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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 action

Yanuca, Fiji  
28 to 30 November 2006

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RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UNDP SAMOA  
(DISCUSSION PAPER)

Presentation by Mr. Mads Nielsen  
On behalf of Ms, Naheed Haque, Resident Representative of UNDP Samoa  
Pacific Seminar on decolonization, 28-30 November 2006, Fiji

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Thank you Mr. Chairman  
Your Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme in Samoa, Ms. Naheed Haque, it is my great pleasure to address this distinguished audience today and to thank you for the kind invitation to share our perspectives and experiences on the topic of decolonization in the Pacific and especially in the case of Tokelau.

Mr. Chairman. As the development arm of the United Nations, it is the responsibility of the UNDP to support the efforts of countries that are under the administration of foreign governments to achieve self-government – UNDP gladly takes on the role of being an *honest referee*. A level of administrative confidence as demonstrated by economic sustainability, good national planning and provision of services, a high level of professional capacities in public offices, credible financial management and accountability systems, and a strong judiciary are some of the prerequisites for self-government. During the First International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, UNDP Samoa remained vigilant to the aspirations of Tokelau for self-determination.

In 1994, the first year that the Tokelauan people ever expressed a clear and official interest in making an act of self-determination, the UNDP intensified its focus on capacity building and institutional strengthening for increased self-government. One of its first nation-building projects to support this movement was the drafting of the country's constitution and compilation of its laws and regulations. Both projects revolved around extensive consultations with all the citizenry of Tokelau to introduce them to the concept of self-determination and constitutional development.

The second undertaking was the establishment of a state of the art modern telecommunications system under a partnership between the New Zealand government, UNDP Samoa, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), and a significant contribution by the Tokelauan leadership. The improved telecommunications had an immediate impact in enabling easier dialogue between the local administration and the Tokelau Administrator based in Wellington, New Zealand, amongst its citizenry and its development partners. Prior to this, Tokelau had relied solely on New Zealand-based systems for the direct management of its national assets, economic development and the delivery of services to the populace in what was known as the Apia based Tokelau Public Service.

Support to the development of the Modern House of Tokelau was the third focus of the UNDP Country Programme from 1997 to 2002 and continued the strong support from UNDP to Tokelau well into the Second International Decade for the Eradication of

Colonialism. The Modern House of Tokelau was a homegrown concept for the governance structure of the Tokelauan government before and after potential self-determination. Working in close collaboration with the New Zealand administration and local leadership in Tokelau, public service reform measures were put in place to devolve local administrative authority from the Tokelau Public Service to the traditional leaders of each village, spearheaded by the Council of Elders, the Taupulega. The joint effort also included a Commission of Inquiry into the entire public service to identify areas where further training was needed, human resource assessments were carried out and needs identified, and changes made to meet the new governance structures.

Also, through the participation of Tokelauans in relevant regional and global training programmes, meetings, conferences and seminars supported by UNDP over the years, a cadre of trained nationals in the fields of economic planning and management; information and communications technologies, law; constitutional development; environmental management and energy; gender and human rights has been slowly but steadily built up in Tokelau. Also, due to the ongoing loss of brainpower, mainly to New Zealand, the process for training remains an ongoing and pressing need for Tokelau.

During the current cycle, 2003-2007, further work on good governance focused on the drafting of the Treaty of Self-Government in free association with New Zealand, and national preparations for the Referendum that was eventually held in February 2006 in Tokelau. Although the necessary two-thirds majority vote for the Treaty was missed by a mere fraction, as we have heard earlier on, the results showed that the majority of Tokelauans, that is, 60 per cent, felt that a change was necessary and that they were ready for decolonization and self government. The Taupulega of Tokelau has determined to hold another Referendum in November 2007, as outlined by the Ulu-O-Tokelau, Mr. O'Brien. In the meantime, the national flag of Tokelau remains unfurled and its national anthem unsung until an unambiguous result is achieved.

Mr. Chairman. UNDP has been extremely fortunate to be able to work closely with a very supportive and affirmative administrative power such as New Zealand, whose positive attitude towards helping Tokelau achieve its aspirations has gone a long way in enabling the process to continue unhampered. We applaud this partnership and hold it up as a best practice for other territories in the world.

In the meantime, UNDP is committed to playing a central role within a coordinated United Nations Development Framework of Action, to provide the financial and moral support to Tokelau on her ongoing preparations for next years Referendum. UNDP will also commit it self, hopefully alongside New Zealand and regional organizations like SPC, to support Tokelau and make sure that the six priorities, as listed by the Ulu-o-Tokelau, will get the required attention in order to achieve a sustainable political and socio-economic development of Tokelau for years to come.

Ladies and Gentlemen – Thank your for your attention.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.