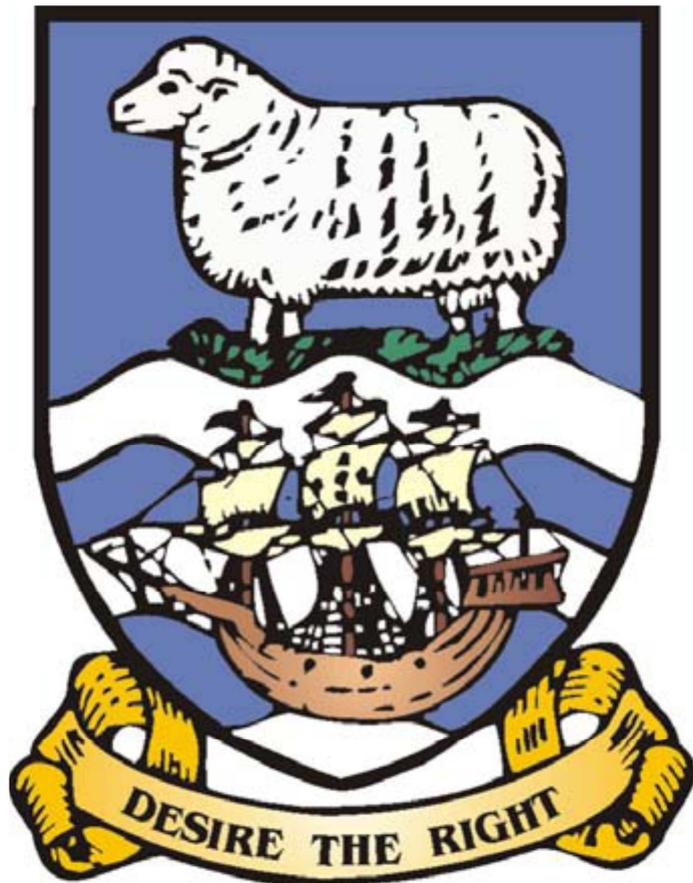


FALKLAND ISLANDS



United Nations General Assembly

Special Committee of 24 on Decolonisation

26 June 2014

Statement by
The Honourable Mike Summers OBE
Member of the Legislative Assembly

Mr Chairman, Ambassadors and Members of the UN Decolonisation Committee.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address you on behalf of the Government of the Falkland Islands.

This Committee has one purpose, and one purpose only, and that is to assist the peoples of the Non Self Governing Territories to reach a post colonial status that is acceptable to them. The Committee has no other role or responsibilities. It is specifically not charged with mediating in or determining any sovereignty disputes, Upholding the basic human rights of the people of the Non Self Governing Territories is your single and solemn duty.

Throughout the many years Falkland Islanders have attended this Committee, we have put the case for the collective voice of our people to be heard and respected. That is what each of the NSGT's might reasonably expect from a Committee, charged by the UN with assisting those few remaining territories who have not yet reached independence, to achieve a political status that is acceptable to them.

But unfortunately this Committee has failed to deliver on that responsibility. Why? Because it seems to prioritise the interests of certain Member States over the wishes of the peoples it is supposed to be assisting. If this Committee is to remain relevant, that has to change.

Mr Chairman, you have inherited a Committee that has allowed itself to be dragged away from its sole purpose, which is to look after the interests of the NSGT. You have a monumental task in pushing back the national self interest of Member States, and encouraging them to focus, not on their own partizan agendas, but on the social and political development of the NSGT. You have a difficult task but I wish you well in trying to restore the social and political conscience of the UN, and reimposing the responsibility you have for decolonisation.

I would like to pay special tribute here, as I did last year, to those Members of the Committee who have stood firm in protecting the important principles entrusted to you. For reminding the Committee, year on year, in the face of increasing pressure, that the right of self determination is sacred to the decolonisation process, that the

right of self determination is a universal human right not to be denied, and that the people of the NSGT's have an absolute right to be involved in any and all discussions about their country, and their future. To those members, thank you.

Mr Chairman, I know what colonialism is like, because I have experienced it at first hand. We are all agreed that colonialism is not appropriate to this modern era, and we all share the ambition to ensure that it is eradicated in all areas. Where we differ is in our assessment of when a colonial situation exists, and how we move away from it to the benefit of the people involved. In our case the Argentine Republic insists that the Falkland Islands remains a colony of the United Kingdom. It does so, not because it has any care about the people of the Falkland Islands, but in order to advance a case for territorial expansionism, irrespective of the concerns and welfare of Falkland Islanders.

