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Third Committee
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Statement

by

Ms. Michelle Joseph

on

Agenda Item 69
Rights of People to Self-Determination

Mr. Chairman,

The General Assembly from its 57th through 61st sessions has repeatedly reaffirmed in its resolutions on the small island non self-governing territories that, and I quote, "*there is no alternative to the process of self-determination, which is a fundamental human right as recognised under the relevant human rights conventions*" (closed quotes).

This principle of self-determination of peoples is, indeed, an essential precept of the United Nations, and is enshrined in Articles 1 and 55 of its Charter. The Assembly adopted one of its earliest resolutions on this issue in 1952 when it recognised that "*the right of peoples and nations to self-determination is a prerequisite to the full enjoyment of all fundamental human rights.*"¹

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¹ General Assembly Resolution 637 (VII) of 16 December 1952).

Self-determination is also the basic underpinning of the various human rights instruments including the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. It is fundamental to the *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, and to the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*. For the remaining small island non self-governing territories, self-determination is also a decisive component of the landmark Decolonization Declaration.

Mr. Chairman,

Even as these principles are continually reaffirmed by the General Assembly, the realisation of the right to self-determination as a fundamental human right continues to elude the people of the remaining non self-governing territories. The adoption by the General Assembly of the first and second International Decade(s) for the Eradication of Colonialism to foster a genuine self-determination process has not resulted in the implementation of the key elements of the extensive plan of action of those International Decades, which had been based on the recommendations of the representative of Jamaica to the Secretary-General in 1990.

A Plan of Implementation of the self-determination mandate for these territories, endorsed by the General Assembly in Resolution 61/130, has also not elicited the requisite follow-through from the United Nations system, including the introduction of special mechanisms to provide much needed substantive support. Thus, for these territories, the self-determination process has reached a stalemate, and it is only through the implementation of the General Assembly mandate by the wider United Nations system that the process of self-determination will be achieved.

Mr. Chairman,

The Special Committee on Decolonisation and the 4th Committee have had historic responsibility for carrying out the mandate regarding these territories. However, this responsibility to foster the self-determination process is not exclusive, and the entire United Nations system has a role to play in this regard. As such, this issue is well within the purview of the 3rd Committee, under the agenda item of the *Right to Self-Determination*. In this vein, the General Assembly by Resolution 61/128 has supported collaboration on the issue of self-determination of the small territories with the *Human Rights Committee*, the *Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues* and the *Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*. Since the reports of these bodies are official documents before the 3rd Committee, it would be most appropriate that a more in-depth examination be made regarding the self-determination process in these territories, under the self determination agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

In closing, I refer to the statement on self-determination of the small island territories, delivered last month to the 4th Committee on behalf of CARICOM by Ambassador Crispin Gregoire, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Dominica, and I quote:

“The self-determination and subsequent decolonisation of the remaining 16 non-self-governing territories remain the un-finished business of the United Nations, some seven years into the 21st Century...(yet) not enough attention and resources have been devoted to implementing this mandate.” (closed quotes)

As a small island state which emerged from colonialism into independence through a process of self-determination, St. Lucia joins with other delegations in advocating that the necessary measures are taken to ensure that the peoples of the non self-governing territories have a legitimate chance to exercise this fundamental human right of self-determination. For this process to succeed, this issue must be addressed, in earnest, in all relevant General Assembly committees and subsidiary bodies where human rights issues are considered.

I thank you.