



WILMA REVERÓN-COLLAZO, expert, urged participants to recall the situation that led to the Declaration on decolonization through resolution 1514 (XV). The fundamental principle is self-determination, as stated in paragraph 5, she said. Decolonization requires in-depth education to change the minds of the Territories' peoples and the administering Powers. Noting the important role played by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Global Communications, she said the work of the United Nations must be publicized through all available means, including radio, video, print and social media. She emphasized that she has never seen the United Nations carry out education programmes on the right to self-determination in Puerto Rico.

**General Assembly Special Committee on Decolonization**

**Caribbean Regional Seminar, AM & PM Meetings**

**Participants Urge Renewed Commitment to**

## **Speed Up Eradication of Colonialism by 2020,**

**as Caribbean Regional Seminar Opens**      SAINT GEORGE'S, Grenada, 2 May – Opening the Caribbean Regional Seminar on Decolonization today, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called for renewed commitment to accelerating efforts to end colonialism by 2020.

“Today, renewed commitment of all involved parties and pragmatic measures are required to accelerate decolonization processes,” the Secretary-General said in his video message to the Seminar, held under the theme “Implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: accelerating decolonization through renewed commitment and pragmatic measures”.

[In 1960, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, subsequently proclaiming the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (1990 to 2000), as well as the Second and Third International Decades (2001-2010 and 2011-2020). More than 80 former colonies have gained their independence since the creation of the United Nations, but 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remain today.]

Pledging that the Organization will continue to support decolonization, the Secretary-General urged all concerned – administering Powers, Non-Self-Governing Territories, Member States and the Special Committee on Decolonization, a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly created to monitor implementation of decolonization processes – to play their respective roles.

Keisha Aniya McGuire (Grenada), Chair of the Special Committee, highlighted the important role played by the annual regional seminars. “Indeed, the regional seminars are an effective mechanism to interact, exchange views and to have an enriching dialogue on how to move the decolonization agenda forward,” she said, explaining that the current Seminar offers a special opportunity to devise and propose innovative, specific and practical measures that will help the Special Committee discharge its mandate. (For background information, see Press Release GA/COL/3331 of 29 April.)

The subsequent presentations and interactive discussions touched upon such issues as the role of the Special Committee – known formally as the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples – and the perspectives of the different stakeholders. They underscored the importance of enhanced cooperation and active participation by the administering Powers, Non-Self-Governing Territories and other relevant stakeholders.

The Premier of the British Virgin Islands said the relationship between that Territory and the United Kingdom has become increasingly strained as the administering Power has become more intrusive in the areas of governance constitutionally delegated to the territorial government. However, “under my leadership, things will change”, he declared, pledging close

cooperation with the United Nations. He urged the Special Committee to facilitate a self-governance assessment of the Territory, dispatch a visiting mission, facilitate an education campaign on self-determination and sit as an official observer of public deliberations during the next constitutional review.

Similarly, Tregenza Roach, Lieutenant Governor of the United States Virgin Islands, said that Territory would also welcome the Organization's presence as an objective and credible voice regarding the decolonization process. It would also welcome financial support and other resources that can help to advance dialogue, he said, emphasizing that the present territorial government recognizes the need to embark on a new and meaningful conversation that should culminate in a status referendum within its four-year term. "A decade for decolonization has morphed into three," he noted. Pointing out that colonization persisted for hundreds of years, he emphasized: "The task is daunting, but it is pregnant with meaning. We must stay the course."

Judith L. Bourne, expert, pointed out that only one Territory has been decolonized over the past 29 years while one returned to the jurisdiction of the Special Committee, leaving a grand total of 0 per cent change in the number of Non-Self-Governing Territories on the list. She went on to recall that the early successful decolonization of more than 80 territories, most of which are now Member States of the United Nations, was propelled by the expressed will of the colonized peoples. However, many of the peoples of today's Non-Self-Governing Territories have little or no knowledge of the three self-determination options, and demonstrate no generalized impulse towards self-determination, she said, emphasizing that "this should not be seen as a lack of desire, but as a lack of information". She urged the Special Committee to reach back to the well-grounded, well-developed Plan of Implementation adopted 12 years ago.

