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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**

**DISCUSSION PAPER**

**PRESENTATION**

**BY**

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**United Nations Special Committee on Decolonisation**  
**Pacific Regional Seminar on the Third International Decade for the**  
**Eradication of Colonialism**

**9-11 May 2018**

***The Role of the United Nations (UN) System in helping the Non Self-governing Territories (NSGTs) to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)***

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He served for 20 years as Minister of State for External Affairs of the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) Government with duties including the representation of the territorial government before the United Nations (U.N.) Decolonisation Committee, the Special Political and Decolonisation Committee (Fourth Committee), the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-ECLAC), and relevant General Assembly special sessions. He was the founding chair of the UN-ECLAC Ministerial Working Group of Associate Member Countries (AMCs). He was a member of the USVI Political Status Commission and Advisor to the territory's Fifth Constitutional Convention. He was a member of the faculty of the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) Institute for Future Global Leaders, and introduced the first academic course of instruction on "Political Status Options for Small Island Territories" at the University of Guam.

He has also served as Senior Advisor to the Premier of Bermuda and its Independence Commission, the Prime Minister of Curacao, the President of French Polynesia, and the Island Council of Sint Eustatius. He has been the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Constitutional Advisor to the Government of Anguilla, and UNDP Independent Expert to the U.N. Decolonisation Committee Special Missions to Bermuda, and to the Turks and Caicos Islands, respectively. He is the former Secretary-General of the Inter-Virgin Islands Council, a cooperation mechanism between the British and U.S. Virgin Islands, and former Secretary-General of the Caribbean-Pacific Alliance of (U.S.-administered) Dependent Territories.

He has authored four U.N. studies on the access of Non-Independent Countries (NICs) to programmes and activities of the U.N. system, and has written four books and numerous chapters in edited volumes/academic journals on a range of self-determination and decolonisation issues.

## INTRODUCTION

As the theme of the current seminar focuses on overall implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (IDEC), with specific relevance to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Non Self-Governing Territories (NSGTs), the focus of the current paper is on *"The Role of the United Nations (UN) System in helping the NSGTs to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions,"* as identified in paragraph 6(3) of the Guidelines and Rules of Procedure of the Pacific regional Seminar.<sup>1</sup> The paper is specifically related to the Small Island Non Self-Governing Territories (SI-NSGTs) in the Caribbean and Pacific.

The focus of the 2018 seminar on the particular question of the economic and social development through the realisation of the SDGs must not be taken as a deviation from the general question of political decolonisation for the territories. Thus, the particular question of the economic and social dimension cannot be addressed in isolation from the the general question of how to solve the contemporary colonial dilemma with which the SI-NSGTs are faced.

The U.N. has long categorised decolonisation as an issue of Peace and Security. Thus, there is a direct line between the decolonisation process and *SDG # 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions*. If there is any question as to this organic link between decolonisation and peace, one only has to acknowledge the history of member States whose independence was hard fought after the acceleration of the 1960 Decolonisation Declaration period, including the successful independence of Namibia at the beginning of the 1990s after warfare with the apartheid State which occupied it.

The linkage between peace and security and decolonisation did not end there, and are witnessed in contemporary terms. The ongoing process of decolonisation in New Caledonia<sup>2</sup> following the signing of the Matignon and Noumea Accords, under the watchful eye of the UN Decolonisation Committee (C-24), emerged from the response of the indigenous peoples to settler domination which resulted in the death of many Kanaky freedom fighters. The ongoing efforts of the progressive forces in French Polynesia<sup>3</sup> to gain proper reparation for the health, economic and other consequences of thirty years of nuclear testing are also to be recognised in the context of war and peace amid the continued reluctance of the administering Power to accurately acknowledge and adequately compensate the affected persons and their families.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Document A/AC.109/2018/19 of 9 April 2018.

<sup>2</sup> The territory's indigenous name of Kanaky is also used in other UN bodies.

<sup>3</sup> The territory's indigenous name of Ma'ohi Nui is also used in other UN bodies.

