

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR RENAGI R LOHIA  
AT THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF  
24 REGIONAL SEMINAR IN PORT MORESBY FOR  
ASIA/PACIFIC REGION 4-6 MARCH 1985**

Mr Chairman; Members of the Special Committee of 24; Members of the United Nations Secretariat; Distinguished delegates and fellow Papua New Guineans.

It has often fallen my duty to address gatherings of the United Nations on various issues which the organisation has concerned itself with, but never have I addressed a committee on a particular issue with more conviction of my reason or more concurrence of my heart.

The United Nations role, through the trusteeship council, the special Committee of 24 and the secretariat itself, in Papua New Guinea's advancement to independence and nationhood cannot be over-emphasised. All have a proud place in Papua New Guinea's history. Apart from what Papua New Guinea owes to the Australian Government for its exemplary sensitivity and responsiveness towards the interests and aspirations of Papua New Guineans for independence, I wish to acknowledge here our debt and gratitude for the role the United Nations and its auxillary bodies, like those I have just named, have played in our progress to nationhood.

Mr Chairman, as you acknowledged in your opening statement, this year is the tenth anniversary of Papua New Guinea's independence. You and the Committee of 24 have indeed made the government and people of Papua New Guinea proud by agreeing to our offer to act as host to one of the only two regional seminars commemorating the 25th anniversary of the declaration of independence to colonial countries and peoples. To play host to such a seminar is an honour of which any former beneficiary of the work of the special Committee of 24, might well be proud of.

Mr Chairman, I cannot help but note with much regret the conspicuous absence of Australia from the membership of the Committee of 24. I am sure that it will bring to the Security Council the same commitment to the ideals of the United Nations as it displayed in the Committee of 24.

Having just spoken of the withdrawal of Australia from the Committee of 24, I feel obliged to echo the fervent hope of both the government and people of Papua New Guinea that members of the United Nations, especially members of the Committee of 24, will consider Papua New Guinea benefitting of a place in the rank and file of the membership of the Committee of 24. Our views on decolonisation are well known and despite events of the 39th session, Papua New Guinea's resolve to become a member of this important committee is undiminished. Being once a colony ourselves and a direct beneficiary of the excellent work of the Committee of 24, we feel we have an obligation to help facilitate the exercise by the remaining peoples under colonialism, the same right of genuine self-determination and independence as that once afforded us.

For the few days you have been here, many dependent people's eyes were upon you with great hope. I hope you found here the satisfaction and guidance that you wished for, and that our modest surroundings did not deter you in any way from your task.

Mr Chairman and distinguished delegates, much has been said about the constructive and decisive role which the United Nations played in the whole decolonisation process and one need not look past the membership of the United Nations to justify this. From a total of 51 original members in 1954, the United Nations membership has blossomed to 159 members today, bringing us closer to our goal of 'universality'.

The historic 1950 declaration of independence to colonial countries and peoples ushered in an era characterised by the redoubling of efforts by all concerned to grant colonial countries and people their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. This process was further accelerated by the establishment of the special Committee of 24 in the following year. In fact credit for much of the accomplishments of the United Nations in the area of decolonisation is largely due to the unrelenting efforts of the special Committee of 24. Out of the original 90 or so Trust and non-self-governing territories, approximately 71 have since acceded to independence.

Despite this obvious achievement it must not and should not signal an end to the good work of the Committee of 24. Twenty-five years after the adoption of the declaration, we must face the fact that not all people under colonial domination have been set free. Namibia continues to be unscrupulously exploited of its resources, while United Nations' efforts to secure her freedom, continues to be sabotaged by certain self-interested member-nations. Twenty-five years later, a Trust territory still remains to find an appropriate settlement of its status.

We would also be all failing our duties as members of the United Nations if we were to consider the United Nations record in this area as unblemished. History of the decolonisation process demonstrates that there have been times when the United Nations have been indecisive, when it should not have. There have been times when United Nations have been rendered inactive, when action was needed. And there have been times when United Nations have made decisions not considered judicious or in the interest of those peoples whose interests it is supposed to safeguard.

As members of the United Nations, we should feel as our responsibility as much as our obligation to 'seek to strengthen the United Nations, not only to help solve its financial problems, but also to make it a more effective instrument of peace, to develop it into a genuine world security system - a system capable of resolving disputes on the basis of law, justice and freedom' and of creating conditions under which remaining dependent people can be able to exercise genuine self-determination and perhaps independence.

