

STATEMENT BY MR. AJAI MALHOTRA, AMBASSADOR &
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA
IN THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION
(FOURTH) COMMITTEE ON DECOLONIZATION ITEMS AT THE
63rd SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 9, 2008

Mr. Chairman,

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you on your election as the Chairman of the Fourth Committee, as well as to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. I would like to assure you of India's full cooperation during this 63rd session of the UN General Assembly.

Mr. Chairman,

We continue to wrestle with the remnants of colonialism, a bygone system that runs contrary to the fundamental principles of the UN. Archaic and outmoded, colonialism contravenes the fundamental tenets of freedom, dignity of the individual, human rights and democracy. While there has been considerable progress in removing countries from the grip of colonialism, sixteen areas still remain on the list of Non-Self Governing Territories. This serves to remind that, although we have covered much ground, the process of decolonisation is as yet unfinished and more remains to be done.

We are now in the eighth 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 work of the Special Committee of 24 may well enter another decade before it is completed.

Our approach to the task ahead must blend urgency and activism with sensitivity and circumspection. In doing so it is of paramount importance that we 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 of these Territories, and taking into account the stages of development of each Territory, are critical inputs for the making of decisions that would enable them to develop indigenous political and socio-economic institutions and structures of their choice. The importance of steering clear of 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. On occasion, the local population may be unaware of the legitimate political options available to them. For real constitutional and political advancement to occur, the peoples of a Territory must have sustained access to unbiased information about the licit options of political equality before them, viz., independence, free association with an independent state, or integration with an independent state, as clearly defined under Resolution 1541 [XV] of the General Assembly.

Visits by UN Missions to Non Self-Governing Territories and the conduct of Regional Seminars by the Special Committee of 24 on Decolonisation, are important tools to bridge this information deficit in the process of decolonisation. The instrumentality of visiting Missions helps in the collection of adequate, first-hand information on conditions in the Territories and in ascertaining the wishes and aspirations of the peoples concerning their future status. Such missions are also 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. In this context, we look forward to the holding of the next seminar in the Caribbean region in 2009.

The actions of the administering Powers in recent years have been largely imbued with a spirit of cooperation and flexibility. We would urge them to build upon this positive spirit by, in particular, assisting the Special Committee of 24 in devising customized action plans for the decolonisation of certain Territories in their quest for self-determination. Tokelau is an example and we join in appreciating the cooperation shown by New Zealand, as the administering Power, with the work of the Special Committee relating to Tokelau. We hope that such instances of partnership will also guide other administering Powers that still resist the international dialogue established by the United Nations on the political and constitutional development of the territories under their administration. We agree that 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.

Mr. Chairman,

We agree with the recommendation that the Special Committee develop a mechanism to annually, systematically review the implementation of the specific recommendations on decolonization, with a focus on implementing the mandate as set out in General Assembly resolutions and the plan of action of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. We would like to assure the Chairman of the

Committee of 24 of our full support for his efforts to move the agenda ahead and successfully fulfill the mandate of the Special Committee.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, in a statement a little while ago the distinguished delegate of Pakistan made an unwarranted reference to the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, given the context of the work of this Committee. He would have been better served by avoiding commenting about an integral part of another member state. Such a comment also contradicts the agreed Conclusions and Recommendations of the Special Committee on Decolonisation that were presented on 16 May 2008, which specify that any such attempts are incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, we certainly do look forward to the continuation and deepening of a constructive dialogue with Pakistan and to a profound transformation in our bilateral relationship with Pakistan, so that our two countries can work together on our shared objectives of peace, prosperity and security.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, as a founding member of the UN and the Special Committee on the Implementation of the Declaration on Decolonisation, I would like to reaffirm India's unrelenting commitment to achieving the goal of complete decolonisation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)