

Distr. RESTRICTED
CRS/2007/CRP.5

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Caribbean Regional Seminar on the implementation of the Second
International Decade for the Eradication of
Colonialism: next steps in decolonization

St. George's, Grenada
22 to 24 May, 2007

STATEMENT OF WELCOME

BY H.E. THE HONOURABLE MR. ELVIN NIMROD

FOREIGN MINISTER OF GRENADA

Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Representative of the Secretary-General,
Delegates,
Distinguished Guests,

I am delighted to welcome you to Grenada, the beautiful isle of spice and encourage you to find some time, in your busy schedule, to experience the island's charm.

The Government and people of Grenada are pleased to be able to host this United Nations Caribbean Regional Seminar and hope the ambiance of our country will inspire you to reach your goals. I am also happy to recall that Grenada is hosting this Seminar for the second time. For in 1992, the First Caribbean Regional Seminar of this type was convened here, at St. George's.

For us in the Caribbean, decolonisation of the remaining territories is viewed as unfinished business of the United Nations, and is integral to the successful completion of our regional integration process.

Distinguished participants,

Since the inception of the United Nations, the international community has come a long way. For in 1945, almost one third of the world's population lived in Territories. Sixty years later, 80 former colonies are now independent, while 16 remain dependent territories.

Fortunately, Grenada can now boast of its independence.

Last February, Grenadians celebrated 33 years of Independence. The road was not always smooth and we are still faced with challenges. Challenges to our quest for development, and sometimes frustrations with our aim to achieve a higher standard of living of our people.

Despite this, I can assure that maturing as a nation is rewarding. Our people are proud of our achievements and are doubly proud of our independence. I, therefore, look forward to the day when all nations of the world can enjoy this right.

Grenada's foreign policy is vested in the fundamental principles of human rights, the dignity and worth of human capital, with equal rights for men and women of every nation large or small.

In keeping with this philosophy, Grenada maintains a strong belief in the practice of democracy and is, therefore, committed to the principles of self-determination of all people.

Our commitment is manifested in our dedication to decolonization. This commitment is exhibited in our membership, as well as, that of several Caribbean States on the Decolonization Committee at UN Headquarters.

As Caribbean people, we are fully cognizant of the difference between being dependent and being independent. The former keeps one within a frame of directives and rules which holds a large element of detachment. While the latter allows exposure to international affairs; it fosters self-reliance, and provides freedom, as much as possible, to chart the social, cultural, and to a letter extent, economic course of ones country.

The decolonisation of small island territories is a particular challenge, while the situation of larger territories, which are the subject of sovereignty disputes, creates an added dynamic.

In addition, in this era of integration there is a new dimension that territories must face. Those territories that are ruled from the metropolis must now cope with the realities of integration and regionalism. In this context, some territories that are devoid of the experience of self-rule now fall within the ambit of the regional integration process of the 'parent state'.

This is but one challenge among many to be faced by non-self-governing states.

Regional seminars, as this one here in Grenada, must be the catalyst to re-energize those territories which aspire to decolonize. This Seminar must be the catalyst to restart the process for those territories, whose lack of access to the United Nations role in the decolonisation process serves as a significant impediment.

Distinguished participants,

We recognize that there are differing opinions on what constitutes self-government in contemporary terms. Political scientists also contend that many of the non-self-governing territories are merely micro-states, mini states and small states, and consequently, too small to be independent. Assertions are even being made that the United Nations no longer has a role to play in the self-determination of the remaining territories.

It is, therefore, critical for us to reaffirm that the time-honoured principles of absolute political equality are as relevant to the small island territories today as they were yesterday. The size of a territory should not preclude it from its natural evolution to political equality. I firmly believe small territories should not be compromised.

Therefore, as you explore innovative means to further the decolonization process for the remaining small island territories, please bear in mind the longstanding CARICOM position that *“the principles of absolute political equality must continue to be the guiding standards applicable to the small island territories, just as they were the standards to decolonize other former colonies.”*

The seminal work on these critical issues by Caribbean scholars, Sir Fred Phillips, Dr. Carlyle Corbin and others should be a reference point for your deliberations here.

We must continue to bear in mind that on the issue of contemporary decolonization, the international community can, and must, do better. But these issues can only be resolved through the concerted implementation of the extensive mandate that United Nations member states have adopted.

I challenge you at this session to focus considerable attention on ways to stimulate the United Nations system to intensify its work in decolonization, and to implement the programmes already approved for that purpose.

With this charge, I wish you, the participants all the best in your important deliberations during the *Caribbean Regional Seminar on the implementation of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism*.

Thank you.