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FOURTH INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

**Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Fourth
International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism:
pursuing goals and addressing needs of
the Non-Self-Governing Territories**

Caracas, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

14 to 16 May 2024

STATEMENT BY

MR. KENNETH HODGE

(ANGUILLA)

**HON. MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS
(including responsibility for Constitutional Affairs)**

Mr. KENNETH HODGE

ADDRESS TO:

**2024 UN SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONIZATION
COMMITTEE OF 24 (C-24)
CARIBBEAN REGIONAL SEMINAR
CARACAS, VENEZUELA
MAY 14 – 16, 2024**

I would like to adopt the protocol already established and wish to thank the United Nations and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the efficient coordination of arrangements to facilitate my attendance at this Caribbean Regional Seminar of the C-24. To our Venezuelan hosts you are to be commended for the sterling hospitality shown.

This Seminar is organized around the theme: **“Pursuing goals and addressing needs of the Non-Self-Governing Territories”**

Permit me to share some thoughts on this quite relevant topic.

By way of background, I was elected into office in the Anguilla General Elections of June 2020 as a member of the Anguilla Progressive Movement (APM) Administration. It was an Election with a difference – campaigning initially only with virtual meetings and socially distanced voting. The Honourable Premier, Dr Ellis Lorenzo Webster, Md., as the Leader of Government Business assigned to me the Home Affairs Ministry, which includes: Lands, Physical Planning, Constitutional Affairs, Labour, Immigration and Information & Broadcasting.

Anguilla is an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) located in the Leeward Islands (the most northerly) of our beautiful Caribbean. And, for those of you interested in some details of Anguilla’s constitutional history from the 1960s to the present time, I was honoured to present a Paper on this subject at the UN C-24 Pacific Regional Seminar in Castries, St. Lucia in May 2022 (The Paper can be found at: https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/sites/www.un.org.dppa.decolonization/files/prs_2022_crp.10_anguilla.pdf).

Continuing with the background, Anguilla’s “landscape” comprises some **96 sq. kms.** In addition, because of its location Anguilla has an **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 92,178 sq kms.** Therefore, in its combined “landscape” and “seascape” Anguilla comprises some

92,274 sq. kms. Incidentally, that makes Anguilla 70% the size of England, a constituent member of the UK – England comprises 130,278 sq. kms.

Our APM Administration upon taking up the reins in 2020 found Anguilla in the midst of being ravaged, both in terms of our economy and our society, by the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. It is true that to that point Anguilla had not registered any COVID-19 related deaths. However, the decision taken to close Anguilla's borders (as virtually every Caribbean country and territory did likewise) as a major safe guarding measure against the spread of the COVID-19 virus meant that our tourism driven economy came to a crashing halt. And, with that, mass unemployment as tourism and ancillary services shed their workers. Which in turn caused the demand for Government financial assistance to skyrocket while Government revenues were falling off the proverbial cliff. The challenge for our APM Administration was to stabilize the situation, and then rebuild and reconstruct. As a progressive movement, we have put social concerns at the heart of such efforts.

The Anguilla Progressive Movement in its Campaign Policy Document, by way of a Vision outlined, inter alia, the following:

The Anguilla Progressive Movement understands that enhancing the foundation of a great society means investing more in its people and empowering them to take ownership of their own destiny.

Further:

We shall set about to build not just another society – but a just, fair and flourishing society – a New Anguilla.

This imperative of building a New Anguilla is reflected in the Budget Addresses delivered by the Leader of Government Business the Honourable Premier, who is also the Minister of Finance and Health. Permit me to share the themes with you so that you can get a sense of what this has entails:

2021: "Restoring Anguilla's Economy Innovatively and Sustainably"

2022: "Advancing Through Adversity, Restoring Prosperity"

2023: "Anguilla Reimagined: Economically Resilient, Socially Inclusive & Fiscally Responsible"

2024: "Anguilla's Blueprint: Harnessing Technology, Empowering Tomorrow's Leaders, and Building the Future"

For those interested these Budget Addresses can be obtained from the Government of Anguilla website: <https://www.gov.ai/>

Encapsulated in all the above, is the recognition that for Anguilla and other Caribbean territories and countries, over the past decade and a half the cumulative impact of financial and economic price shocks (e.g. the global financial and economic crisis of 2008/09), environmental shocks (e.g. Category 5 Hurricanes Irma, Maria (2017) and Dorian (2019) and the 2010 Haiti earthquake), and health shocks (e.g. the global COVID 19 pandemic) serves to reinforce the need for transformational development in the region.

Being a UK Overseas Territory poses unique challenges in pursuing transformational development.

The United Nations Charter is clear in stating that:

“All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely determine their economic, social and cultural development”.

In Anguilla based on the consultations from the 2017 Constitutional Committee the two main public demands for constitutional reform were:

- (i) **To improve democracy;**
- (ii) **To improve standards in public life.**

The recommendations from that Committee in the form of a Draft Constitution was tabled for the consideration of the Government Administration of the day. In 2019 they submitted three aspects of the Draft Constitution to the UKG to amend the Anguilla Constitution. In a nod towards increasing representation, there was an increase in the number of elected representatives in the House of Assembly from 7 to 11 by providing for 4 members elected on an island wide basis. The 2020 General Elections were therefore the first to allow for the election of candidates on an island wide basis.

Our APM Administration is committed to continuing with the Constitutional Reform process and to that end from September to October 2021 town hall meetings were held in the 7 electoral districts to discuss the draft constitution. The feedback obtained confirmed the desire to improve the level of democratic representation and to have adequate safeguards and protections to ensure good governance and to promote high standards of integrity in public life.

In order to move along the path to self-determination there is need to diversify the economy and build up financial autonomy and resilience as well as resilience in other areas, such as to the impacts of climate change. In all this, there is a role and indeed an obligation for the UKG as the administering power to play in assisting Anguilla. And this they have been doing.

Sometimes it is more apparent than at other times. For example, following the devastation caused to Anguilla by Hurricane Irma in 2017 the UKG pledged some US\$85 million in capital budget assistance to rebuild and replace damaged infrastructure. Also, in 2020 given the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic the UKG pledged up to US\$37 million in recurrent budgetary assistance to Anguilla. The Government and People of Anguilla are grateful to the UKG for assisting us in those times of need. We look forward to continue to work with the UKG based on the principle of mutual respect and partnership for the advancement of Anguilla.

In closing, it can be said that the Caribbean Condition is compelling. One of our region's most celebrated poets, Derek Walcott in his Nobel Lecture, **The Antilles, Fragments of Epic Memory** wrote (quoting in part):

“Break a vase and the love that reassembles it is stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of its original shape. It is such love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars”.

The Honourable Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Dr Ralph Gonsalves (or “Comrade Ralph” as he is affectionately known) observes that:

“This reassembling of the African, Asiatic and European fragments forms the basis not only of Antillean art but of our very civilization itself which is at once shaped and yet evolving”.

As I indicated in my remarks at the C24 Pacific Regional Meeting in 2022, as Anguillians we are committed to forging the steps forward in creating our own destiny by formulating a Constitution which sets the path towards the realization of our dreams and aspirations as a free people under God's dominion.

The APM Administration of which I am part also recognizes that this also requires economic transformation utilizing our human resources and the resources available in our landscape and seascape to realize this vision.

I thank you for listening.

May God Bless you all.