Mr Chairman and distinguished delegates, hence, whilst the 25th anniversary of the declaration of independence to colonial countries and peoples should be an occasion to celebrate United Nations' accomplishments in the area of decolonisation, it should also be an occasion for all of us to reflect critically on the role the United Nations played, both in the past and at present, with a view to improving its effectiveness in the discharge of its noble functions. Only then can we hope to keep the United Nations as 'the repository of the human community's aspirations for a better and safer world'.

Mr Chairman and distinguished delegates, of all the colonial situations existent today, none is more abhorrent and evasive of a peaceful solution than the Namibia question. Twenty-five years after the adoption of the declaration of independence to colonial countries and peoples, Namibia continues to suffer under the repulsive rule of the racist regime of South Africa. Nineteen years after Namibia was placed under the direct responsibility of the United Nations, South Africa continues to spurn with cynical impunity the authority of the world body. Eleven years after the enactment of Decree No. 1, for the protection of the natural resources of Namibia, Namibia continues to be raped of its resources by South Africa and certain trans-national corporations.

Mr Chairman, yes, Papua New Guinea does acknowledge that the problem is complex. Yes, we do also acknowledge that South Africa has and continues to be an extremely difficult and intransigent adversary. However, Papua New Guinea also believes that no situation is too complex and no impasse too permanent if each and every member-state abides by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and fulfils to the letter, the obligations assumed under the charter.

I must admit, Mr Chairman, that I am at a loss to understand why we the member-states of the United Nations have not been able to compel South Africa to grant Namibia its inalienable right to self-determination and independence. Have not the people of Namibia suffered long enough? Haven't their patience and restraint been proven often enough? Haven't they amply demonstrated their genuine willingness to implement resolution 435 without preconditions?

It has often been argued by certain states, states who have a greater ability to influence events in South Africa than do most of us, that 'isolation' of South Africa was not the best way to deal with the problem but rather 'constructive engagement' would forge a positive change in the policies of South Africa towards Namibia. However, I submit to you, Mr Chairman and distinguished delegates, that the fact that South Africa has not modified its attitude is ample testimony that 'constructive engagement' renders succor to the Pretoria regime as opposed to change in South Africa.

I believe that the time has now come when those member-states of the United Nations who advocate 'constructive engagement' be bold enough to replace 'constructive engagement' with 'constructive disengagement'.

Papua New Guinea of course, I'm proud to state, has no dealings whatsoever with South Africa. We continue to believe that Security Council Resolution 435 offers the most viable scheme for Namibia's independence and so join others in demanding that it be immediately implemented.

Papua New Guinea is also extremely concerned that certain quarters within the world news media should consider it fit to portray the Namibian people's struggle for independence as 'terrorist activities' and a 'terrorist group'. It is more disquieting when member-states whose media perpetrate these distortions should seemingly condone their behaviour. I believe, member-states of the United Nations have a responsibility to regulate, within the permits of their democratic political processes, the behaviour of their media representatives.

Whilst mindful of the fiscal limitations that the United Nations and its bodies have to work within, we urge the United Nations, through the special Committee of 24, the United Nations Council for Namibia, the office of the Commissioner for Namibia, the United Nations Department of Public Information, as well as all those concerned to intensify their efforts in waging a counter media campaign to put right these serious distortions.

Mr Chairman, equally as repulsive as portraying SWAPO as a 'terrorist group' is the injection of extraneous elements, such as making Namibian independence

contingent on the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. Addressing the 39th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on 1 October 1984, the then Foreign Minister of Papua New Guinea said, "We deplore the injection of extra-neous elements into the question of Namibia's independence. Papua New Guinea therefore rejects the so-called linkage rationale."

Mr Chairman and distinguished delegates, and now I must touch upon an issue, which I must admit has been very painful to me and which I acknowledge is perhaps a concern of the Special Committee of 24. I speak of no issue than that of New Caledonia.

Whilst disclaiming any desire to interfere in the affairs of France, and desiring that the most amicable relations between Papua New Guinea and France should be preserved, I feel it my duty to express my concern at the extremely explosive situation existing in New Caledonia today.

