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SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Caribbean Regional Seminar on the implementation of the Second  
International Decade for the Eradication of  
Colonialism: next steps in decolonization

St. George's, Grenada  
22 to 24 May 2007

**Statement by H.E. Margaret Hughes Ferrari**

**Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the  
Grenadines to the United Nations**

**Chair of the Special Committee**

Statement by H.E. Margaret Hughes Ferrari,  
Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to  
the United Nations, Chair of the Special Committee

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are delighted and honoured to have the United Nations 2007 Caribbean Regional Seminar hosted by Grenada, one of the steadfast supporters of decolonisation in the region and the world at large. Appropriately, the Seminar is taking place during the week of solidarity with the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. On behalf of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, I again extend our sincere gratitude to the Government and people of Grenada for their hospitality.

Six months ago, the Special Committee convened its last regional seminar in the Pacific. I am confident that the general approach outlined on that occasion by the then Chair, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Saint Lucia, is still fresh in our minds: the Special Committee exists to provide the people of the Territories with information on all of the options available to them and to assist where it can in furtherance of the self-determination process. Today, and during the next two days, we are gathered here in this beautiful country to build on this approach.

The process of decolonisation promoted by the Special Committee has evolved over the years into several notable features: informational aspects, analytical scrutiny and, most importantly, actionable dimensions. The Special Committee has one essential task to perform, namely the "de-listing" of Non-Self-Governing Territories in application of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960) and subsequent relevant General Assembly resolutions, as well as the pertinent provisions of the United Nations Charter.

With only two-and-a-half years left of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, it is essential that we focus the next steps in decolonisation on tangible results for all concerned. Only such concrete steps towards the application of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence can be considered as constructive and meaningful progress towards the complete eradication of colonialism.

There is some good news to report. For instance, with regard to Tokelau, it is hoped that positive developments towards decolonisation and subsequent "de-listing" by the Special Committee and the General Assembly can be expected after the second referendum that will be held in November 2007. The referendum this year is likely to

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be considered as a legitimate, genuine and conclusive act of self-determination. If, as expected, Tokelau is indeed delisted, a "lessons-learned" briefing to the Special Committee on this important act of self-determination might be useful. Such a briefing could help all parties concerned with Non-Self-Governing Territories to shape action-oriented and results-based strategies, on a case-by-case basis.

Moreover, particularly in the Caribbean, positive developments are expected by the end of the decade in British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands and possibly Anguilla and Cayman Islands, all of which, as you know, are administered by the United Kingdom. We are also optimistic that there will be progressive developments in the United States Virgin Islands and American Samoa, Territories administered by the United States. The opportunity is there for the parties concerned to build on ongoing or recently concluded internal constitutional review exercises.

How do we envisage that progress can be achieved? It can only happen through the recognition of the unequivocal will of the people in each of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In this connection, I repeat what the former Chair said at the last regional seminar, and I quote: "It is important to note that the mandate of the Special Committee is not to persuade or influence the people of the Territories about a particular political alternative". (End of quote).

As we all know, the ongoing or recently concluded internal constitutional or status review exercises in the aforementioned United Kingdom and United States-administered Non-Self-Governing Territories basically appear to lean towards endorsing the current relationship between the respective Territory and its administering Power. Important constitutional and political status-related developments are being negotiated or implemented, depending on the Territory in question.

In view of this reality, the Special Committee -- and, upon its recommendation, the General Assembly -- will have to have solid reasons to believe that the people concerned are in fact on the road to self-determination. The international community has to be completely convinced that the people of the Territories are freely expressing their will through legitimate consultative and voting modalities as an act of internationally recognised self-determination.

In order to ensure progress on this, the Special Committee intends to give greater weight to the need to appreciate fully the fairness and authenticity of the act of self-determination. We intend to focus less on the traditionally recognized "options" and more on the wide variety of positive self-determination outcomes opted for by the people directly concerned, namely the people of the territories.

It is important that we measure political progress astutely and clearly so that we are able to recognise an act of self-determination when we see one. We must not limit ourselves to boilerplate notions that do not adequately reflect reality in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We all stand to benefit from drawing on the positive developments in some of the Territories, and moving forward in a creative way. Instead of

automatically discounting the so-called "status quo" situation in its entirety, we would be better advised, where appropriate, to think creatively of its possibilities among the array of legitimate "transitions to self-determination", provided that the people of a Territory have had the opportunity to make a fully informed choice.

Clearly, the recently concluded "modernisation" and "study" exercises in a number of Territories fall short of an internationally acceptable change of, or verdict on, the Territory's status. At the same time, however, these exercises could provide the Special Committee with an opportunity to follow up and put the self-determination issue to the voters in a clear and simple fashion.

Exploratory discussions on a results-oriented strategy for the Special Committee might involve the following elements in four key areas:

(1) With regard to the administering Powers concerned, the Bureau will contact the United Kingdom and United States to explore how to build on the internal constitutional and political status-related exercises in each Territory - American Samoa, British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands and possibly Anguilla, Cayman Islands and United States Virgin Islands.

(2) Moreover, the Committee will explore ways to enhance information exchange between territorial Governments, the administering Powers and the United Nations. One proposal that could be considered is that, in consultation with the administering Powers, territorial Governments could designate an informational "C-24 focal point", while being completely transparent and in no way circumventing official or traditional lines of communication. Such a focal point would simply help facilitate the Special Committee's working-level contact with elected territorial Governments. It would also facilitate the open exploration and informal identification of appropriate modalities (general election, plebiscite question, referendum, etc.) that could help ascertain in a preliminary but representative fashion the will of the people in a given Territory. For example, the use of public opinion polls could be considered by the Committee, in full consultation with the relevant administering Power and the territorial government concerned.

(3) In this connection, further efforts should be made to field, in close cooperation with the relevant administering Power, visiting missions to learn first-hand about the situation in Non-Self-Governing Territories and inform their people about political status issues and the decolonisation work of the Special Committee.

(4) At the sixty-second General Assembly, the Special Committee would propose draft resolution elements (based on resolution 61/130 of 14 December 2006) that reflect the current approach that has been elaborated in the course of our recent seminars and the meetings of the Special Committee. In particular, the General Assembly would recognise the continued importance of relevant resolutions such as 1541 (XV) of 15 December 1960 and 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970 addressing political status options "freely determined;" – support providing the people of the Territories with information on all of the options available to them; – promote a closer

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and constructive collaboration among the administering Powers, the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the Special Committee; and – build on internal constitutional review and status study exercises with a view to the early “de-listing” of some of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

We all know that, for different reasons, the prospects for decolonisation confined to a few limited options has not yielded the hoped-for results in the majority of Non-Self-Governing Territories (with the exception of Tokelau). However, the current situation in a few Non-Self-Governing Territories stands to benefit from a creative approach, if only the international community, spearheaded by the Special Committee on Decolonisation, can muster the required political will. It is the responsibility -- nay, the obligation -- of all of us in the Special Committee to focus our attention and energy on those Territories where progress is at least conceivable. “No action” can no longer be the preferred option for the international community.

The Special Committee has to find new ways of going about its business. To me, this would entail “vigilant cooperation” with the administering Powers; proactive efforts that could lead to the early identification of the proposed focal points on the ground by the territorial Governments; and a carefully designed initiative at the upcoming General Assembly along the lines just proposed.

I look forward to discussing these and related issues with you over the next three days. It is my hope that we can achieve positive results from our deliberations and spell out the action- and goal-oriented details of our strategy for the “next steps in decolonisation”.

Thank you.