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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:
priorities for the remainder of the Decade

Bandung, Indonesia
14 to 16 May 2008

Statement of welcome

by

H.E. Mr. Imron Cotan, Secretary-General

Department of Foreign Affairs

Republic of Indonesia

Welcoming Remarks by

H.E. Imron Cotan
Secretary General
Department of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Indonesia

At the Opening of
The Pacific Regional Seminar
On Decolonization

Bandung, 14 May 2008

Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government and the people of Indonesia, in particular the people of Bandung, I am pleased to bid you all a warm welcome to this beautiful city as we gather here for the 2008 United Nations Pacific Regional Seminar on Decolonization.

Indonesia is greatly honoured to host this seminar. Apart from the privilege of playing host to such an important event, we are also given another opportunity to fulfill our constitutional mandate to contribute to a better world of peace and social justice. Decolonization, after all, is a fundamental form of social justice.

It is particularly significant that we are holding this seminar in Bandung, site of the historic Asian-African Conference of 1955. In fact, as mentioned by the Chair of the Special Committee in his opening remarks, the Conference took place in this very building, Gedung Merdeka.

Here, on 18 April 1955, President Sukarno, the founding President of Indonesia, stood before the first generation of Asian and African leaders and attested to their united stand on the issue of decolonization. "We are united," he said, "by a common detestation of colonialism in whatever form it appears. We are united by a common detestation of racism. And we are united by a common determination to preserve and stabilize peace in the world."

In that historic conference, the new emerging sovereign nations of Asia and Africa gave notice to the world at large that they were determined to take an active role in the mainstream of international affairs. They also rang the death knell of colonialism in its classic form of outright and barefaced domination.

On that occasion, 29 countries were represented in this building. Fifty years later, in 2005, when the Government of Indonesia in cooperation with the

Government of South Africa hosted the golden anniversary of the Asia-Africa Conference, 106 countries—all proudly independent, all proudly equal in their sovereignty—were represented here.

It is therefore clear that much progress has been made. But not to the extent that decolonization is no longer an issue. It still is.

Thus, this seminar is held at a very critical juncture, as the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism is swiftly approaching its scheduled completion in 2010. The main theme of this year's seminar, "priorities for the remainder of the decade," is therefore very timely.

We have a full agenda before us. The fulfillment of that agenda depends on each of you who represent the Special Committee member states, the administering Powers, and the Non-self-governing Territories.

We urgently need to identify pragmatic, constructive, and innovative ways to push the decolonization agenda forward. In doing so, we must think outside the box. We must put the quest for decolonization in the context of the realities of our time.

For the sake of the peoples of the remaining Non-self-governing Territories, we must really listen to one another this time. We must strive for mutual accommodation. We must summon the Spirit of Bandung, the lofty sentiments that united the first generation of leaders of Asia and Africa who met in this building more than half a century ago, so that it will impart Godspeed to our deliberations.

If we do imbue ourselves once more with the Spirit that first gave momentum to the decolonization movement, I have no doubt that we will effectively address the tasks we set out to accomplish in this seminar.

Thank you and I wish you a pleasant stay.