

Statement by Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri, Ambassador/Deputy Permanent Representative, during the General Debate of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009

Mr Chairman,

India's independence in 1947 was one of the most important milestones in the history of decolonization. The deliberations of the Fourth Committee, and in particular the items on decolonization, therefore have a special significance for India. My delegation attaches the greatest importance to the deliberations of this Committee. My delegation wishes to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of this Committee, and assures you and other members of the Bureau of the fullest support and cooperation in the conduct of its business.

Mr Chairman,

We are about to compete the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is a sad reflection that we still continue to concern ourselves with the issue of colonialism.

Colonialism is a product and a concept of an exploitative past. It runs contrary to the principles of sovereign equality on which the United Nations and other modern multilateral systems are grounded. It is anachronistic, archaic and outmoded; it contravenes the fundamental tenets of democracy, freedom, human dignity and human rights.

Mr Chairman,

One of the greatest achievements of the United Nations has been to rid the world, or most of it, of this scourge. Nearly 50 years ago, the Declaration on Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Resolution 1514), 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. 80 million people living in 60 former territories have been decolonized and much of the world is free. Decolonization has been perhaps the greatest success story of the United Nations.

Yet, the goal set out in the Declaration has not been fully realized. In December 2000, the 55<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly mandated a second international Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2000-2010). The 16 Non Self Governing Territories in the UN list serve as constant reminders that the business of decolonization is not yet complete.

Mr Chairman,

Resolution 1541 (XV) further defined full self-government as being one of three options; independence; free association with an independent state; or integration into an independent state.

We need to ensure that the achievement of these goals is approached with a combination of urgency and activism and sensitivity and circumspection. In doing so, special attention needs to be paid to the needs of the people of the Territories themselves. Many of the Territories have made considerable progress in their political, constitutional, economic and social development and have gone a long way towards self-government. The issue is of finding the appropriate format and timing for the completion of decolonization in each Territory.

The role of the Special Committee and indeed of the UN as a whole here is crucial as it is delicate; ascertaining the political aspirations of the people in each of these territories and, taking into account the stages of development and advancement of each territory, so that they are enabled to acquire for themselves political and socio-economic institution and structures of their choice.

Mr Chairman,

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 Decolonization 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.

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 their options.

Visits by UN Missions to Non Self Governing Territories and the conduct of Regional Seminars by Special Committee of 24 are important tools to bridge this information deficit in the process of decolonization. The instrumentality of visiting Missions helps in the collection of adequate, first-hand information on conditions in their Territories and in ascertaining the wishes and aspirations of the peoples concerning their future status. Such missions are also important in the contest of furthering modalities and action plans for decolonization and observing acts of self-determination. We hope that the administering powers would continue to extend their full cooperation in facilitating such visits.

Mr Chairman,

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 come to the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

Thank You.

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