And, of course, there is the accelerating use of the NSGTs for military purposes – especially some NSGTs in the Pacific - against longstanding resolutions of the General Assembly calling for such activities to cease, and for the military installations to be removed as they impede the self-determination process. In this last example, the General Assembly is to be commended for the re-insertion of the relevant language in its resolutions in 2017 which has re-awakened an international dialogue on the issue. In this connection, it is important to note that three of the five permanent members of the Security Council (P-5) continue as administering Powers (AP), and that the absence of two of these P-5 members from cooperation with the C-24 ignores longstanding UN resolutions. One of the P-5 is in violation of Article 73e of the U.N. Charter by refusing to provide information to the Secretary-General on the stewardship of its territory.

### **Composition of the Non-Independent Caribbean and Pacific**

Before examining the issue of the role of the U.N., a short review of the geo-strategic context of the Caribbean and Pacific may be useful. These two regions have the most diversified models of governance anywhere ranging from French, New Zealand (NZ), United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US) dependency arrangements. The regions also include various autonomous governance models (Netherlands, NZ, US) and forms of partial and full integration (Netherlands, France, US). A categorisation of the non-independent countries of the two regions is provided in Tables 1 and 2 below.

**Table 1. Non Independent Atlantic/Caribbean (2017)**

<u>Non-Self Governing</u>	<u>Autonomous</u> *	<u>Full / Partial Integration</u> *
Anguilla 1/	Aruba 3/ 9/	Guadeloupe /8 9/
Bermuda 1/	Curacao 3/ 9/	Martinique /8 9/
British Virgin Islands 1/	Sint Maarten 3/ 9/	Guyane 8/ 9/
Cayman Islands 1/	Puerto Rico 7/ 9/	Bonaire 6/ 9/
Montserrat 1/	Fr. Saint-Martin 4/ 9/	Saba 6/ 9/
Turks & Caicos Islands 1/	Saint-Barthélemy) 4/ 9/	St. Eustatius 6/ 9/
U.S. Virgin Islands 2/	Greenland ( <i>Atlantic/Arctic</i> ) 5/ 9/	
	Faroe Islands ( <i>Norwegian/N. Atlantic</i> ) 5/ 9/	

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**\* FOR COMPARISON PURPOSES ONLY.**

1/ British administered dependent territory, listed by UN as non self-governing.

2/ U.S. administered dependent territory, listed by UN as non self-governing.

3/ Semi-autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

4/ Autonomous collectivity with France.

5/ Autonomous arrangement with Kingdom of Denmark.

6/ Partially integrated with Holland.

7/ Un-listed territory on agenda of the U.N. Decolonisation Committee

8/ Overseas department fully integrated with France

9/ Formerly an NSGT and removed from UN list by General Assembly resolution.

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**Source: Dependency Studies Project (DSP), St. Croix, Virgin Islands (2017)**

**Table 2. Non-Independent Pacific (2017)**

<u>Non-Self Governing</u>	<u>Autonomous</u> ***	<u>Full / Partial Integration</u> ***
American Samoa (US) a/	N. Mariana Islands (US) d/h/	Hawaii (US) g/ h/
Guam (US) a/	Cook Islands (NZ) e/ h/	
New Caledonia (Fr.) b/ *		
Fr. Polynesia a/ c/ **	Niue (NZ) e/ h/	
Tokelau (NZ) c/		
Pitcairn f/		

a/ US administered dependent territory, listed by the UN as non self-governing.

b/ French administered dependent territory, listed by the UN as non self-governing.

c/ NZ administered dependent territory, listed by the UN as non self-governing.

d/ Semi-autonomous dependency administered by US.

e/ State in free association with NZ with shared citizenship.

f/ UK administered dependent territory, listed by the UN as non self-governing.

g/ Former NSGT in full integration with US.

h/ Formerly an NSGT and removed from UN list by General Assembly resolution.

