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SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Pacific Regional Seminar on the implementation of the Second
International Decade for the Eradication of
Colonialism: priorities for action

Yanuca, Fiji
28 to 30 November 2006

STATEMENT OF WELCOME

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OPENING ADDRESS

PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE

MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (C-24)

Fijian Hotel, Yanuca-Fiji 28-30 November, 2006

The Chairman of the Special Committee,
His Excellency Ambassador Anthony Severin
Vice Chairpersons,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Representatives,
Members and Observers of the Special Committee on
Decolonization,
Ladies and Gentlemen

INTRODUCTION

I'm indeed honoured to welcome you to Fiji, and on behalf of the People and the Government of Fiji, **BULA VINAKA**. I'm also aware that some of you participated in the seminars of 1998 and 2002, and to you, welcome back.

Mr. Chairman, allow me to convey through you the apologies of my Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade who would have loved to be here if it were not for his prearranged commitment abroad this week.

Mr. Chairman, a month ago, on 10th October Fiji celebrated 36 years of political independence, and although the transition from colony to sovereign state was peaceful, the political challenges over the years continue to mount. In this regard our political leaders are working tirelessly to seek a lasting home grown solution to these and other economic, security and sustainable development challenges. And we feel strongly, Mr. Chairman that our brothers and sisters in the remaining non-self governing territories will only be better placed to address these and other relevant development issues once they, like us have exercised their right to self-determination as enshrined in the 1960 Declaration on Decolonization.

Fiji's offer as host of this regional seminar is a mark of our deep respect for the rights of people to exercise self-determination and our commitment to the issue of decolonization in this part of the world. Furthermore, the Fiji Government is fully conscious of the need to facilitate the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples as contained in the United Nations General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

The United Nations and this Committee in particular, ought to be justifiably proud of the fact that over the years, more than 80 million people around the world have exercised their right of self-determination under UN auspices. However, with 16 Non-Self Governing Territories still to decide their future, a few more lapses remain before your work on deconolonization is accomplished.

GENERAL STATEMENT

Mr. Chairman, all available options for self-determination of Non-Self Governing Territories are valid as long as they are in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned and in conformity with the clearly defined principles contained in the United Nations Charter and in relevant resolutions of the UN General Assembly. Specific

characteristics and the sentiments of the people of these Territories require flexible, practical and innovative approaches to the options of self-determination, without any prejudice to territorial size, geographical location, size of population or natural resource endowments.

NEW CALEDONIA

For those of us in this part of the world, we welcome the measures pursued in New Caledonia by the French authorities, in cooperation with all sectors of the population, to promote political, economic and social development in that Territory. The involvement of New Caledonia in regional organizations has achieved some measured success with her admittance last month as an Associate Member of the Pacific Island Forum. This was clearly an endorsement by the PIF leaders of the political developments in New Caledonia and would not have been possible without the positive encouragement of your Committee, particularly the intensification of contacts between New Caledonia and neighbouring countries in the South Pacific region.

TOKELAU

Mr Chairman, earlier this year [in February] Tokelau held a referendum on a measure granting it self-government in free association with New Zealand, it's administering Power. We in the Pacific are content that even though the referendum did not result in the two-third majority necessary for any change in the territory's status, it did however fairly reflected the will of the people of Tokelau and highlighted the continuing need for all people of all Non-Self Governing Territories to be allowed the right of self-determination.

The combined effort of New Zealand and the UN Special Committee on Decolonization in making the Tokelau referendum possible is again commended. Fiji believes that it was important for the people of Tokelau to have had this opportunity to express their wishes. I confirm here my

Government's absolute confidence that the Government of New Zealand and the people of Tokelau will continue to maintain the constructive spirit with which they have approached their dialogue on this sensitive subject. The Tokelau example, we hope will serve as a useful guide for other administering Powers and their governed territories on the way forward.

OTHER PACIFIC TERRITORIES

Mr Chairman, the UN Charter affirms the responsibility of the administering Powers to promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and the legitimate rights of these people over their natural resources. Earlier this month, Pacific Forum Island Leaders, in their communiqué welcomed the establishment of the Papuan Peoples Assembly (MRT) by the sovereign authority, Indonesia. We commend this positive development from the Government of Indonesia as indicative of their commitment to the ideals of self determination enshrined in the Charter and as an expression of their commitment towards the full implementation of the 2001 special autonomy law and the development of Papua.

GENERAL CONCLUDING REMARKS

Mr Chairman, in order for the Special Committee to enhance its understanding of the political status of the people of the Territories, it is important for it to be apprised by the administering Powers and to receive information from other appropriate sources, including the representatives of the Territories, concerning the wishes and aspirations of their people. The holding of regional seminars such as this, whether be it here in the Pacific, in the Caribbean, at the UN Headquarters in New York or in other venues, does therefore provide a useful forum for the exchange of views and ideas and also serves as helpful means for the Special Committee to fulfill its mandate effectively.

Yours is not an easy task, Fiji is confident that with constructive dialogue and with the usual cooperation that have come to characterize the conduct of your regional seminars, you will find this Session here at the Fijian Hotel a success. Should you however, find the discussions getting a bit warmer than the weather here, we invite you to take a break and enjoy the fresh South Sea breeze and the crystal blue Pacific waters, the pacifying sound of which you can hear from this conference room.

Mr. Chairman, welcome again and enjoy the hospitality of these islands and have a successful session.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.