A total of 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remain under the Special Committee's purview: American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands (Malvinas)\*, French Polynesia, Gibraltar, Guam, Montserrat, New Caledonia, Pitcairn, Saint Helena, Tokelau, Turks and Caicos Islands, United States Virgin Islands and Western Sahara. The administering Powers are France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In other business, the Seminar adopted its agenda (document PRS/2019.CRP.1) and provisional programme of work (document PRS/2019/CRP.2). The Chair appointed the representatives of Dominica and Côte d'Ivoire as Vice-Chairs, and the representative of Papua New Guinea as Rapporteur.

The Seminar will reconvene on Friday, 3 May, to continue its work.

### Opening Remarks

KEISHA ANIYA MCGUIRE (Grenada), Chair of the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, declared the Caribbean Regional Seminar on Decolonization open, thanking the Government and people of Grenada for hosting it. Grenada is a country well

known for its unswerving commitment to the cause of decolonization, she said, recalling that it previously hosted three seminars of the Special Committee in 1992, 2007 and 2018.

PETER DAVID, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Grenada, speaking on behalf of the host country, stressed the importance of regional seminars in helping the Special Committee discharge its mandate. Reaffirming his country's commitment to the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, he recalled that seminar participants gathered in Saint George's one year ago to share their thoughts and listen to those of others in order to find common solutions. The current thinking has been put on the table, but it is not exhausted, he added.

With the end of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism approaching, time is of the essence, he emphasized, calling for an increased sense of urgency, greater political will and collective action to achieve tangible results towards decolonization. He went on to highlight three keys: renewed commitment to speed up decolonization; cooperation among stakeholders and with the Special Committee; and pragmatism to advance the interests of all peoples in the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. "It cannot be business as usual," he emphasized, expressing hope that there will be no need to propose another decade for decolonization. Decolonization must conclude by 2020, he stressed.

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said in his video message to the Seminar that since its founding, the United Nations has been engaged in decolonization processes around the globe. "That work continues today, as 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remain." Last November, New Caledonians held a referendum on their future and on the status of their Territory, he recalled, applauding the Government of France for its commitment throughout the referendum process, and commending the Special Committee's contribution. "Today, renewed commitment of all involved parties and pragmatic measures are required to accelerate decolonization processes," he said, adding that the United Nations will continue to assist. However, all should play their role – the administering Powers, Non-Self-Governing Territories, Member States and the Special Committee.

### Organization of Work

The representative of Cuba, in a protest against the Government of the United States, said the latter failed to issue a visa for a diplomat at her Permanent Mission to the United Nations who was supposed to represent the Cuban delegation at the Seminar. That country's non-compliance with the host country agreement has impeded the work of diplomats accredited to the United Nations and led to financial loss for the Organization as the air ticket issued for the Cuban diplomat was not used, she noted.

The representative of Syria expressed solidarity with his Cuban counterpart, saying that another delegation experienced a similar occurrence in 2018. He then sought clarification from the Secretariat about the procedural issue of non-funding with regards to the representative of Frente Polisario for Western Sahara.

The Special Committee Chair responded by stating that, on the basis of fairness and equity, a

decision was made not to fund two participants from Western Sahara.

The representative of the Russian Federation said his delegation also experienced a similar visa issue in 2018, expressing support for an effort to address the issue that is becoming consistent. Regarding the funding of participants, he said the issue must be addressed during the debates and in documentation, adding that the Russian Federation is ready to engage in a constructive discussion.

The representative of Sierra Leone expressed support for the Chair's decision, noting that she took fairness and equity into account regarding the funding of participants from Western Sahara.

The representative of Cuba expressed regret at the Chair's decision, recalling that the Special Committee has always funded the participation of Frente Polisario since 1999. The new practice is discriminatory compared to the way other representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories are treated, she noted, underlining that the issue is under the purview of the General Assembly and should not set a precedent.

The representatives of Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Côte d'Ivoire, Chile and Saint Lucia also expressed support for the Chair's decision.

The representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis echoed Cuba's sentiments regarding the visa issue while expressing support for the decision on non-funding.