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\* *The territory's indigenous name of Kanaky is also used in other UN bodies.*

\*\* *The territory's indigenous name of Ma'ohi Nui is also used in other UN bodies.*

\*\*\* **FOR COMPARISON PURPOSES ONLY.**

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Source: Dependency Studies Project (DSP), St. Croix, Virgin Islands 2017.

The U.N. decolonisation process addresses only those which are formally designated by the General Assembly as Non Self-Governing Territories (NSGTs), and assigned to the UN Decolonisation Committee for consideration. However, to more deeply recognise the challenges faced by the Small Islands Non-Self-Governing Territories (SI-NSGTs), such an examination of the broader governance mosaic which comprised these two regions is useful.

### **The Historic United Nations Mandate**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and its forerunner Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are constructs of the United Nations General Assembly with concentration on implementation in favour of U.N. member States. For the NSGTs, a fundamental question is how they can interface with those UN mechanisms designed for States to realise the SDGs. These questions speak to the level of implementation of U.N. resolutions aimed to assist the SI-NSGTs in their respective development processes by facilitating their participation in programmes and activities of the U.N. system under appropriate modalities.

Interestingly, there is a longstanding mandate to this effect. The participation of NSGTs in programmes and activities of the wider United Nations (UN) system has been the stated aim of the international community since the first session of the UN General Assembly in 1946 when the list of NSGTs was formally created.<sup>4</sup> In this connection, resolutions and decisions of the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) have directed, encouraged, and requested the wider UN system to facilitate the participation of NSGTs in UN programmes in order to enhance the socio-economic development process of these territories. At the first UN Regional Seminar (1991) of the first International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (IDEC), the statement of the representative of the US Virgin Islands Government chronicled this UN legislative authority to that point<sup>5</sup> :

The direct linkage between the decolonization process and the participation of our territories in the United Nations system has been recognized by the U.N. General Assembly as far back as its sixth session. Resolutions over four decades in this connection have called for the use of special provisions in the terms of reference of specialized agencies and regional economic commissions to provide for the admission of NSGT's as associate members or observers, and for the progressive increase in participation of these territories in the work of the technical organs and specialized agencies of the U.N. system.

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<sup>4</sup> See U.N. General Assembly Resolution 66 1 (1946)

<sup>5</sup> Statement of the Representative for External Affairs, Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands, to the U.N. Caribbean Regional Seminar of the Special Committee on Decolonisation; St. Georges, Grenada (1992).



This question was first considered by the U.N. General Assembly as far back as its 6th Session where the concept of using the U.N. to promote the progress of people of dependent territories to a position of equality with U.N. member states was endorsed. In 1952, the General Assembly adopted Res. 566 (VI) which stated that the direct association of non-self-governing territories in the work of the U.N. and of its specialized agencies was an effective means of promoting the progress of the people of those territories. This was followed by Res. 653 (VII) of the same year which focused on the participation of the indigenous inhabitants of the trust territories in the work of the U.N.

Subsequent resolutions of that decade continuing through to the 1970's called for the progressive increase of the participation of representatives of NSGT's in the work of the U.N. At its 26th Session (1971), the General Assembly began the agenda item on the "Implementation of the (Decolonization) Declaration by the Specialized Agencies and the International Institutions associated with the U.N.", and the focus then began on direct participation of the NSGT's in the work of the U.N. at all levels. The latest (1991) resolution (Res. 46/65 of 11 December 1991), reaffirmed that these specialized agencies and others organizations and institutions of the U.N. system "should continue to be guided by the relevant resolutions of the U.N. in their efforts to contribute to the full implementation, without further delay," of the Decolonization Declaration in order to conclude the self-determination process of the remaining NSGT's, and should "accelerate the full and speedy implementation of the relevant provisions of those resolutions."

The 1991 resolution also requested the U.N. system "to strengthen measures of support and formulate adequate programmes of assistance" to the NSGT's, and to provide such assistance, bearing in mind the need "to alleviate the adverse conditions arising from the interplay of a combination of factors reflecting the vulnerable character of their economies."