The United Kingdom has accepted that all of its Overseas Territories, including the Falkland Islands, should be given the freedom and assistance to develop their economies and their social and political structures, and to determine for themselves their political futures. This accords with the terms of the UN Charter.

The Falkland Islanders have responded to this challenge over the last 32 years since the war, because like all other small island states we have a strong wish to be masters of our own affairs and our own destiny.

And in the last 30 years have seen a dramatic transformation of the Falkland Islands, from colonial backwater to a thriving and progressive modern economy, with a modern Constitution and full internal self government, save for foreign affairs and defence. We have done this by taking the opportunities available to rebuild the economy, and to work with the United Kingdom to update and modernise our Constitution. There has been a major transformation in the Falkland Islands, and this has been achieved through a series of fundamental reforms:

- land reform, by achieving the transition of ownership of all the farmland in the Falkland Islands from expatriate landowners to local owner occupiers, and ensuring that new younger generations of Falkland Islanders can buy

agricultural, commercial or domestic property

- fisheries development, by progressively building a Falklands owned fishing industry, managed sustainably by Falkland Islanders
- tourism development, by welcoming tourists to the Falklands to see the spectacular wildlife and natural heritage
- constitutional reform, by moving away from the old system of government, to a system of internal self government by Falkland Islanders, for Falkland Islanders, and by introducing a full suite of fundamental freedoms of people supported by a robust independent judiciary
- political reform, by introducing a system of full time Members of the Legislative Assembly, who are responsible for the policies, strategies, laws and governance of the Islands
- administrative reform, by making the Falkland Islands public service responsible to the elected government of the Falkland Islands, and no-one else
- fiscal prudence, by having control over setting and managing our own budgets, spending our money wisely, by building financial reserves to help us through difficult times, without borrowings for any purpose, and spending only within our means
- infrastructure development, by progressively building new roads, schools, medical facilities, housing, port and airport developments to support our economic growth
- social reform, by investing heavily in education at all levels, living in accordance with the fundamental freedoms of the Constitution, looking after those who are less able to care for themselves, and maintaining a well adjusted and well ordered community
- environmental protection, by caring for the natural environment which supports our agriculture, tourism and fishing industries, and which characterises our Islands

We have done this largely with our own resources and with our own money but with some outside help and advice along the way. We have worked hard making this

transition from colonial possession to internally self governing Overseas Territory with our administering power, the United Kingdom, who have accepted and espoused the fundamental right of Falkland Islands people to choose their own Government and their own way of life. We have not always agreed; sometimes we have actively disagreed, but we have done so within the bounds of Constitutional propriety, the rule of law, and an understanding of and respect for human rights. The guiding principle has been the right of self determination set down in the UN Charter which gives all people the right to determine their own future free from coercion.

Such progress should be welcomed and applauded by this Committee. It should be encouraged, nurtured and sustained as we continue to develop as a country.

There are those of course who try to argue that none of this matters, because they allege we are just an implanted population in someone else's land, and that therefore self determination does not apply. Nothing could be further from the truth. Leaving aside the moral and legal arguments against such a position, let us remember that our Islands had no native population, and in that respect we are unlike most other colonial situations of the 18th and 19th centuries. I am a sixth generation Falkland Islander, I have 8th generation grand children, and there are now families in the Islands who can trace 9 generations. Particularly for those on this Committee who accept the Argentine propaganda on this, you might like to know that my great grandfather on my mother's side was Pedro Llamosa, who was born in the Falkland Islands in 1862. His father was Jose Llamosa, a Uruguayan citizen who came to the Falklands with his wife Rosa, not dragged kicking and screaming by the British, but of his own free will. He farmed independently for a number of years before going back to Uruguay, leaving Pedro behind to found his own family.

This is not unique to my family. Settlers arrived and departed of their own free will, and arrived from many different parts of the world, including Chile, Patagonia, Uruguay and Argentina, as well as Denmark, Sweden, Norway and a variety of other European countries. At recent censuses Islanders have identified themselves as coming from 57 different ethnic backgrounds. Until the second illegal invasion of the Falklands by Argentina in 1982, in breach of two UN Security Council resolutions, there were effectively no immigration restrictions. Those that exist now under

Falklands law are non partisan and non discriminatory. People regularly came and went between our Islands and Chile and Argentina right up until the war. And even since then a number of Argentine citizens have found a better life in the Falkland Islands. So when you hear later of an implanted British population and Argentines not being allowed to settle here, you will know that it is untrue.