The representative of the Congo, pointing out that the issue of invitation and funding is the prerogative of the Chair, said she must follow the rules and expressed his support for her decision.

The representative of Papua New Guinea said his delegation supports the Chair's decision but respects the various views expressed by all the delegations. He asked the Chair to ensure that this procedural matter does not undermine the Special Committee's substantive work, not only in the Seminar but also in other forums.

The representative of Venezuela said his delegation stands in solidarity with Cuba on the visa issue. He urged the Special Committee to ask the host country of the United Nations to respect the prerogatives it extends to the Organization, adding that his country was also unable to have the representation it requires.

The representative of Timor-Leste, echoing the views of Cuba and Syria, described Frente Polisario as the "legitimate representative of Western Sahara", citing General Assembly resolutions 34/17 and 35/19. He expressed concern over the Secretariat's decision not to fund the participation of its representatives, pointing out that that was not the case in the past. Upholding General Assembly resolutions is fundamentally important, he stressed.

The representative of Nicaragua expressed concern over the visa denial, describing it as an obstacle to the Special Committee's deliberations. Regarding Frente Polisario, he said the

Secretariat must guarantee funding in accordance with the right not to suffer discrimination.

The representative of Grenada expressed sympathy for Cuba over the visa denial and support for the Chair's decision on funding, but emphasized that the latter should not interfere with the Special Committee's substantive work.

The representative of Indonesia also expressed support for the Chair's decision on funding while highlighting the importance of Security Council proceedings on Western Sahara.

The representative of Syria said there is no new draft resolution of the General Assembly on the question of Western Sahara, and recalled that the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy described Frente Polisario as the legitimate party at the negotiation table. The important decision on participation must be taken in consultations with Bureau members, he said, adding that funding questions must go to the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary). He also suggested that the Special Committee discuss the matter during its June session.

The representative of Fiji, pointing out the time spent for discussion, said he respects the Chair's decision.

The representative of Algeria, expressing solidarity with Cuba on the visa issue, said the issue of funding for Frente Polisario should not have been raised in the first place because the group is the legitimate representative of Western Sahara, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The issue should have been resolved in New York, he stressed.

The representative of Morocco insisted the Seminar is not the right venue to discuss representation because it has its own agenda. The political process currently under way should be supported, he said, welcoming the two round-table meetings held in Geneva. Expressing support for the Chair's decision, he asked for discourse based on tolerance, also calling for an effort to transcend the differences between substantive and procedural matters.

The representative of Syria said he did not raise an issue of a substantive nature but wishes the Special Committee's report to reflect this procedural issue.

The Seminar then adopted its agenda (document PRS/2019.CRP.1) and provisional programme of work (document PRS/2019/CRP.2). The Chair also appointed the representatives of Dominica and Côte d'Ivoire as Vice-Chairs and the representative of Papua New Guinea as Rapporteur.

## Discussion I

KEISHA MCGUIRE (Grenada), Chair of the Special Committee, said that over the years, the General Assembly has reiterated the important role played by regional seminars, with the active participation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, as a helpful means for the Special Committee to fulfil its mandate. The Special Committee also attaches great significance to the seminars because they are held in observance of the Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The General Assembly has underlined that the regional nature

of the seminars is considered crucial in ascertaining the political status of the Territories, she said. Indeed, they are an effective mechanism for interaction, exchange views and an enriching dialogue on how to advance the decolonization agenda.

She went on to state that the present Seminar will focus on: the Special Committee's role in making viable advances in the Territories; the perspectives of the administering Powers, the Territories and other stakeholders in devising strategies to overcome the challenges of decolonization and ensuring the well-being of the Territories' peoples; and the role of the United Nations system in providing development assistance in accordance with relevant resolutions. In the penultimate year of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, she said, this Seminar has a special opportunity to devise and propose, through frank and constructive discussions, innovative, specific and practical measures to help the Special Committee discharge its mandate.

The representative of Argentina noted that the critical document, resolution 1514 (XV), was adopted nearly 60 years ago, reiterating the commitment of his country's Government to implement it. Argentina has been represented at all regional seminars and reaffirms its commitment to resolving all challenges of Non-Self-Governing Territories, including sovereignty disputes, he said. Underlining the importance of the advisory opinion concerning the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965, he said it highlights the General Assembly's exclusive responsibility relating to decolonization and, thus, its importance to the work of the Special Committee.

