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

**Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Non-Self-Governing Territories: social, economic and environmental challenges**

**Saint George's, Grenada  
9 to 11 May 2018**

**STATEMENT BY**

**MR. ROGER EDWARDS**

**(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).

## **MLA Roger Edwards Pre C24 Draft Speech, Grenada May 2018**

Mr Chairman, honourable delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee. I am Roger Edwards, an elected Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Falkland Islands and today therefore am representing the views of those Islanders.

The Falkland Islands have been on the United Nations List of Non Self Governing Territories since the UN's creation in 1946. Unfortunately the resolution makes no reference to the right of Falkland Islanders to self-determination.

Falkland Islanders enjoy financial self- sufficiency, internal self- government and the right to determine their own future – in other words, the right to self-determination, which is one of the cornerstones of the UN Charter.

The right of Falkland Islanders to determine their own future is unequivocal. The principle of self-determination is enshrined in Article 1, paragraph 2, and again in Chapter XI, Article 73 of the Charter of the United Nations. Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and political Rights and Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights affirm the right of all peoples to self-determination, and lay upon States Parties, including those having responsibility for the administration of Non-Self-Governing Territories, the obligation to promote the realisation of the right and respect it, in conformity with the provisions of the Charter. At no point has the United Nations ever explicitly denied this right to the Falkland Islanders.

Falkland Islanders are British, living in a British Overseas Territory because they want to do so. It is a wish ably demonstrated in March 2013 when we, the Legislative Assembly, organised an internationally observed referendum in which 99.8% of the 92% of the turnout of the voters answered “yes” to the question-

“Do you wish the Falkland Islands to retain their current political status as an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom?”

That result was unequivocal but unfortunately Argentina refuses to accept and recognise the result of that referendum.

I wish to remind this committee that it is not charged by the Secretary General or the General Assembly with discussing or resolving sovereignty disputes nor

to advance, or support, claims to the Falkland Islands, or any other territory - to do so is an abuse of this Committee's purpose.

Contrary to the views of some of this Committee, the Falkland Islanders do not consider themselves to be a colony but a prosperous, internally self-governing overseas territory of the United Kingdom with whom we enjoy a modern relationship and shared values.

I wish to further remind this committee that under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960, people from the Non-Self-Governing Territories can exercise self-determination and reach full measure of Self-Government by Free Association, by Integration or by becoming Independent. Building on this, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2625 (XXV) of 1970 offered a fourth option as an outcome of a people's exercise of the right of self-determination. This fourth option enabled "any other political status freely determined by a people".

I believe that the free and fair Falklands Referendum referred to earlier, carried out under the scrutiny of International Observers, demonstrates that fourth option perfectly.

There was an attempt by Argentina in 2008, in the 4<sup>th</sup> Committee, to remove the right of self-determination in "disputed" territories but this attempt was defeated.

It has been argued that we are not a 'people' but an implanted British population put there to further Britain's colonial aspirations.

Our recent census clearly demonstrates that this is not the case as the evidence produced shows that we have people from more than 60 ethnic background groups living and working peacefully together and they have been doing so for the past 185 years.

We can now claim an A to Z of status holders from Argentina to Zimbabwe who have settled and integrated peacefully into our Islands and our society. Our population has evolved in the same way as that of other countries in the region: immigrants who left their native homelands to seek favour and fortune in overseas countries.

Our parents, grandparents and great grandparents have forged a lifestyle for us to enjoy in a beautiful and unique environment, one for which we retain stewardship until, we in turn, pass it on to our own children and grandchildren. We have families that can trace their ancestry back to the very earliest settlers, over nine generations of living and working in these Islands.

Our ancestors, with all their varied ethnic backgrounds, worked hard to make our Islands prosperous while retaining and conserving its wildlife and abundant marine resources for future generations. We are now self-financing and have been since the late 1980s and we receive no economic aid from Britain nor do we pay any taxes or levies to the United Kingdom.

