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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: challenges and opportunities in the process of
decolonization in today's world**

**Frigate Bay, Saint Kitts and Nevis
12 to 14 May 2009**

Statement by the Administrator of Tokelau

(New Zealand)

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SIRTUATION WITH REGARD TO THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF
INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES**

**ADMINISTRATOR OF TOKELAU
DAVID PAYTON**

**STATEMENT TO THE CARIBBEAN REGIONAL SEMINAR
OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONISATION**

MAY 2009

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

Much of relevance to Tokelau and its relationship with New Zealand has happened since the last regional seminar held in Bandung, Indonesia a year ago and this statement will focus on these development.

It is now more than a year and a half since Tokelau held its second self-determination referendum which confirmed that Tokelau would not change its status. Participants will be aware of the ensuing commitment New Zealand and Tokelau leaders came to in February 2008 that both parties would devote their time, effort and resources to addressing the core requirements of the people of the three atolls of Tokelau and that consideration of any subsequent act of self-determination would be deferred for an appreciable period of time. That commitment stands and forms the basis of ongoing planning and related efforts in Tokelau.

The past year has been a challenging one and particularly for all small and developing communities like Tokelau. Its remote location has not protected it from the pressures of the global economy and it has seen many of the costs of essential services rising steadily. The cost of its shipping service has been particular hard hit and the need to import virtually all food supplies has presented Tokelau's communities as well as individuals with similar challenges to those being experienced around the world.

Increased pressure on Tokelau's finances, which are largely provided on a three year block grant basis by New Zealand, has required Tokelau to make hard choices and hold to clearly identified priorities. Although this has proved challenging, the discipline it requires will assist Tokelau to get best value for both money and effort.

Tokelau has also been grappling with its reality as a small, very remote and fragile community. The needs of a community of 1500 people spread over three atolls, 500-600 km from the next nearest island, are just as complex as those of a far larger community. This proved to be the case recently when the atolls found themselves facing an outbreak of an influenza-like virus. In the month prior to the far wider challenge of Influenza A H1N1, Tokelau was faced with a virus that brought down many of its youngest members. Tokelau's health team, working with the atoll representatives, New Zealand health officials and the WHO's regional team in Fiji showed they could tackle the challenge quickly and professionally. A total of 12 percent of Tokelau's total population was affected by this virus and the most welcome outcome of all this effort was full recovery of all concerned.

I set this out in some detail because it shows most clearly Tokelau's vulnerability and the particular challenges of its remoteness and isolation. This event also demonstrated the power of cooperation between Tokelau, New Zealand and WHO. A real team effort.

Tokelau will continue to need team efforts of this type. The current Influenza A H1N1 situation is being handled with great care to ensure that whatever may occur Tokelau's people are as well prepared to meet the challenge as they possibly can be.

The current Global Economic Situation is subjecting Tokelau to challenges that are just as demanding but seem certain to last far longer. As it tackles these pressures Tokelau knows that it has New Zealand's full support. The hard choices and priority setting I referred to earlier requires that all those who deal with Tokelau's needs must ensure that their efforts deliver tangible benefits for Tokelau. Activity for its own sake must be avoided at all cost.

This report focuses on the practical efforts Tokelau and New Zealand are taking to address the realities facing Tokelau and its people at a time of increasing difficulty for communities all round the world. New Zealand is committed to continuing to provide such practical assistance to Tokelau.