JOSEPH BOSSANO, former Chief Minister of Gibraltar, stressed the need to accelerate decolonization processes, saying they have not advanced for nearly 30 years. The choice made by Niue, which opted for non-independence in keeping with the wishes of its people, must be acceptable to the Special Committee if it is acceptable to Tokelau, he emphasized. He went on to note that pragmatic solutions might potentially exist for Pitcairn, a Territory with a population of 50 people. He emphasized the need for stakeholders to interact with each other and urged the administering Powers to participate in regional seminars.

The representative of Indonesia asked: "How many international decades for decolonization can we afford?" The Seminar provides an opportunity to identify pragmatic solutions and is an important platform for all stakeholders to exchange views and take stock of challenges and options, he said. There is no "one-size-fit-all" solution, he added, stressing that each case must be assessed carefully.

The representative of Spain said there is forward momentum with the end of the Third Decade approaching and expressed support for the Special Committee's work going forward.

The representative of China noted that more than 2 million people still live in the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, with the colonial situation causing suffering for the local peoples. China contributes to the work of the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) and the Special Committee to help them fulfil their mandates in accordance with the United Nations Charter, he added.

The representative of Papua New Guinea said that improving the Special Committee's work requires its members to take a serious look at decolonization processes on a case-by-case basis. Echoing the speaker from Gibraltar, he said Tokelau stands a chance of breaking the two-thirds threshold in a referendum towards a possible final outcome. Regarding Pitcairn, he said the Special Committee has not had an opportunity to hear directly from its people since May 2004.

The representative of Sierra Leone said the regional seminars create the right atmosphere in which to meet and address the issues. He also emphasized the relevance of visiting missions in helping to provide an accurate understanding of situations on the ground.

The representative of Ethiopia underscored the need to accelerate efforts to end colonialism by 2020. Describing Western Sahara as the only Territory in Africa on the Special Committee's list, she called for a resolution of the political impasse in order to reach a mutually acceptable solution. Welcoming the two round-table meetings held in Geneva in 2018 and 2019, she said the parties must commit themselves to the political process, emphasizing that the role of the African Union is also vital.

**The representative of Venezuela said** the administering Powers must respect the wishes of non-self-governing peoples to advance sustainable development. They must disseminate accurate information, he emphasized, calling for neutral media coverage.

**Visiting missions lead to positive outcomes, he said, urging the Special Committee to send missions to some Territories, including Montserrat and American Samoa. Pointing out that more than 30 resolutions on Puerto Rico have not been implemented in satisfactory manner,**

he stressed that Venezuela fully supports an inclusive political process for Western Sahara.

The representative of France said his delegation respects the choices of 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories, emphasizing that French Polynesia should not be on the list. Describing New Caledonia as a success story of cooperation involving the Territory, the Special Committee and France, he explained the enormous effort involved in organizing a referendum. France was delighted that voter turnout was more than 80 per cent, he said, pointing out that about 56 per cent of voters were not in favour of independence, during this referendum, he said, adding that a second and third are being considered for 2020 and 2022, respectively.

The representative of Timor-Leste called for intensified efforts to eradicate colonialism by 2020, the year coinciding with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. He went on to urge administering Powers to facilitate visiting missions, to safeguard the natural resources of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. He also asked that the administering Powers provide up-to-date information on socioeconomic conditions in the Territories.

The representative of Uganda said the high attendance at the Seminar reflects heightened interest. The Seminar is taking place at a time when multilateralism is under threat from unilateral actions by some countries, he noted, emphasizing that the wider body of humanity needs assurances that multilateralism will prevail. The outcome of the Seminar is critical since



it will inform the Special Committee's future work, including the June substantive session, he said, adding that regional processes have a role in discussing these issues.