An important element of the 1991 resolution calls on the organizations of the U.N. system to include a separate item on the agenda of their respective governing councils on how the respective U.N. agency is implementing the various resolutions on decolonization.

The resolution also calls on the administering powers to "facilitate the participation of the representatives of the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories at the relevant meetings and conferences of the agencies and organizations so that the territories may draw maximum benefits from the related activities" of these organizations.

The General Assembly also adopted in 1991 a new resolution on the question (46/70) entitled *Cooperation and Coordination of Specialized Agencies and the International Institutions associated with the United Nations in their assistance to Non-Self-Governing Territories*.

The resolution recognized the work being done on this matter by the Working Group of Non-Independent Caribbean Countries of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC), and the role of the UNDP, and set in motion a process to coordinate the various agencies of the U.N. to better serve the people of the NSGT's.

The people of the territories themselves have also endorsed their direct involvement in programs and activities of the U.N. system at both the Pacific and Caribbean decolonization seminars held in Vanuatu and Barbados, respectively, in May and June 1990.

As noted, a number of specialized agencies associated with the U.N. have taken steps to increase NSGT participation, but others have not proceeded as quickly.

Consistent with this early UN legislative authority as outlined in the excerpts of one NSGT statement at the first UN regional seminar in 1991, subsequent views of the NSGTs at later regional seminars throughout the first second and the present third IDECs were chronicled at the 1998 Pacific regional seminar in Fiji in the form of a comprehensive blueprint derived from the recommendations of the seminars held to that point. The key recommendations called for: <sup>6</sup>

- \* U.N. assistance to the territories in conducting a fair and unbiased political education for the peoples concerned.
- \* Direct and closer participation of the NSGTs in the work of the U.N. as an effective means of promoting the progress of the peoples of those territories.
- \* Inclusion of NSGTs in the programmes and projects of the U.N. system such as those envisaged under the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and those designed to assist island developing countries.
- \* Greater membership and participation of NSGTs in subregional, regional and international organizations
- \* Participation of representatives of elected governments of NSGTs to participate in the meetings of the Special Committee and its subcommittee in an official observer capacity,
- \* Inclusion of provisions for observer status for NSGTs in technical programmes of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the General Assembly

Many of these earlier recommendations of the NSGTs have been repeated in regional seminars over the last 25 years to present day. Some of these ideas have also

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<sup>6</sup> "A Plan of Action for The Self-Determination Of The Remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories" A Paper Delivered by Dr. Carlyle Corbin to The Pacific Regional Seminar, United Nations Special Committee on Decolonisation; Nadi, Fiji, 16 June 1998

been integrated into resolutions of the General Assembly and ECOSOC, but some have not been implemented. In the latter case, the General Assembly continues to reiterate the request that the Human Rights Committee (HRC) formally collaborate with the Special Committee on Decolonisation (C-24), within the framework of its mandate on the right to self-determination as contained in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The General Assembly has also urged such formal collaboration between the C-24 and other relevant UN bodies such as the regional commissions and specialised agencies, consistent with General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions. There is little evidence that the modalities for such collaboration have been established.

### **SDGs and NSGT Access to the International Process**

A critical point of reiteration is that the General Assembly has long recognised the direct linkage between the decolonisation process and the participation of NSGTs in the UN system, and it is this very access to the UN and to the overall international system that would assist the NSGTs to develop capacity to engage the SDG process at the regional and global levels – consistent with the General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions. This is a fundamental component of a systematic process of decolonisation as a negotiated transition from the status of NSGT to a country status which exercises the full measure of self-government with the readiness to assume the irreversible devolved powers, as opposed to the limitation of delegated power afforded to NSGTs. Accordingly, the nature of the participation of the NSGTs in the UN system was examined at the 2010 Pacific Regional Seminar.<sup>7</sup>

This participation of NSGTs non self-governing territories in the UN system is generally facilitated in several ways. These include participation through direct membership, associate membership, and/or observer status in the UN regional commissions, as well as in the UN specialised agencies, depending on the rules of procedure of these respective UN bodies.

