



FALKLAND ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

**ADDRESS TO THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION
WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE
GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES**

UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE OF 24

25 JUNE 2019

***by* THE HONOURABLE ROGER SPINK**

MEMBER OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

I am pleased to be representing my country here at the United Nations, to support and endorse the description my colleague has given to you of the modern-day Falklands, to re-confirm that my country is not a colony of the United Kingdom, and to defend my country against the support that some members of this Committee give to the colonial aspirations of Argentina.

The Falkland Islands is internally self-governing and economically self-sufficient, save for the cost of defence.

We are not a colony of the United Kingdom, but an Overseas Territory, that has progressed well beyond colonial status. We have expressed our clear wish, in a free, open and internationally observed referendum in 2013, to remain an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom, with HM The Queen as Head of State. This is not an unusual arrangement, but one which many others have followed in their progress from colonial possession to independent nation state. That is the journey the Falkland Islands is on, and in the last 35 years we have made very considerable progress.

We have a large capital expenditure program to improve our infrastructure wholly funded by the Falkland Islands Government and we annually budget for an operational cash surplus in order to fund further capital expenditure in the future.

Two young Island University students whose roots go back many generations have accompanied us to these meetings and in the great city of New York that boasts that symbol of freedom the Statue of Liberty it would be a positive and constructive move if they were to hear members of this committee supporting our rights to self-determination.

Mr Chairman, we wholeheartedly agree that colonialism must be eradicated in all its manifestations. That no people should be subjugated against their will, or have their people, their governance or their natural resources under the control of another country, against their wishes, is a fundamental human right. Our constitution reiterates this right.

Argentina has argued just as fiercely over the Beagle Channel Dispute as it has over the Falklands- but was proved wrong.

For much of the latter half of the 19th century, the eastern portion of Tierra del Fuego was populated by a substantial majority of nationals who were not Argentine citizens, including a number of British subjects. Ushuaia was founded informally by British missionaries, following previous British surveys, long before Argentine nationals or government representatives arrived there on a permanent basis. The British ship HMS Beagle, under the command of Captain Robert Fitzroy, first reached the channel on January 29, 1833, during its maiden voyage surveying Tierra del Fuego. The city was originally named by early British missionaries using the native Yámana name for the area. The name Ushuaia first appears in letters and reports of the South American Mission Society in England. The British missionary Waite Hockin Stirling became the first European to live in Ushuaia when he stayed with the Yámana people between 18 January and mid-September 1869. In 1870 more British missionaries arrived to establish a small settlement. The first house constructed in Ushuaia was a pre-assembled 3 room home prepared in the Falkland Islands in 1870 for Reverend Thomas Bridges. One room was for the Bridges family, a second was for a Yámana married couple, while the third served as the chapel. Perhaps The Falklands should make a claim?

The Argentine claim that Britain expelled the “population” of the Falklands in January 1833 is a falsehood, which Argentina has used to mislead the UN ever since the 1960s

In fact, Britain only told a small, recently arrived, Argentine garrison to go. It comprised 26 soldiers and their 11 women and 8 children. That garrison had only been there just less than three months, and in that time it had mutinied, murdered its commanding officer and terrorised the civilian population. It is a fact that after the mutiny and thinking itself abandoned it had chartered the British schooner Rapid in order to be able to return to Buenos Aires, although that plan was abandoned just a day before it was due to be implemented.

Britain had protested diplomatically just a week after that garrison sailed from Buenos Aires for the Falklands in September 1832. It returned to Buenos Aires in January 1833 and seven of its members were promptly executed by firing squad and three others given lesser punishments for the mutiny and murder of their commander. In January 1833, Britain wanted the handful of

civilian settlers in the Falklands to stay and most did. Only four genuine civilian Islanders chose to leave.

The Economic Blockade and bullying of the Falklands by the Argentine Government has caused great concern to the many families particularly for those who have close ties with Chile.

Some disputes have been settled peacefully and respecting self-determination. Following a territorial dispute between Argentina and Chile in early 1902, the Limits Commission met in School No.18, Trevelin on 30 April of that year. The British arbiter was Sir Thomas Holdich. The inhabitants of the area (both the indigenous Mapuche and the Welsh colonists) voted to remain in Argentina. Their views were respected.

The actions of the last Kirchner Government taught a new generation of Falkland Islanders not to trust a country of some 45 million people who sought to subjugate and bully our country of just over 3000 people into submission.

We are however peaceful and constructive neighbours.

There is no doubt the ICRC Humanitarian work to identify the remains of Argentine service men at the cemetery in the Falklands combined with the two visits of the Argentine Families and the tragic loss of the Submarine San Juan (in search for which assets from the Falklands were immediately offered and accepted) meant people on both sides looked past their differences at the human compassion and decency that is present in everyone. The Falkland Islands Government were pleased to have been able to play their part in finally enabling families to identify their loved ones.

We are committed to ensuring the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources in the South West Atlantic Ocean and in so doing safeguarding the marine ecosystems in which these resources occur;

The joint work being carried out by Falkland Island and Argentine scientists on understanding fish stocks is vitally important to both countries and recognizes the necessity to collect scientific data in order to understand the marine biodiversity and ecology in the region and to assess the impacts of fisheries on marine species and vulnerable marine ecosystems

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks of 4 December 1995 should also apply to discrete fish stocks in the high seas. The Falkland Islands Government stands ready to work with all countries in the region to develop a suitable management regime.

All countries in the South West Atlantic need to avoid imposing adverse impacts on the marine environment, to preserve biodiversity, to maintain the integrity of marine ecosystems, and to minimize the risk of long-term or irreversible effects of fishing operations. This is common ground benefitting the global environment that we can continue to work together on.

I say now to the Argentine representatives stop behaving like an envious and greedy colonial power wishing to conquer and subjugate the people of the Falkland Islands and start behaving like a 21st century member of the world community respecting democratic rights and living and working in harmony with your neighbours.

I ask the members of the C24 to cast aside their preconceptions and to come and see for themselves the modern thriving Falkland Islands and its rightful people.