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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: current realities and prospects

Quito, Ecuador  
30 May to 1 June 2012

STATEMENT

BY

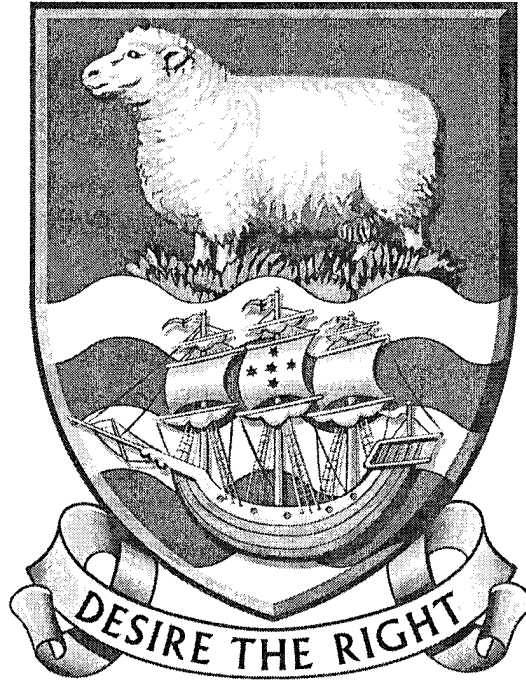
MR. ROGER EDWARDS

(FALKLAND ISLANDS (MALVINAS))<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

# FALKLAND ISLANDS



## PACIFIC REGIONAL SEMINAR OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF 24

Quito, Ecuador

31 May 2012

Statement by  
The Honourable Roger Edwards  
Member of the Legislative Assembly

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am Roger Edwards, an elected Member of the Falkland Islands Legislative Assembly. I stand before you today to demand that Falkland Islanders are accepted as a people with the very basic of human rights, the right to determine their own future, the right of self-determination.

The principle of self-determination is enshrined in Article 1, paragraph 2, 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 and Trust Territories, the obligation to promote the realization of that right and respect it, in conformity with the provisions of the Charter.

We would be very alarmed if the Special Committee in any way weakened its commitment to self-determination, as enshrined in Resolution 1514, the Charter of the United Nations, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the practice of the UN 4<sup>th</sup> Committee. In this respect we would be very concerned if General Assembly resolutions or Special Committee considerations were interpreted in any way that undermined the primacy of Resolution 1514. Special Committee consideration of the Falkland Islands currently makes no express reference to our fundamental right of self-determination, and the outdated language on which consideration is still based predates many important developments within the UN system and global international community in relation to self-determination.

Argentina has made the claim that we are an implanted population, a population held in the Islands against our will by our Colonial Masters back in the United Kingdom and as such have no access to the right of self-determination. I would suggest that our history tells a very different story.

I would say to you that history tells a tale of natural immigration in much the same way as Argentina was settled but with one major difference: the Falkland Islands had no indigenous people. Argentina claims that Britain expelled the population from the Falklands in 1833 but that is so far from the truth. The facts are that the population was encouraged to stay and most did. Records actually indicate that they appear to have looked forward to an improvement in their situation under the British flag. At that time the population of 29 was made up of 3 British, 2 German, 1 French and 23 Spanish speaking, 18 of whom came from Buenos Aires.

In the 2006 census, the permanent residents shown were born in a total of 62 different countries including Chile, Argentina and Uruguay. The 2012 census is expected to show a population which has grown to over 3,000.

The Falkland Islands are a group of islands in the South Atlantic, some 300 miles (450 Kilometres) from the coast of Argentina. There are two main islands, East and West Falkland, and about 750 smaller islands. The total landmass is about 4700 square miles (12,713 square kilometres) making them slightly larger than Jamaica, Lebanon or Cyprus, and they are as large as the 25 smallest member states added together. The Islands rise to a maximum of 705 metres (Mt Osborne). The climate is cool temperate being somewhat muted by the influence of the cold South West Atlantic. The soil is acidic peat overlying a sandstone base. The language is English and we have our own currency on par to the pound sterling.

The Islands have been under continuous sovereignty of the United Kingdom for 179 years except for a brief period of 74 days in 1982 when they were illegally occupied by the armed forces of Argentina.

Some families can now claim 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> generations of people born in the Falkland Islands. During those 179 years the Islands have developed from being a Colony until today we are a modern Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom, internally self governing and, moreover self financing. We receive no aid from, nor pay any taxes to the UK, relying on our sovereign power only to provide advice on foreign affairs and defence, a defence which would not be necessary were it not for the belligerent stance taken by our nearest neighbour.

