceful coexistence of all stakeholders in New Caledonia.

A spirit of constructive cooperation, trust and genuine dialogue prevailed in New Caledonia between the different stakeholders, and between the Administering Power and the signatories to the Noumea Accord prior to the Third Referendum in December 2021.

Regrettably, the decision by the Administering Power surrounding the conduct of the Third Referendum has somewhat eroded the trust of the Kanaks in the impartiality of the Administering Power in the ongoing discussions between the signatories to the Noumea Accord. We join the FLNKS in their calls for the Administering Power to, return to the spirit of the Noumea Accord, and be an impartial arbiter between two competing groups on the future of New Caledonia, post-Third Referendum.

We note the “Cadres for the future” programme developed by the Administering Power and hope that this could be extended to other countries in the region for those Kanaks that wish to study in educational institutions closer to home. There are synergies between this programme and our own MSG scholarship programme which we are prepared to exploit and leverage for the benefit of the Kanaks.

We see value in the placement of New Caledonians in French Embassies in the Region in terms of training them for future diplomatic roles in an Independent New Caledonia Diplomatic Service. We urge the Administering Power to remain faithful to that noble objective and not to succumb to the temptation of a mission drift towards assimilating them into the French Diplomatic Service.

New Caledonia must be allowed to enter into Trade Agreements with neighbouring Pacific Countries. Recent attempts at this have been frustrated by extraneous, noncommercial elements, being added to the prerequisite considerations.

Madam Chair

The Committee of 24’s role in strengthening cooperation and engagement with administering Powers to move the decolonization agenda forward is still very important.

Since 1962, the Non-Self Governing Territories list to which it has responsibilities has dwindled to 17. This is a good measure of the constructive role that the Committee of 24 has played in the decolonization process.

We continue to support the strict maintenance of UN Visiting Missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It is our hope that MSG would be invited to be part of future UN visiting missions to New Caledonia.

Likewise, the role of the overall UN system in supporting Non-Self-Governing Territories must be enhanced.

As it concerns New Caledonia, we would want to see, and support, New Caledonia’s intentions to seek Observer Status to the United Nations.

While the United Nations is still seized with the matter of New Caledonia, we believe that an Observer Status would allow for better conversations to be had between the United Nations and New Caledonia Authorities on developments in that Non-Self-Governing Territory.

Conclusion

Madam Chair

The Fourth Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism offers all of us an opportunity to take stock of the actions we are taking in the implementation of Resolution 1514 (XV) and not only seek to upscale those efforts but to correct course if need be.

Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Non-Self-Governing Territories is essential.

Unfortunately, Reports indicate that efforts to attain these goals, seventeen in total, have been mixed but generally off-track. The onset of Covid 19 and its attendant effects have not helped in addressing the SDGs.

There is an important nexus between the attainment of SDG in Non-Self-Governing Territories and their aspirations of self-determination and independence.

Actions aimed at attainment of these SDG targets will ensure that when Territories and Peoples to which Resolution 1514 (XV) applies eventually attain full self-determination and independence, they will be better placed to take on responsibilities of governance, better assured of maintaining sustainable economic prosperity, better able to sustain equitable and decent living standards and able to take their seats amongst the family of nations as viable independent states.

Thank you.

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