Many of the territories are associate members in the *Economic and Social Council/or Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)* and the counterpart *Economic Commission/or Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)*. Additionally, many of the territories have access to assistance from the UN bodies, usually through the coordination of the *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*.

In many cases the territories have participated through their own separate country cooperation frameworks facilitated by *UNDP* with targeted assistance provided by

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<sup>7</sup> A Paper Delivered by Dr. Carlyle Corbin to The Pacific Regional Seminar, United Nations Special Committee on Decolonisation; Noumea, New Caledonia, 18-20 May 2010.

relevant UN agencies depending on the scope and nature of the requirements of the territory. In recent years, as GDP per capita income was increasingly used as the determinant for UNDP assistance, these territories were limited to participation in regional programmes unless they used their own funding to access UNDP assistance.

As noted above, the participation of Non-Independent Countries (NICs), including the NSGTs, in programmes and activities of the wider United Nations system has been a special aim of the General Assembly since its sixth session as part of the Secretary-General's Memorandum of points for consideration in the development of a twenty-year programme for achieving peace through the United Nations. Point nine of that Memorandum advocated the use of the United Nations as a means of promoting "by peaceful means the progress of dependent colonial or semi-colonial people to a position of equality with member States of the United Nations".

This theme was first adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 566(VI) of 18 July 1952 which stated that the direct association of non-independent countries in the work of the United Nations, and of the specialised agencies, is an effective means of promoting the progress of the peoples of those territories. The Assembly recommended the use of special provisions in the constitutions of specialised agencies and of the regional commissions to permit the admission of these countries as associate members. These themes have been included routinely in resolutions of the General Assembly, and of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since that time, most recently in UNGA Resolution 70/96 of 9 December 2015, and ECOSOC Resolution 2015/16 of 20 July 2015. Further, General Assembly Resolution 70/231 of 23 December 2015:

"Request(ed) the Secretary-General, the specialised agencies and other organisations of the United Nations system to provide economic, social and other assistance to the NSGTs."

### **Regional Economic Commissions**

As recent as 2015 in advance of the return to individual resolutions for the SI-NSGTs, the General Assembly in its omnibus resolution on the SI-NSGTs (Resolution 70/102 of 9th December 2015) noted with appreciation the contribution to the development of some territories by the specialised agencies and other organisations of the United Nations system, in particular the Economic Commission for Latin America, and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Resolutions in 2016 and 2017 have repeated these references.

As earlier noted, both ECLAC and ESCAP maintain specific provisions in their respective terms of reference providing for associate membership for these territories. All of the NSGTs under review by the C-24 are associate members of either of these two commissions, and participate in their programmes and activities. A Working Group of Non Independent Caribbean Countries (NICCs) – later re-named the Working Group of Associate Member Countries (AMCs) – was created by resolution in the 1990s to further facilitate their participation in the U.N. system.

## **U.N. World Conferences**

Through resolutions proposed by the AMCs, ECLAC member states have historically proposed changes in the rules of procedure of the U.N. World Conferences in the economic and social sphere for the participation of its associate members inclusive of the NSGTs in the capacity of official observer. As a result, the rules of procedure of most U.N. world conferences have reflected a specific category for the participation of the AMCs, including the NSGTs, in the UN world conferences.

The first such rule was included for the 1992 Earth Summit, and the rule has been included, generally, in most of the UN world conferences to present day with a few notable exceptions. This has facilitated the participation of the NSGTs of ESCAP and ECLAC in the world conferences and special sessions of the General Assembly on small island developing states, sustainable development, social development, population, human settlements, racism, among other areas. Such participation serves to break the isolation of the NSGTs from the international process, and assists them in their capacity building. It is to be emphasised that the participation of the NSGTs can only be given effect if the rules of procedure of the specific UN bodies are respected. This is evident in the relevant terms of references, and rules of procedure of the respective UN bodies which make the required provisions. However, no such arrangements were made for the NSGTs in the preparatory processes to the MDGs or SDG's. The NSGTs were, thus, limited to engaging the regional preparatory processes of the regional commissions or non-Un regional bodies.

