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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: assessment of decolonization process in today's world

**Nouméa, New Caledonia
18 to 20 May 2010**

STATEMENT

BY

Mr. David Payton

(Director, Office of the Administrator of Tokelau

(New Zealand)

**PACIFIC REGIONAL SEMINAR ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF
COLONIALISM: ASSESSMENT OF THE DECOLONISATION PROCESS IN
TODAY'S WORLD**

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**STATEMENT OF NEW ZEALAND
DAVID PAYTON, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR OF
TOKELAU**

Thank you for the invitation to participate in this seminar. New Zealand is pleased to be able to provide its perspective as administering authority for Tokelau.

The practice of the Committee and the United Nations Secretariat to hold regional seminars each year, alternatively in the Pacific and the Caribbean, provides the opportunity for members of the Committee and those most directly involved with the issue of decolonisation to share views and relevant experiences. Thank you to the government of New Caledonia for its offer to host this year's seminar. New Caledonia is the closest part of the Pacific Island region to New Zealand and we value the growing links between us and continue to support the Noumea Accord process.

The period since the last regional seminar in May last year and then the June session of the Committee of 24 in New York has been a busy one in the relationship we have with Tokelau. Together we have continued efforts to deliver for the people of the atolls of Tokelau the quality services and infrastructure that is essential if those three very small and isolated communities are to be viable places for the people of Tokelau to live. Results have been varied and much remains to be done.

More than two and a half years have passed since Tokelau voters, in the second self determination referendum of October 2007, did not reach the threshold Tokelau had set itself for a change of status. Members of the Committee and those who follow the cause of decolonisation will recall that this outcome led to a decision by the leaders of both New Zealand and Tokelau that there would be an "appreciable period of time" before any further act of self-determination was undertaken by Tokelau and that both parties in the relationship would devote their time, efforts and resources to addressing the core requirements of the people of the three atolls of Tokelau.

New Zealand remains committed to this understanding and is determined that maximum effort will be given to improving conditions on the atolls of Tokelau.

The past year has shown how challenging it is to achieve this shared goal.

Tokelau's shipping needs still remain unresolved as closer attention is given to the most cost effective means of providing passenger and cargo services to the atolls, while also ensuring the necessary high standards of safety. Those who follow Pacific events will be aware of the maritime tragedies that have befallen the region in the past year with major loss of life first in Kiribati and then in Tonga. The increased attention paid to passenger safety on the Tokelau route from Apia to the atolls has highlighted major deficiencies in the existing service to Tokelau and this is being remedied as a high priority. Attention is also being given to the feasibility of an air connection between Tokelau and other parts of the region.

Tackling transport needs for these very small and isolated communities is showing very clearly the complexity and cost of providing essential lifeline services. Hard choices will need to be made by both New Zealand and Tokelau in the coming months about the type of shipping and transport system that will service Tokelau in the years ahead.

Provision of better quality education and health infrastructure also continues to be a challenge. After some delay while overall costs needed to be looked at very carefully and hard questions asked about value for money, work is now starting on schools for two of the atolls and a health centre on the third.

Work is also well underway to assess the feasibility of a substantial shift by Tokelau from diesel-based generation of electricity to a solar powered system. Clearly this would make sense on many levels but the cost of such a move is a major hurdle that both partners need to face realistically. At this time when financial constraints are a reality for us all, it is even more important that careful thought is given to major new initiatives of this type.

Mr Chairman

It is not my intention to take up the time of this seminar with a lengthy account of the challenges that exist within the relationship New Zealand and Tokelau have. It is important however to draw attention to the need for careful and thoughtful attention to be given to the realities of a community as small and isolated as Tokelau. Less than 1500 people living in three communities in this ever more complex world face a huge challenge as they tackle communal expectations, let alone those of the wider community.

In decolonisation one size does not fit all, as the remaining territories covered by the C24 attest. How does a community as small and isolated as Tokelau realistically function in this globalised world? And how can resources be provided on a long term basis to meet the aspirations of the people of Tokelau?

Careful thought was given to the February 2008 understanding that committed New Zealand and Tokelau to focus on the needs of the atoll communities. Staying focussed on that goal continues to be a challenge, not least when so many regional and international organisations actively encourage Tokelau's leaders and officials to turn their attention elsewhere. It is a matter of ongoing concern that so many of those most needed to focus on the realities at home seem so often to be away from their core work, leaving gaps in administration and management that can not be easily filled.

New Zealand and Tokelau are about to start discussions on a new three year package of funding for the period from July 2010. We do not expect this to be an easy process. The needs of the atolls remain high. So too does the cost of achieving progress in key areas. It is likely to be necessary for Tokelau's leaders to make hard decisions and set priorities that will require some preferred activities to be set aside. These are challenging times where true leadership within Tokelau will be crucial.

The coming months and years will be challenging for New Zealand and Tokelau. Together we will face the realities of this very small and isolated community of New Zealand citizens. Finding the right balance within this relationship will determine the wellbeing of Tokelau and its people. Decolonisation will be a factor in this dynamic process, but only a small part of it. We will be pleased to continue to keep the Committee informed of this process.