**WILMA REVERON-COLLAZO, expert, urged participants to recall the situation that led to the Declaration on decolonization through resolution 1514 (XV). The fundamental principle is self-determination, as stated in paragraph 5, she said. Decolonization requires in-depth education to change the minds of the Territories' peoples and the administering Powers. Noting the important role played by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Global Communications, she said the work of the United Nations must be publicized through all available means, including radio, video, print and social media. She emphasized that she has never seen the United Nations carry out education programmes on the right to self-determination in Puerto Rico.**

PETER CLEGG, expert, referring to the situation of Pitcairn, emphasized that decolonization "by decline" or "by default" is not acceptable, and the United Nations should come up with a pragmatic solution before it is too late. Pragmatism is the watchword, he stressed.

## Discussion II

ANDREW A. FAHIE, Premier of the British Virgin Islands, recalled that the Territory's people elected a new government on 25 February, declaring: "Under my leadership, things will change." Assuring the Special Committee of close cooperation, he pointed out that the unelected Governor appointed by the United Kingdom still presides over a Cabinet comprising a Premier and ministers elected by the people. The relationship between the Territory and the administering Power is becoming increasingly strained as the latter has become more intrusive in the areas of governance constitutionally delegated to the territorial government, he said. In 2018, the United Kingdom adopted the Sanctions and Anti-Money-Laundering Act, which imposes public registers of beneficial ownership on its overseas territories, he said, stressing that the United Kingdom's actions violate the principle of self-governance and triggered the largest protest in the history of the British Virgin Islands in May 2018, he said.

He went on to recall that the United Kingdom's House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee published a report in February, recommending that the overseas territories legalize same-sex marriage, abolish "Belonger" status, and permit legally resident British and overseas territory citizens currently not eligible to vote and run for elected office in the Territories to be allowed to do so. Noting that the British Virgin Islands wishes to deepen its relationship with the United Nations, he said it is currently unable to access international funds under the Organization's programmes from such sources as the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund. Requesting that the British Virgin Islands be granted associate membership of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, he said the Special Committee can facilitate a self-governance assessment of the Territory, dispatch a visiting mission, facilitate an education campaign on self-determination and sit as an official observer to public deliberations during the next constitutional review.

WALTER H. ROBAN, Deputy Premier of Bermuda, echoed the Premier of the British Virgin

Islands, saying that Territory shares a common connection with his own. Bermuda opposes the United Kingdom's position on the issue of beneficial ownership, he said, pointing out that his Territory's constitutional arrangement is different from those of other overseas territories. Its constitutional arrangement will not allow the United Kingdom to impose legislation, he stressed.

He went on to note that the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union would require Bermuda to take more active responsibility for its overseas relations. Recalling that things went well in the early 1990s, he said the Territories welcomed remarks by then Foreign Secretary Robin Cook relating to the United Kingdom's position on its overseas territories. However, much has changed since 1997, and the United Kingdom has decided to exert greater responsibility, including the issuance of passports for the peoples of its overseas territories, he said. This gives Bermuda a considerable amount of problems, he emphasized. Although the United Kingdom has given assurances that certain arrangements will not change, the government of Bermuda is not sure that it can trust them, he said, stressing that the Territory will not accept decolonization "by decline" or "by default". If Bermuda wishes for independence at a certain point in the future, following proper processes, it will seek the Special Committee's guidance and looks forward to joining the family of nations, he said.

**TREGENZA ROACH, Lieutenant Governor of the United States Virgin Islands, said Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands require separate treatment in decolonization processes.** "Our present status, though it was acquired more than 100 years ago, represents the shameful act of the purchase of land and people in the relatively modern era, many decades after the emancipation in all the territories framed by European slavery," he said. The United States Congress passed legislation authorizing a locally drafted constitution, he recalled, while pointing out that the charter would require the approval of Congress. However, United Nations resolution 1514 (XV) would not endorse the adoption of a constitution by a Non-Self-Governing Territory, which must be approved by the administering Power, he pointed out.

He went on to state that the government of the United States Virgin Islands recognizes the need for the Territory to embark on a new and meaningful conversation regarding its status, which should culminate in a status referendum within the government's four-year term. The Territory would welcome the presence of the United Nations as an objective and credible voice on the decolonization process and on financial support and other resources that can advance dialogue. "A decade for decolonization has morphed into three," he said. Noting that colonization persisted for hundreds of years, he declared: "The task is daunting, but it is pregnant with meaning. We must stay the course."