ECLAC has long recognised the importance of the participation of its associate members in UN world conferences as a capacity building measure, and has conducted a number of studies in the further integration of the NSGTs in the UN system. These include:

- \* The Participation of Associate Member Countries in U.N. World Conferences (2004)

- \* A Plan of Action for the Further Integration of Associate Member Countries in the United Nations System including its specialised agencies in the economic and social sphere – 2007

### **Assessing Opportunities for NSGT integration in the U.N. System**

A most recent study undertaken for ECLAC in 2017 entitled “*Assessing Opportunities for enhanced of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) integration of the associate members*”<sup>8</sup> “explored options for a design of a strategy of programme support to accelerate the economic and social progress,” and to identify opportunities to further integrate the NSGTs into ECLAC’s programmes of development support. The findings of the study outline a number of the key challenges faced by the NSGTs particularly relevant to the SDG-NSGT nexus:

- While the NSGTs share common needs, including challenges related to climate change and natural disaster vulnerability, heavy reliance on fossil fuel and limited institutional capacity, the individual circumstances between them are unique.
- A number of the NSGTs in the Caribbean region “are major players in the international financial sector but are prone to pressure from developed countries who regularly call for certain reforms to be undertaken in the constant dialogue if nuance between perceptions of legality of tax avoidance versus the illegality of tax evasion.”
- Serious budgetary shortfalls and high public sector debt to GDP ratios are major concerns, and are exacerbated by their inability to access concessionary resources owing to their classification as middle and upper middle income countries, as well as restrictions of access based on their non-sovereign status.
- Resultant austerity measures such as those enacted in Puerto Rico as a result of the debt crisis (*and the unilateral takeover of the elected government’s financial administration by the AP*) have increased poverty with a concomitant increase in out-migration of skilled labour, and making it extremely difficult to finance much-needed infrastructural upgrades. (*The level of destruction of the electricity system in Puerto Rico during Hurricane Maria in 2017 was exacerbated by deferred maintenance due to a lack of financial resource*).

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<sup>8</sup> “*Assessing Opportunities for enhanced integration of the associate members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean*,” A study prepared for the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, *Studies and Perspectives Series, United Nations Publication LC/CAR/TS/2017/4*. Alexander, Dale and Corbin, Carlyle.

- The issue of eligibility criteria for the participation of NSGTs in the U.N. and other multilateral frameworks continues to be a challenge as provisions have not been substantively expanded for NSGT participation in many UN programmes and activities despite the relevant annual resolutions of the General Assembly and ECOSOC.
- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has traditionally coordinated the delivery of technical cooperation and assistance from the wider U.N. system to the NSGTs, but some territories are not serviced by UNDP. In this connection, it is recalled that the General Assembly has adopted resolutions for over a decade for the US Virgin Islands to be permitted to access UNDP regional programmes but no action has been taken in this regard, nor has there even been an explanation as to the reluctance of UNDP to implement the recommendation.
- The participation of the NSGTs in the relevant specialised agencies can be significantly enhanced by the provision of more detailed and updated information on the eligibility criteria for the participation of the territories in their programmes.
- Separate supplementary work programmes within the regional commissions specific to the unique needs and conditions of the NSGTs should be considered.

## **CONCLUSION**

In order for the NSGTs to realise the SDGs, it is important for the U.N. system to implement its longstanding mandate on the participation of these territories in programmes and activities at a greater level. Thus far, the level of participation is uneven owing to insufficient information on the available programmes and eligibility criteria for NSGT participation.

Whilst UNDP serves as the primary coordinator of assistance to most NSGTs from the UN system, the regional commissions of ECLAC and ESCAP are the most comprehensive in their coverage of all NSGTs, and provide for direct NSGT participation through associate membership. Similar provisions exist in various UN specialised agencies (UNESCO, FAO, WHO et al), but the participation of the eligible NSGTs is uneven. It is also the case that the number of responses by UN agencies to the annual request for information from the Secretary-General on activities to further the NSGT development process remains inadequate. This suggests that the issue is not a priority with regards to the wider UN system.