Since the eviction of the Argentine forces in June 1982 the Islands have moved forward with a new found energy and confidence. We have a new and very much a post colonial constitution which reflects our aspirations and determination to press forward with internal self governance.

Every four years we have open and free elections to vote Members to the Assembly. We have two constituencies, Stanley and Camp, Camp being the rest of the Islands outside Stanley, and we elect five Members for Stanley and three for Camp. We have a four year term in office. The eight Members elect annually three of their colleagues to sit on the Executive Council. Although the Governor chairs Executive Council, only the three elected Members have a vote. We pass our own Legislation, issue our own licences and have our own environmental controls. We are internally totally self governing.

We have established one of the best managed fisheries in the world where the local companies now own the resource and they are encouraged to exploit that resource to bring the best possible benefits to the Islands while maintaining stocks at levels that guarantee the fishery for future generations. Income from this fishery was used to help the Agricultural sector through a very significant downturn and now, with this investment and help, we see a very prosperous farming community producing both high grade wool and meat, from a EU approved abattoir, with both products being sold across the world.

In the late 1990s, the Falkland Islands Government issued the first exploration licences to search for hydrocarbons off the shores of our Islands in full accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Poor results and a very low oil price brought that round to an end without conclusion. In 2010 a second round of offshore Licences was issued by the Falkland Islands Government and this time one Company claims to have found commercial, exploitable quantities of oil to the North of the islands. Exploration continues to the South of the islands.

Our children receive free education from nursery until completion of their first degree from university. Our expanding economy and exciting future prospects attract our youngsters back to the Islands where they can find interesting, worthwhile and well paid employment. Recently we have our own students returning as Vets, Doctors, Teachers and well qualified apprentices. We are actively looking at how computers can improve distance learning for our youngsters and adults alike.

We have a well run and efficiently managed health service free at the point of contact that can look after the needs of a modern society. Visiting specialists cover areas where we lack that special expertise and we can, and do, send difficult medical and surgical cases overseas for treatment. We are currently looking at ways of improving the hospital's diagnostic procedures by linking into front line specialist hospitals in the UK by use of computers and the Internet.

Communications throughout the islands have been improved over recent years by building over 1000 kilometres of Camp Track, by introducing a ferry service between East and West Falkland, and also to the outlying islands and by using our own Islander aircraft to provide an aerial taxi service. Our population is not large enough to make these services completely viable and so the Falkland Islands Government subsidises the service in order that it is made affordable to the Islanders.

Tourism continues to grow and we now have over 60,000 cruise ship passengers visiting the islands annually. Many come just to see the wonderful wildlife on offer still in its environmental idyll. Land based tourism is steadily growing but we recognise that it still needs much investment.

Our economy is strong and we are in the most fortunate position of having two and a half times our annual operating budget in reserves, a situation many countries would fervently wish for. Our Government has made the decision that the Annual Budget is at break even or better and, as a result, any surplus can be invested in our savings to off set the ever presence of inflation.

Mr Chairman, we live in fortunate times in the Falkland Islands and our people wish for that to continue. We have no desire to become a colony of Argentina – for that is exactly what we would be if Argentina had its way. There can be no negotiations over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands. The United Nations did not enshrine peoples’ universal rights into its Charter, only for member states to then negotiate those away. Argentina appears to have no desire to negotiate or respect the United Nations Charter. Argentina has included the full transfer of sovereignty in its own Constitution as the only acceptable outcome, ignoring our rights and the principles of the United Nations Charter. Islanders wish to retain the status quo and remain as they are, after all, as stated in Resolution 1514 “ the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental rights”. The Special Committee should not seek to support any form of negotiations that might open the possibility of the subjugation, domination and exploitation of our people under Argentine sovereignty.

We currently face many aggressive attempts by the Argentine Government to impede certain sectors of our economy. Our approach is not to react to each and every report but to continue to develop the economy in our way, and to ensure we are not diverted by outside influences. We must concentrate on our goals and our agenda, not someone else’s. Falkland Islanders are resilient and resourceful. They are used to standing up for themselves and they are steadfast in their resolve.

Mr Chairman, before concluding, may I be as bold as to remind this Special Committee of the plea by the Secretary General of the United Nations on 23<sup>rd</sup> February this year “to make tangible progress in assisting those territories to achieve self-determination”. He reminds you that it is

within your power to develop innovative approaches and new dynamics to achieve this goal.

Mr Chairman, every year we put forward arguments in support of our human rights, in order that this Committee will one day recognise its own obligations under the UN Charter and respect our right of self-determination. Hopefully this year, the Special Committee will recognise that the people of the Falklands will always be here, and as has been proven right across the globe many times before “self-determination” is the only solution that will lead to a permanent, peaceful solution.

Mr Chairman, thank you.