PETER CLEGG, expert, said that the British Overseas Territories, especially those in the Caribbean, are experiencing a period of significant uncertainty, including the likely impact of "Brexit" on the Territories in terms of trade, aid and political cooperation. Despite some recent constitutional reforms in Anguilla, which in reality brought that Territory into line with the others, the present United Kingdom Government appears reluctant to countenance further significant reform, he said, pointing out the notable difference between total population size and the number of eligible voters in many of the Territories. Tight controls over "Belonger" status should be considered when gauging the quality of democracy, political participation and civic engagement, he said, adding that "Belonger" status is highly prized and strongly defended. Its

benefits include the right to live in a territory without restrictions on immigration; the right to own property without the need for a licence; and the right to vote and stand as a candidate for election. Noting that fewer than half the population of the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands is able to vote, he also pointed out that only 18 per cent of the total population of the Turks and Caicos Islands voted in the last election. He said the Territories have long defended the status quo, fearful that extending the franchise to immigrants – even those who have been resident for many years – will change the nature of their societies and undermine their coherence. However, a more representative electorate would enrich discussions on the future political status of each Territory, he argued.

Several other electoral reforms could improve the legitimacy of the process, he said, citing improved transparency of campaign financing and the redrawing of electoral constituency boundaries. The largest constituency in Anguilla had 2,355 registered voters in the 2015 election, and the smallest had only 964, he recalled, noting that the difference in numbers of voters per elected representative undermine the principle of equal suffrage and equal weight of the vote. The United Kingdom should reconsider its well-established position of keeping support to a minimum and establish a “new deal” for the Territories, he said. As a first step, it must make good any loss in the support provided by the European Union beyond 2020. But it must go further and put financial support in place that will upgrade key services, such as health care and education, strengthen infrastructure and provide a real chance for economic diversification. Funding should be committed for more than a single year – perhaps three years – to give the Territories more certainty when putting their plans in place, he said, adding that greater support is also needed to deal with immigration. The capacity of the Turks and Caicos Islands to repatriate illegal immigrants trafficked from Haiti is limited, he pointed out. Although there is no particular appetite in London for significant constitutional change, that does not mean progress cannot be made towards greater autonomy, he emphasized, urging a pragmatic, step-by-step approach to improving the functioning and financing of the Territories.

JUDITH L. BOURNE, expert, said the Non-Self-Governing Territories that are not the subject of sovereignty disputes require a different analysis. Noting that the Seminar’s 2019 theme contains three significant concepts – accelerating decolonization, renewed commitment and pragmatic measures – she pointed out that only one Territory has been decolonized over the past 29 years, whereas one returned to the jurisdiction of the Special Committee on the recognition that it has not been effectively decolonized. That leaves a grand total of 0 per cent change in the number of Territories on the list, she said. The only correct response is renewed commitment to actualizing the right of self-determination as set forth in United Nations resolutions 1514(XV) and 1541(XV), she said, emphasizing that commitment to anything not rooted in these first principles encourages erosion of the distinction between principles and ideals. The commitment is not merely that of the Special Committee, but that of the United Nations as a whole, she stressed.

Turning to pragmatic measures, she said that for the last 29 years, the Special Committee has not seen itself as capable of addressing the apparent fact that the nations maintaining the Territories as colonies constitute the major obstacles to decolonization. However, that reality should not, and must not, undercut or weaken the fundamental right to self-determination, or seek to re-define it out of effective existence, she said. Pragmatism calls for an examination of

factors that could influence administering Powers to re-evaluate their interest in encouraging self-determination among their Non-Self-Governing Territories. The early history of the successful decolonization of more than 80 territories, most of them now Member States of the United Nations, was propelled by the expressed will of the colonized population, she pointed out. By contrast, many of the peoples of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories have little or no knowledge of the three self-determination options, or of how a choice might affect their lives or futures, she said, adding that they demonstrate no generalized impulse towards self-determination.