The reality is the Falkland Islands has been British territory for very nearly 250 years, and has been continuously and peacefully settled under British administration for over 180 years. We have developed from being a former colonial territory to an economically self sufficient, internally self governing country, save for foreign affairs and defence. Falkland Islanders are a proud and resourceful people, that is why we have done so well. We are confident in our rights and our future, and to that end voted freely in our referendum last year to remain an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom for the foreseeable future. That is our decision and our choice.

The only major inhibition to the continued development of our country is the continued spiteful and aggressive harassment of our people by Argentina. The head of the so called Malvinas Secretariat stated recently that it was the firm objective of the Argentine foreign policy on the Falkland Islands to try to prevent further economic development. Such a bullying and selfish attitude should be abhorrent to this Committee, whose sole responsibility, let me remind you again, is to the people of the NSGTs.

To illustrate this negative and destructive attitude, you might note that since the advent of the Kirchner regime in Argentina they have:

- banned charter flights to the Islands damaging the tourism industry
- prevented further flights or additional capacity between the Islands and Chile to restrict growth
- turned a blind eye to violent action in Argentina against international cruise ships also visiting the Falklands
- discouraged Spanish companies working in Argentina from working in the Falklands fishery
- persuaded the Chinese jigger fleet not to fish in the Falkland Islands

- attempted to send their own illex jigger fleet to fish on the edge of our zone to destroy the illex stock
- withdrawn from scientific co-operation to protect all migratory fish stocks in the SWA
- attempted to close Mercosur ports to Falklands flagged vessels to stifle trade
- threatened oil company workers and their contractors with punitive fines and imprisonment
- actively tried to discourage people from visiting the Falkland Islands to better understand for themselves the realities of the Islands, including members of this Committee

If anybody thinks that this is an appropriate way for a large country to behave towards a small and innocent neighbour, or provides support to these policies, they should be ashamed of themselves.

According to UN Resolutions 1514 and 1654 every territory on the list of non self governing territories is entitled to self determination. That was set down by the GA in 1960, reaffirmed in 1961 and reaffirmed again by resolution 2625 in 1970, and has not changed since. So to argue here, as certain members do, that Falkland Islanders do not have the right of self-determination, is to contradict the founding principles of this Committee. An abortive attempt by Spain and Argentina to change that policy in the 4th Committee in 2008 was firmly rejected. You do not have discretion here to change those resolutions.

The only responsibility and duty of this Committee is to the peoples of the NSGTs. In the case of the Falkland Islands this Committee is not required or empowered to choose in a sovereignty dispute between the UK, the administering power, or Argentina the aspiring colonial power.

The duty of this Committee is to assist the people of the NSGTs, including the Falkland Islands, to achieve a political status that is acceptable to them, free of coercion and harassment from other parties. If you act in a way which is contrary to

this duty you will be making a mockery of this Committee.

So I would once again strongly urge you, in discharging your duties in respect of the Falkland Islands, to listen to the wishes of the Falkland Islanders expressed so clearly and democratically in our referendum, a referendum which, incidentally, you signally failed to seek accreditation to observe, despite having had every opportunity, and a clear mandate on behalf of the UN, to do so.

We are very clearly a people in our own right, who have the right to be heard, and demand to be heard. No member of the UN can reasonably deny that right, and for that reason alone, you should not support the expansionist Argentine agenda.

Mr Chairman, this Committee has, by its own admission, failed in its duty and its mission for the past two decades. I encourage the Committee to examine what has caused that failure and remedy it. Above all get out to the territories which are in your care, talk to the people, see how they live, test the extent of their self government, and ask them what they want for themselves. That is the way to discharge your duty, and to have real success going forward. We have formally invited the Committee of the C-24 to send a visiting mission to the Falkland Islands on many occasions before. We have not even had the courtesy of a response. Mr Chairman, your predecessor said "Visiting missions were critical not only in terms of hearing the concerns of the people in Non-Self-Governing Territories, but also in terms of arriving at informed conclusions through the collection of data". He was right. We have formally invited you again this year, and are assured that the UK, as administering power, will not object. And nor do we set conditions on the makeup of the delegation. If Argentina objects it can only be that it continues to be afraid of the truth, of openness and transparency, and of the power of basic human rights.

In closing I will, as I did last year remind you of the words of the Secretary General. He said "We no longer have the luxury of indulging in rhetoric and rituals. Concrete action and tangible results are essential". Based on these sentiments I urge you to discharge your duty to all the NSGT's, and listen to us to provide the way forward. To do otherwise is to risk making this Committee an irrelevant anachronism.