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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

ULU-O-TOKELAU

FAIPULE FOUA TOLOA

Chairperson – Excellency Marty Natalegawa  
Rapporteur and distinguished Members of this Seminar,

I bring warm greetings on behalf of the Council of Elders of the 3 villages of Tokelau, the General Fono, the Council for the Ongoing Government of Tokelau and the people of Tokelau.

As the Ulu o Tokelau, please allow me to express my sincere apologies for not being able to make it in person to this important seminar. The timing of this seminar coincides with our National Budget Meeting and General Fono Session. These are national priorities and key activities that I as the Ulu must attend. In addition, another added factor to my non participation is also due to the global Influenza A H1N1 which is currently causing threat to the region, hence important for me as the Ulu to stay close to my people during this difficult time. I pray that God will continue to be with us during these hard times and also give the Special Committee His strength and guidance in this very important work.

Prior to addressing the Special Committee, I wish to convey to this seminar that Tokelau continues to be grateful and appreciative to the Special Committee for the last several years for the support given to Tokelau's move towards self determination. Through your support our people were able to exercise their right to convey our dreams and aspirations on how we as a people would like to govern ourselves.

I wish to register in this session that Tokelau will not give up its aspirations to be one day self determined. As reported to the Special Committee last year, the General Fono resolved in February 2008 that there is still a lot of work that needs to be done in strengthening local capacity and both infrastructure and economic development. While the work on self determination will continue, it will be several years before the issue of another referendum on self government is considered again by the General Fono. This decision is consistent with Tokelau's aspirations to be one day be self determined. Tokelau will therefore continue to look towards the Special Committee for its commitment and guidance with regard to the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

Strengthening the local capacity and infrastructure together with strong encouragement for economic development is currently the strategy for the Government of Tokelau.

In achieving our goal to develop our people's capacity, self reliance (including economic development) and infrastructure - Tokelau will continue to work closely with New Zealand in the spirit of partnership. The Joint Principles of Partnership and the Economic Support Arrangement between the Government of Tokelau and New Zealand remains critical as they demonstrate New Zealand's commitments in fulfilling its responsibilities to Tokelau.

The challenges of the global financial crisis and other challenging issues such as the recent disease threats, climate change and sea level rising and the fact that Tokelau is small, fragile and vulnerable has witnessed the reaffirmation of partnership between Tokelau and New Zealand in a very real and practical manner. Tokelau wishes to develop itself as a responsible partner and will continue to work closely with New Zealand to ensure that we, as a people, achieve our goals and overcome the challenges before us.

Tokelau is mindful of the recent change in New Zealand Government's aid policy in the Pacific region. It is important that in the heat of things Tokelau is not inadvertently bundled up with the rest of the Pacific Island countries as Tokelau has a unique relationship with New Zealand. Tokelau does not see itself as an aid recipient of New Zealand but rather a family member that have a responsibility for one another.

The close working relationship between Tokelau and New Zealand is critical to progress the Infrastructure Development Project and the Tokelau Shipping Project that are currently underway in Tokelau. These two projects apart from other ongoing projects in each village are large and significant for our people. Shipping is the lifeline for our people. Tokelau will continue to rely on New Zealand to ensure that these projects are delivered in time to address the practical challenges that our people continue to face.

To ensure that our plans and policies meet the needs of our people, Tokelau is now working on a Tokelau National Strategic Plan that will capture the needs and priorities of our people at both national and village level. It is our strategy that this national plan will provide the framework and platform where bilateral, regional and international entities can provide a more focused support towards the needs of our people. On this note Tokelau continues to value the contributions made by UNDP and other regional organizations.

To end my statement, as the Ulu o Tokelau, I wish to reiterate that Tokelau is determined to build itself as a self reliant and responsible people. In achieving this I believe that self determination will be more meaningful outcome for our government. Tokelau will continue to work with New Zealand to achieve the aspirations of our people with the continuing understanding and commitment of the Special Committee of 24.

I wish the Special Committee all the best in its deliberations. May the Almighty continue to give you guidance and be with you during this Seminar.

On behalf of my people, thank you once again for the opportunity given to Tokelau to address the Special Committee on Tokelau's status regarding self-determinations.

Ke alofa te Atua fakamanuia na talanoaga a te Komiti Fakapitoa ma ke ola foki ia Tokelau.