In the Falkland Islands we are continuing to develop our economy and unique society. We are an Island population and as such strive on challenges. Indeed since 1982 we have grown financially, culturally and with an even greater determination to forge a bright future.

Britain has retained sovereignty over our beautiful Islands since 1765. Britain has never relinquished its sovereignty claim over the Islands and, once again, Falkland Islanders have freely demonstrated their wish to remain British.

The United Kingdom assists us with our foreign affairs and defence. A defence, I might say, only required because of the 1982 conflict. It is a defence that is maintained in order to deter any future aggressor. Stories of massive military build-up in the South West Atlantic are quite frankly just that, stories, not truth.

The Republic of Argentina's claim to these Islands, which it bases on the principle of disruption to its territorial integrity, is without foundation, as the Islands have never legitimately been administered by, or formed part of, the sovereign territory of the republic of Argentina.

We would be delighted to have a normal, friendly relationship with all our neighbours, to freely trade with, work with and discuss things of mutual benefit – such as the conservation of straddling fish stocks. Instead we are not recognised nor accepted as a people in our own right.

Indeed, Argentina has done all it can to damage our economy by persuading Mercosur countries not to permit Falklands' flagged vessels to enter their ports, by passing legislation which will penalise those who participate in the Falklands' hydrocarbon industry, and by disrupting cruise ships travelling to the Falkland Islands. More recently we have learnt of Argentina lobbying in Spain against the Falkland Islands continued quota free and tariff free access to Europe post Brexit.

However more recently we have seen under the presidency of Macri, for the very first time in 36 years, the possible early signs of a new relationship with our neighbours. In September 2016 a joint communique, issued by the Argentine and British Governments, gave us hope that some of the sanctions,

particularly pertaining to over flights and fisheries science, imposed by previous administrations could be lifted and the first fisheries talks about talks will begin this very next week. We welcome these small signs of progress.

While the community still feel the after effects from 1982 – it does not mean the Islands are without compassion and we remain keen to support all humanitarian exercises. This can be evidenced following the tragic loss of the Argentine submarine San Juan, where the community fully supported the immediate mobilisation of search and rescue assets from the Islands.

We, the Falkland Islands Government, have assisted the International Committee of the Red Cross in the truly humanitarian task of attempting to identify the 122 unknown Argentine soldiers lying in the cemetery at Darwin. Following the DNA identification of some 90 of the fallen soldiers, the Falkland Islands Government made arrangements for the visit of over 240 family members who came to the Islands to pray at the gravesides of their lost sons.

Maybe here I can again refer to the UN Charter, this time to chapter XI Article 74 which refers to the general principle of good neighbourliness.

The challenges we face are many. Our approach is not to react to each and every external pressure but to continue to develop the economy in our own way, and to ensure that we are not diverted by outside influences. Our focus will not be diverted by antagonistic attempts to prevent us from pursuing our aims. We are clear that we will concentrate on our goals, on our agenda, not on someone else's.

Mr Chairman, your predecessors have visited Argentina and have no doubt received a one sided fantasy briefing. Each year, for more than a decade, we have invited the Chair and this committee to visit our beautiful Islands and to see for themselves the way the people manage and conserve our natural resources but so far no one has taken up that invitation. Mr Chairman, I hope that you are a man who is open to the truth as I would like to invite you, yet again, publicly, to visit the Falkland Islands to see for yourself our way of life and the freedoms that we enjoy.

Mr Chairman, this is the fourth time that I have addressed this committee and I do hope that over the years our wishes have been expressed both loudly and clearly. I do realise that some people will only hear what they want to hear, others will only hear if they are prepared to listen but I do hope that on this occasion members of this committee are prepared to listen and take note.

I will conclude by asking Members of this committee to ignore the false claims put forward by Argentina and to consider the role of this committee, its aims

and purposes and then to support our wishes to remain an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom and to recognise our right to self-determination as is clearly defined in the various documents I have previously alluded to.

Once again Mr Chairman I thank you for allowing me to speak to this Committee.