

Distr. RESTRICTED

CRS/2024/CRP.28

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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 THE REPRESENTATIVE OF

SOUTH AFRICA



Special Committee on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (C24)

South Africa's Statement at the C24 Regional Seminar in Caracas, Venezuela

15 May 2024

Chairperson,

I would like to congratulate you on your reappointment as Chair as well as Cuba, Indonesia, Sierra Leone and Syria for their reappointments to the positions of Vice Chairs and Rapporteur. We reassure you of South Africa's support for your leadership of this subsidiary body and we will work with you to ensure that the 2024 programme will yield further results towards the attainment of decolonisation.

We thank Venezuela, for graciously and successfully hosting this year's regional seminar of the C24.

As a former colony, South Africa attaches great importance to the issue of decolonisation. Needless to add, our delegation would not be represented in the UN if it were not for the efforts of this Committee. South Africa reiterates its strong commitment to the full respect and application of international law, of which self-determination is a core foundational principle. Therefore, South Africa continues to stand in solidarity with those 17 Non-Self-Governing territories (NSGTs), which are yet to exercise their right to self-determination.

We remain concerned that 78 years after the founding of the United Nations, self-determination remains elusive for the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories despite the adoption of UN resolutions on the issue. If we agree that colonialism was and is a historical and current injustice – this Committee is obligated and mandated to work towards a time when this Committee is no longer needed – when colonialism is truly only a historical occurrence.

Chairperson,

Western Sahara is the last remaining colony on the African Continent; therefore, the issue of Western Sahara should continue to be discussed as an agenda item of this Committee until the people of Western Sahara attain their independence. In this regard, we wish to stress that the agenda item should be utilised appropriately with the correct title as Western Sahara. We also emphasise that this territory is not a province, but a non-self-governing territory and should be addressed in these meetings as such.

We reaffirm our support for the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara and their right to self-determination and independence in accordance with the principles set forth in the United Nations Charter and the objectives of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant resolutions, the ICJ Advisory legal opinion (1975) and the decisions of the African Union. Resolutions 690 and 725 (1991) remain internationally legally binding resolutions – specifically relating to the need to hold a referendum on the future of Western Sahara.

The Special Committee on Decolonisation must intensify its efforts to effectively carry out its responsibility towards the people of Western Sahara. This entails ensuring the protection of the political, economic, social, and cultural rights of the Sahrawi people, including their right to permanent sovereignty over their natural resources, and regular reporting to relevant UN bodies on the situation in the territory. The 2015 ruling of the European Court of Justice relating to Western Sahara, highlights this matter well.

South Africa welcomes the engagement between UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the President of Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Brahim Ghali held in September 2023, which should provide impetus for enhanced role of the UN in resolving the conflict.

South Africa continues to support the work of MINURSO, to fully implement its mandate, as set-out in relevant UNSC resolutions. In this regard, we support the work of Mr Staffan de Mistura, the UN Secretary General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, in prioritising the resumption of a political process in bringing both parties, the Kingdom of Morocco and the FRENTE POLITSARIO, to engage in direct political talks as well as develop new innovative solutions to overcome the current impasse.

In this context, we encourage the parties to this conflict to enter into political negotiations in good faith and without pre-conditions and an acceptance of the parties as equal partners. It is therefore imperative that the parties refrain from approaches that will inflame the situation on the ground and serve as obstacles to dialogue. We hope that the political talks can resume without delay to work towards a just and lasting political settlement leading to the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

In conclusion, Chairperson, South Africa urges the international community to fully commit itself to the total elimination of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations, while calling upon the United Nations to contribute in a more effective manner towards this end.

I thank you.