It is to be emphasised that such direct participation by NSGTs as associate members or observers, or as recipients of assistance, is undertaken pursuant to the terms of reference of the institution, and in addition, the administering Power must concur with the type of participation. Nevertheless, member State abstentions persist on the resolutions in the UNGA and ECOSOC on this agenda item based on the need for respect for the rules of procedure of the respective bodies. In fact, such participation cannot be undertaken without these rules being respected, but the abstentions continue, nevertheless. The lack of consensus on these resolutions can send a signal to UN agencies that this is not a priority of the General Assembly.

The participation of NSGTs in the world conferences and the special sessions of the UNGA on issues in the economic and social sphere represent a main development emanating from the period of the first IDEC. However, in a number of instances, such as in the case of the evolution of the SDGs, there were no provisions for NSGT participation at the global level. Efforts should be made to ensure that the rules of procedure of global conferences in the economic and social sphere reflect the observer status category for NSGTs as a matter of course consistent with longstanding UN practice dating back over 25 years.

Consideration should be given to implementing recommendations made at earlier UN seminars for the adoption of a specific resolution entitled "*Support to the Small Island Non Self-Governing Territories from the United Nations system.*" This would distinguish the resolution from the annual text on implementation of the Decolonisation Declaration by the specialised agencies and other international institutions associated with the U.N. In this context, the UN economic and technical agencies simply do not see their role as implementing the Decolonisation Declaration, despite the annual General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions calling on them to do so. They might respond more favourably to a more economic-focused resolution of "providing support" to NSGTs which the agencies may regard as more in line with their mandate. To this stage, the perception of the political nature of the issue is part of the reason why the SG Report on implementation of this resolution contains insufficient agency responses. Even as the an agency may actually be providing technical and other assistance to the territories, it may not regard as part of its mandate to implement the Decolonisation Declaration.

The area of assistance to the NSGTs from the wider U.N. system can be successfully used to implement the decolonisation mandate consistent with annual General Assembly resolutions<sup>9</sup>. In this connection, the Assembly has welcomed the

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<sup>9</sup>U.N. General Assembly Resolution 71/104 of 6 December 2016 on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples



role of a number of U.N. bodies (noted above) in providing assistance to the NSGTs, while it is clear that adjustments are needed to stimulate further action on the part of other agencies which have not implemented UN resolutions on the question.

At the same time, the in-depth policy research, analysis and capacity building undertaken by the regional economic commissions in the socio-economic development of the NSGTs represent an opportunity for the C-24 to develop the formal collaboration with the wider UN system long called for by the General Assembly to provide for comprehensive information and analysis on the NSGTs to be made available to member States. As a start, the various studies and analyses done by ECLAC in relation to the NSGTs should be made official documents of the U.N. General Assembly under the relevant agenda items.

Finally, on the question of U.N. agency collaboration, the General Assembly:

*"Recalls the publication by the Department of Public Information and the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, in consultation with the United Nations Development Programme, the specialized agencies and the Special Committee, of an information leaflet on assistance programmes available to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which was updated for the United Nations website on decolonization, and requests its continued updating and wide dissemination."*

On this point, it is to be noted that whilst the "information leaflet" provides useful general information on a number of U.N. bodies, contact information and their general area of specialisation, the leaflet needs to be made more relevant to the NSGTs themselves in terms of how the territories might actually access these U.N. bodies. For example, what is the status of membership offered to the NSGT by the agency concerned? What is the current level of participation of the NSGTs? Are there costs associated with the membership?

In the final analysis, the extent to which the NSGTs can advance to a position of economic and social sustainability is directly related to the extent to which the UN system can provide the political space for their engagement with the UN process. In this sense, the achievement of the SDG would heighten the possibilities for further political advancement towards the full measure of self-government by reducing some of the perceived obstacles of economic dependency on the AP to a position of genuine decolonisation.

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by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations.