

**STATEMENT BY MR. V.K. NAMBIAR, PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
DECLARATION ON THE GRATING OF INDEPENDENCE TO
COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (AGENDA ITEM 19),
SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONISATION COMMITTEE
(FOURTH COMMITTEE) ON OCTOBER 1, 2002**

Mr. Chairman,

It is a great pleasure for my delegation to see you in the chair. We offer you and other members of the Bureau our congratulations and our fullest cooperation in carrying out the tasks before you. We are confident that you will discharge them fully and effectively.

Mr. Chairman,

It is indeed ironical that at the dawn of this new century, we have still to deal with the vestiges of a bygone system that runs contrary to the fundamental principles of this great Organisation. Colonialism goes against the tenets of democracy, freedom, dignity, progress and human rights. When the UN was established in 1945, 750 million

people - almost a third of the world's population - lived in territories that were non-self-governing, dependent on colonial powers. It is a tribute to the commitment and tenacity of this world body and its progressively growing membership that today, fewer than two million people live in such territories. In May this year, we saw yet another territory exit the list of non-self-governing territories and assume its place beside us as a proud and independent nation. We take this opportunity to welcome Timor Leste to the membership of the United Nations.

With the independence of Timor Leste, we are now left with 16 non-self governing territories on the list of the Special Committee as territories yet to exercise their

right to self-determination. Clearly, we have covered much ground. But the challenge is not yet over. The continued existence of these territories and their special circumstances, as diverse as they are complex, serve as reminders to us that our task in eliminating the evil of colonialism is as yet incomplete.

The General Assembly mandated a second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2001 – 2010) at its 55th regular session in December 2000. This is a welcome development and should give renewed impetus to our efforts. All of us have our respective share of responsibilities in this endeavour. We must strive to achieve what is best for the people of these non-self-governing territories. Of paramount importance is the right of the people of the non-self-governing territories to choose the kind of political system that they desire for their own governance. The role of the Special Committee, and indeed of the UN as a whole, is to ascertain the political aspirations of the people in each of these territories and, taking into account the stages

of development and advancement of each territory, to enable them to bequeath to themselves political and socio-economic institutions and structures of their choice.

The administering powers, in particular, have a vital role to play in this regard. The importance of their participation in the work of the Special Committee can hardly be over-emphasized. We call on them to approach the task at hand in a spirit of cooperation, understanding, political realism and flexibility. Cooperation and not confrontation should be the guiding principle in our common quest. We are happy to note that this spirit has imbued the ongoing dialogue with the administering powers. Particularly noteworthy, in this context, is the dispatch of a visiting UN Mission to Tokelau in August 2002, which required the full cooperation of the Government of New Zealand. We also note with appreciation the participation of the United Kingdom, France and New Zealand in the regional seminar held in Fiji earlier this year.

Such interaction, needs to be sustained and further built upon. Let us hope that during this second international

decade we will be able to make lasting progress in implementing the Declaration for each individual territory. While this is a challenging task, we are confident that, with the good faith that has characterized the dialogue between the administering powers and non-self-governing territories in recent years, we shall be able to develop a reasonable programme of work for each non-self-governing territory.

7. We in India, have suffered the widespread and baneful effects of colonialism

over centuries. This is what gives added commitment to our effort as we join others in the struggle for its elimination. This “legacy” is of particular value in creating a broad-based solidarity between India and other erstwhile colonised peoples and nations. Today, we re-dedicate ourselves to the cherished ideals of freedom, democracy, human rights, dignity and peaceful co-existence while also reaffirming our commitment to ensure that the scourge of colonialism, the remnant of a by-gone era, is banished forever.