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THIRD INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade
for the Eradication of Colonialism: goals and expected accomplishments

Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
31 May to 2 June 2011

STATEMENT

BY

Mr. Julian Fraser

(Representative of the British Virgin Islands)

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The Representative from the British Virgin Islands

Hon. Julian Fraser, RA,

Minister for Communications and Works

At the United Nations Caribbean Regional Seminar

“Implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: Goals and Expected Accomplishments”

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31st May – 2nd June, 2011

The British Virgin Islands maintains a good working relationship with the United Kingdom, as the administering power for the Territory.

Independence is not a matter which is regularly discussed among the people of the territory as the arguments in its favor has lost their appeal. This issue has never been brought to the people by referendum as there has been no call by the people for such a drastic change in the direction of the Virgin Islands.

We are aware, that the United Kingdom Government maintains the position that they will assist any of its Overseas Territories in obtaining independence once it is the expressed wish of the people.

This position is one that is neither spoken nor implied, since the actions of the United Kingdom Government tends to suggest different, and to a large extent fosters the status quo; case in point being, the granting of full Citizenship to its Overseas Territories Citizens, *and hence EU Citizenship*.

Earlier this year I led a delegation to attend the annual Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA) Ministerial Conference and European Union-Overseas Countries and Territories Forum (EU-OCT Forum) between February 28th and March 4th in New Caledonia.

The meetings surrounded the future relationship between the European Union (EU) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT's) under a new Overseas Association Decision (OAD or Decision).

For this purpose, the OCT's in conjunction with their respective EU Member States (i.e., United Kingdom, France, Denmark and The Netherlands) developed and adopted a Joint Position Paper (JPP) that sets out a framework for a new partnership between the EU and OCT's.

The JPP covers a number of subjects such as trade, environment, EU values and technical and financial assistance.

Among other things, the Paper calls on the EU to consider the following in a new EU-OCT relationship:

- A partnership based on principles of solidarity and mutual interests over the long term and recognition of and respect for the OCTs' diversity and vulnerabilities;
- Recognition that OCTs are members of the European family whose biodiversity is an asset and whose people's rights and interest should be protected; and
- Recognition of OCTs unique geographical and environmental challenges and the need for technical assistance to help overcome economic handicaps and to boost global competitiveness.

Since the coming into force of a new constitution in 2007, the mood represents four years since the Territory has been operating under the new framework. Understandably, and not unexpectedly, it has become apparent that there is scope for further review, and the need for some adjustment to the constitution for practical implementation and effective operation of the territory.

In this regard it is seen as a work in progress.

The British Virgin Islands consistently participates actively in the Overseas Territories Consultative Council (OTCC) meeting with Ministers and senior officials of the United Kingdom Government on an annual basis.

In 2009, on exactly the day before the Eleventh Overseas Territories Consultative Council meeting convened, at the request of the Territories a forum was held in London on December 8th, 2009 to review the principles contained in the 1999 White Paper, *10 years after it was issued*.

In 2010 following the annual (OTCC) Council meeting the Territory welcomed the position espoused by the new coalition government of the United Kingdom, that the policy framework governing the relationship between the UK and its Overseas Territories should be reviewed.

To this end the 1999 White Paper, Partnership for Progress and Prosperity, is currently under review, with details of the new Green Paper for further discussion to be issued shortly by the UK Government.

The Territory continues to view Fiscal Sustainability and Financial Stability as proprieties to secure the future of the people of the Virgin Islands.

In this regard therefore, the Territorial Government is committed to coordinated efforts to ensure that the economy of the territory remains viable, and that the Territories financial systems remain resilient.

Finally Mr. Chairman, I hope that the contrast presented in my contribution, between the noble efforts of this Special Committee to see to the eradication of Colonialism; and those of the Administering Countries to retain current relationships with their Colonies, has been thought provoking, and more importantly will serve as a topic for discussion.

