

STATEMENT BY DR RAMESHWAR ORAON, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND
MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, IN THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION (FOURTH) COMMITTEE
DECOLONIZATION ITEMS AT THE 62nd SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL
ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 15, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the Fourth Committee, as well as to congratulate other members of the Bureau. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support during this 62nd session of the UN General Assembly. I would also like to take this opportunity to express appreciation to Ambassador Madhu Raman Acharya of Nepal for his skillful handling of the Committee's work in the last GA session.

Mr Chairman,

Despite having progressed into the twenty first century, we continue to grapple with the vestiges of colonialism, a bygone system that runs contrary to the fundamental principles of this Organisation. Colonialism is anachronistic, archaic and outmoded; it contravenes the fundamental tenets of democracy, freedom, dignity and human rights. While remarkable progress has been made in removing countries from the grip of colonialism, 16 areas still remain on the list of Non-Self Governing Territories. This serves as a reminder that the process of decolonisation is incomplete and much more needs to be done. We are now in the seventh year of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism [2001- 2010] and unless we intensify our work to implement the various resolutions and recommendations to eradicate colonialism, the Special Committee of 24 may well need a further decade to complete its work.

Our approach to the task that lies ahead must therefore blend urgency and activism on the one hand, and sensitivity and circumspection on the other. We must, first and foremost, take into account the needs of the people of these Territories and their special circumstances. An appropriate format and timing for the completion of decolonization in each territory needs to be focused upon. Ascertaining the political aspirations of the people in each of these Territories,

and taking into account the stages of development of each Territory, are critical inputs for making decisions that enable them to develop indigenous political and socio-economic institutions and structures of their choice. The importance of eschewing a "one size fits all" approach cannot be overstated; the focus should instead be on a case-by-case approach, with a view to making real progress in each Territory.

Dissemination of relevant information regarding options that may be available to the people in the Territories is crucial. All too often, the local population may be unaware of their legitimate political options. For real constitutional and political advancement to occur, the peoples of a Territory require sustained access to unbiased information on the licit options of political equality before them, namely, independence, free association with an independent state or integration with an independent state, as clearly defined under Resolution 1541 [XV] of the General Assembly.

Two important tools that could serve to bridge this information deficit in the process of decolonisation, are the visits of UN Missions to Non Self-Governing Territories and the conduct of Regional Seminars by the Special Committee of 24 on Decolonisation. The instrumentality of visiting Missions helps in the collection of adequate and first-hand information on conditions in the Territories and for ascertaining the wishes and aspirations of the peoples concerning their future status. Such missions are important in the context of furthering modalities and action plans for decolonisation and observing acts of self-determination. We hope that the administering Powers would extend their full cooperation to the Special Committee in facilitating such visiting missions. Similarly, we favour the holding of regional seminars by the Special Committee, in an effort to mobilize world opinion to support and assist the peoples of the Territories in speedily ending colonialism. The idea of combining visiting Missions to certain Territories with seminars in order to optimize available resources is a worthy one, which should be pursued. In this context, we look forward to the holding of the next seminar in the Pacific region in 2008.

The role of the administering Powers is an important factor. A spirit of cooperation and flexibility has largely imbued their actions in recent years. We call upon them to further build upon this positive spirit by, in particular, assisting the Special Committee of 24 in devising specifically tailored action plans for the decolonisation of certain Territories in their quest for self-determination. The case of Tokelau is one such example. We extend our full support to the preparations by New Zealand and the Territorial Government for the referendum scheduled for this month in exercise of the right to self determination by the people of Tokelau.

We hope that such instances of partnership will serve as a guide to other administering Powers which continue to resist the international dialogue established by the United Nations on the political and constitutional development of the territories under their administration. We support an interactive dialogue on the objective reality in the Territories would be to the benefit of all concerned, in particular, the people of these territories.

We should like to express our appreciation for the work of the Special Committee. We agree with the Chairman's contention that the focus should now be on implementation. We support moves to concentrate efforts to produce a plan of implementation for the wider United Nations system in order to organize actions already called for, into concrete activities, in furtherance of complete decolonization by 2010. We are convinced that only through such a pro-active approach, which we must carry forth into 2008, will we be able to fulfill the mandate for decolonisation by the end of this decade. We would like to assure the Chairman of the Committee of 24 of our full support and involvement in his efforts to move the agenda ahead and successfully complete the mandate of the Special Committee.

Mr Chairman,

Last Thursday in its statement before this Committee Pakistan had, for a limited and selfish foreign policy objective, made a reference to the Indian State of Jammu & Kashmir that was unwarranted and completely irrelevant to the work of this Committee. Pakistan would have been better served if it were to focus on giving the right of self determination and democracy to its own people, rather than making out of context and factually incorrect comments about others. Not only is Jammu & Kashmir an integral part of India, but it has for long had a democratically elected Government in place. India is of the view that bilateral matters should continue to be discussed bilaterally, and not raised in multilateral fora. There is a need also to be vigilant against the voicing of sentiments or usage of language that would be tantamount to supporting terrorists as they unsuccessfully seek to undermine long established democratic and pluralistic societies.

Mr Chairman,

In conclusion, as a founding member of the UN and the Special Committee of 24 on Decolonisation, we share solidarity with other erstwhile-colonized peoples and nations. We consider it an honour to re-dedicate ourselves to the cherished ideals of freedom, democracy, human rights, dignity and peaceful co-existence, while reaffirming our commitment to achieving the goal of complete decolonisation.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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