However, this should not be seen as a lack of desire, but as a lack of information, she said, underlining that the first aspect of the reality that must be addressed is not to assume that the Territories' peoples do not want significant changes in their status. The reality is that they do not have sufficient accurate information to even begin to think about existing options and what they might mean for them. The second aspect of this reality is that the administering Powers that are not actively helping their Territories in internationally recognized self-determination efforts are unlikely to undertake such activities of their own volition, she said, cautioning that this is a politically sensitive assessment. Thirdly, a process must directly address the need for education, which includes providing more regular contact with the international community that does not depend on action by the administering Powers and is in concord with General Assembly resolutions. The "Plan of Implementation of the Decolonization Mandate 2006-2007", adopted 12 years ago, remains sharply relevant, she said. Such commonly heard reasons for non-implementation as lack of budgetary resources can be readily overcome by including the necessary resources in the budgetary process and advocating for their funding, she added, exhorting the Special Committee to reach back to the well-grounded, well-developed Plan of Implementation and begin implementing it as a matter of utmost urgency.

**WILMA E. REVERÓN COLLAZO, expert, said that with the end of the Third Decolonization Decade approaching, the main responsibility of seminar participants is to make a balance sheet of achievements and remaining challenges. Noting that Puerto Rico is currently the third most unequal among the 101 territories that published their data between 2013 and 2017, according to a study by the University of Puerto Rico, she said the social differences between families there were greater than in any country in the Americas that publishes data with the World Bank. By 2013, Puerto Rico had become one of the top five territories with the world's highest income inequality, alongside Zambia, Honduras, South Africa and Namibia, she said. The reality has worsened after hurricanes Irma and María, with poverty up from 45 per cent to 60 per cent, she added.**

The United States, she continued, has ignored the 37 resolutions passed on the Territory and is in violation of resolution 1514 (XV), as well as the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Third International Decade should not pass without the Special Committee interacting and holding dialogue with the United States while seeking its cooperation to end the colonial situation of Puerto Rico, she emphasized. The administering Power must assume its responsibility to accelerate a process that allows the Territory's people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence in full. As a

**responsible administering Power, the United States must provide all necessary assistance for the recovery from the effects of hurricanes Irma and María, she said. It should also facilitate assistance from international organizations, especially in the area of sustainable development, and not prevent the delivery of humanitarian aid and technical assistance from willing countries in a position to do so. Noting that the United States has increased its military presence in Puerto Rico, she said the move is linked to plans for military intervention against Venezuela. Once again, Puerto Rico is used as a platform for aggression against brotherly peoples, she added, noting that such an action constitutes a violation of resolution 57/140 of 11 December 2002.**

Mr. BOSSANO of Gibraltar expressed his support for Bermuda's views regarding the United Kingdom's imposition of legislation on beneficial ownership. Emphasizing that the option of free association is not limited to association with the former colonial Power, he said it provides an option to associate with other United Nations Member States.

SIDI OMAR, Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguía el-Hamra and Río de Oro (Frente Polisario), emphasized the importance of reconciling renewed commitment with principles and pragmatic measures.

Mr. CLEGG, expert, clarified that he does not represent the Government of the United Kingdom. Regarding the legislation on beneficial ownership, he emphasized that national security concerns must be taken into account. As for the Turks and Caicos Islands, a new constitution was created to address the issue of systemic corruption within the territorial government.

**The representative of Cuba said her country and Puerto Rico are intrinsically interlinked. Arguing that the issue is under the prerogative of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), she underlined her delegation's unequivocal commitment to the independence of Puerto Rico and to the right of its people to self-determination. Cuba supports such efforts until victory over colonialism is achieved, she reiterated.**

### Discussion III

MANUEL TERAÍ, Adviser for Pacific Affairs to the government of French Polynesia, said it is important to ask whether some Territories, including his own, should remain on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, when democratic political authorities elected by the people clearly requested the removal of French Polynesia in May 2013. On seven occasions, the President, his representatives and French Polynesians elected officials representing the Territory's autonomous status within France, he said, recalling that, last October, the President invited Members States to visit the Territory so they can witness the economic, social and political reality, as well as the quality of its partnership with France. Recalling that parties favouring the status quo won all the elections over the past 40 years except the one in 2004, he declared: "This gives a good indication of the state of the opinion of our population and our people regarding the pro-autonomy and the pro-independence political lines."

