

**STATEMENT BY MR. Y.K. SINHA, COUNSELLOR ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION
ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (AGENDA
ITEM 18) - SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONISATION COMMITTEE (FOUR COMMITTEE) ON
OCTOBER 8, 2001**

Mr. Chairman,

May I congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election. We compliment Ambassador Kiwanuka of Uganda and members of the outgoing Bureau for the exemplary manner in which they conducted the proceedings of this Committee.

2. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, we continue to deliberate on the vestiges of a bygone era of governance that contravenes all that this Organisation and the comity of nations represent. Colonialism goes against the fundamental tenets of democracy, freedom, dignity, progress and human rights. One of the greatest achievements of the United Nations has been to rid the world, or most of it, of this scourge. A chapter of the UN Charter stood trustee to the interests of the non-self-governing peoples of the world. Over 40 years ago, the Declaration on Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, boldly set forth our goal: "the end of colonialism in all its manifestations". We can legitimately claim to have largely fulfilled the trust imposed by the Charter and the Declaration. Much of the world is free. Yet, the goal set out in the Declaration has not been fully realised. Seventeen non-self-governing territories continue to be listed. We are aware of the complexities that exist with respect to these territories and hence our task becomes all the more delicate. The last steps are often the most difficult but we cannot shirk our responsibility in this regard.

3. The General Assembly has mandated a Second Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. It is incumbent on us to persevere in a spirit of cooperation, understanding, political realism and flexibility in order to attain our goal. All of us, the administering Powers and others alike, have a shared responsibility. We must strive to achieve what is best for the people of these non-self-governing territories, based on an opportunity to freely determine what they perceive to be in their best interest, from a well-informed stand point. Of fundamental importance is the right of the people of these territories to choose the kind of political system that they desire for their own governance. The role of the United Nations is to ascertain the wishes of these people and facilitate the emergence of a political, economic and social structure of their choice.

Mr. Chairman,

4. The administering Powers have a special responsibility in this regard. Their role is crucial in attaining the objectives that we have laid down for ourselves. The Special Committee on Decolonisation has sought to engage the administering Powers in a constructive and meaningful discussion on the fate of the remaining non-self-governing territories, as cooperation and not confrontation is the key to our work. We are happy to note that this spirit has imbued the ongoing dialogue with the administering Powers. While the levels of engagement vary, a propitious beginning has been made and we should strive to build upon this. In this regard, we would like to commend the participation of the United Kingdom in the Caribbean Regional Seminar held in Havana in May.

5. Such interaction needs to be sustained and discussions to arrive at programmes of work for each non-self-governing territory, in consultation with the people of the territory concerned, would greatly facilitate our work. Not only should we build on the initial discussions held so far on American Samoa and Pitcairn with the concerned administering Powers, but we should expand the ambit of this engagement to include the other remaining non-self-governing territories. We would like to reiterate our support for such an endeavour.

6. As we do so, Mr. Chairman, we also need to draw attention to the challenges to freedom that persist, in different forms and manifestations. The majority of the UN's members have emerged only recently from colonial rule. Almost none had freedom gifted to them. We have all struggled for our freedom, fought for it in one form or other. And we know that the freedom we have won, sometimes at great cost, cannot be taken for granted. Which is why the newly-independent countries introduced into the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples the sixth principle, which stipulates that "any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity or the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations".

7. They were prescient about this. These attempts continue, using means that have become increasingly vile and violent. Terrorists, attempting to overthrow representative governments, to deny individual and civic freedoms, to destroy the fundamental human rights that the Declaration sought to protect, describe themselves, with bare-faced effrontery, as freedom-fighters. Both their objectives and the means they use besmirch the memory of those who truly have fought for freedom. The first principle of the Declaration, which sanctified the fight for freedom against the "subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation", shows up their lie. This is a lie that needs to be nailed. Terrorists are not freedom fighters. Terrorism is defined by the act, not by a spurious and self-serving description of the perpetrators.

8. India as a founding-member of the UN and the Special Committee has been in the vanguard of the struggle against colonialism. We are privileged to have been a co-sponsor of the Declaration on Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. We reaffirm our commitment to the noble ideals enshrined in the Declaration as we embark on the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.