MELVIN WON PAT-BORJA, Executive Director, Commission on Decolonization of Guam, recalled a colleague's eloquent argument in a paper for the 2017 Seminar: "A process of

decolonization that must follow the rules of the colonizer is not decolonization; it is an extension of colonization.” He said that two lawsuits – one concerning voter registration for Guam’s decolonization plebiscite and the other relating to local land law – are examples of the administering Power’s use of its federal system to impede the Territory’s progress towards recognition of the native inhabitants and decolonization. With the election of Guam’s first woman Governor committed to Guam’s decolonization, the journey towards decolonization has been reinvigorated, he said. In 2019, the Commission on Decolonization will reignite plans to conduct a Self-Determination Study, host a Regional Self-Determination Conference and launch a Media Education Campaign. The study, to be compiled in collaboration with the University of Guam, will paint an accurate political portrait of the Territory’s level of self-governance under the status quo, and predict how each of the three recognized political statuses – independence, integration and free association – would impact various aspects of life, including the economy, trade, social services, education, defence and international relations. Urging the United Nations to uphold its annual commitment to supporting Guam’s education efforts, he invited a visiting mission to bear witness to 454 years of uninterrupted colonization by both Spain and the United States. He also invited the administering Power to reaffirm the principle that Governments derive their powers only from the consent of the governed.

MICHAEL LUJAN BEVACQUA, expert, said there has been a dramatic increase in federal interference since 2017, through legal challenges or military construction and build-up that has a direct negative impact on the rights and resources of the indigenous Chamoru people of Guam. In 2011, Arnold “Dave” Davis, a white man from the United States who had settled in Guam, filed a lawsuit challenging the legality of a non-binding decolonization plebiscite, as defined by Guam law, he recalled. Mr. Davis argued that any plebiscite over the Territory’s status must be open to any United States citizen residing on Guam, such as himself, and perhaps include United States military personnel stationed on Guam. In 2017, he recalled further, a federal judge decided in favour of Mr. Davis, ruling that the vote was unconstitutional. In the same year, he added, the federal Government filed suit to terminate a programme aimed at providing restorative justice to thousands of Chamoru families rendered landless through the land condemnation policy of the United States military following the Second World War.

He went on to emphasize that the importance of decolonization is becoming increasingly acute. Noting that the United States military has referred to Guam as the “tip of the spear” under the current Trump Administration, he said this is the reality of a Non-Self-Governing Territory – to be relegated to a weapon brandished by one world Power against others. People on Guam seek a destiny not determined by such narrow strategic interest, not to be the tip of a spear for one side of the Pacific Rim levelled towards the other, but a bridge that can link East and West. “We are denied this ability to be that bridge,” he said. “We are denied that ability to build cooperative networks and partnerships in the region because of its political status.” He recalled that representatives of the United States Department of Interior visited Guam last month and said that any plebiscite over Guam’s political status must be open to all residents, including military personnel stationed on the Territory, and the ballot must include the status quo or remaining a Non-Self-Governing Territory as options.

The representative of New Zealand said his country’s Government remains committed to its relationship with Tokelau based on the decisions of that Territory’s the people. The

Government takes various measures, including the appointment of an official with a single focus on assisting Tokelau, as well as delivery of development assistance. New Zealand will provide resources to support public services and infrastructure over the next four years, he said, adding that it will also support Tokelau's climate change adaptation through practical and pragmatic measures.

The representative of France described New Caledonia as a success story in progress before turning the floor over to his fellow representative of the Office of High Commissioner in Nouméa, who gave detailed accounts of the most recent referendum. She said the preparations, including the deployment of United Nations experts, were deliberate so that the outcome of the vote would be credible and unquestioned.

The representative of Papua New Guinea acknowledged the contributions of all stakeholders, while noting that the representative of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), who usually attend regional seminars, could not be present due to provincial elections. He also acknowledged the Special Committee's useful contributions to the referendum in New Caledonia, as well as the role of France as the administering Power. Although New Caledonia remains "unfinished business", Papua New Guinea has proposed that the Special Committee take some time to consider the lessons learned from the Territory's referendum.

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\* A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).