Regretably, no situation can be more parallel to the Namibian peoples' plight than the Kanaks in New Caledonia. After approximately 135 years of French rule, the indigenous people have always been disadvantaged, dispossessed of their rich lands and confined to reserves. Through the use of deliberate and systematic influx of foreign immigrants the indigenous people have become a minority in their own land. According to a report by four French senators to New Caledonia in 1982, "The uneven ethnic distribution in the territory constitutes a large factor of the New Caledonia problem, since it influences the economic, social and cultural life, not to mention the political consequences of such a situation.

Another legacy of the French colonial rule is that the economy is controlled by foreign companies, largely French owned. Kanaks make up approximately 42% of the estimated 145,000 or so population of New Caledonia. New Caledonia is known to have 40% of the world nickel reserves, but yet again, the control and exploitation of it is by foreign companies. Non-Kanaks control all communication media. Employers in New Caledonia are 86% Europeans, compared to 1% Melanesians. In 1984, after almost over 134 years of French colonial rule ONLY 20 Kanaks had a higher education degree.

Whilst most of the newly independent nations of the South Pacific region attained their political independence without bloodshed, New Caledonia regretably seems destined for a long bitter - and if events of the recent past are any indication - bloody struggle for its inalienable right to force its own political destiny.

Mr Chairman, during my two years or so as Permanent Representative of Papua



New Guinea to the United Nations, I sadly learnt that the Committee of 24, the Fourth Committee and even the General Assembly have often been told that they had no jurisdiction to consider the question of New Caledonia because it was NOT a non-self-governing territory.

Mr Chairman, a careful examination of the political and economic situation in New Caledonia bears a picture contrary to this contention. For instance, 'two-thirds of the budget of the territory is met directly or indirectly by the French state.' As well as this, all important decisions regarding the administration and direction of the territory continue to be made in Paris. As my Foreign Minister stated on Monday, a colonial situation does exist in New Caledonia.

General de Gaulle declared at Noumea that "it was part of France's historic calling to encourage self-determination". Mr Chairman, after 135 years of French rule the Kanaks have yet to be given what has been promised then.

In the 1981 French election campaign, Francois Mitterrand promised the independence front of New Caledonia that he would support their claims for independence if they would support him in the elections. Mitterrand did receive their support and it remains to be seen if he will be true to his word.

But, as Martin Luther King once said of the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness enshrined in the American constitution and the declaration of independence, "America has defaulted on this promissory note in-so-far as her citizens of colour are concerned. Instead of honouring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked INSUFFICIENT FUNDS".

Likewise, France has defaulted in its promise to the Kanaks. Instead of honouring them, it has offered the Kanaks a fake investment policy with a constantly changing maturity date.

Against this background, is it any wonder that the Kanaks are seething with bitterness, animosity, hostility, unrest and impatience with the intolerance bearing racial overtones, that they themselves have experienced at the hands of the white settlers and other foreigners? Cognizant of all these factors, Papua New Guinea with other Pacific Forum countries have persistently urged France to initiate land reforms, political reforms etc, aimed at improving the lot of the Kanaks.

Despite the slow and very much protracted progress being made towards the decolonisation of New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea with the other Forum countries

have never relented in their commitment to find a political programme which will enable a PEACEFUL transition of New Caledonia to independence. The Kanak people, likewise, have proven time and time again their willingness and commitment to dialogue even which such dialogue has been extremely difficult, and even when it was obvious that their claims were not treated with the seriousness it deserved. The French government's disinterest in seriously considering the Kanaks claims was exemplified when out of 488 deputies in the French National Assembly, only about 15 to 17 took part in the debate on the 2nd of May 1984 when the Lemoine Statute of New Caledonia was discussed. The item on the agenda was in fact squeezed between debates on private education and the European elections. "On 22 May of the same year, only about 15 deputies attended the parliamentary debate, and the vote by show of hands was carried by seven to six with three abstentions".

Mr Chairman, at the Forum meeting in Tuvalu, my government with the other Forum governments noted with some degree of satisfaction the constitutional and electoral reforms approved by the French parliament in May 1984, especially those which lend themselves to the possibility of eventual independence. But we also stated that we could not see why a referendum on the issue could not be held before 1989. The metropolitan power only indicated a willingness to move up the planned 1989 referendum after the abortive November 18 elections and the civil disturbances that followed.

We note with guarded optimism the Pisani plan and await to see if allusions for independence are not 'empty promises'. After all, what grounds have we to be convinced that France is seriously interested in granting independence to New Caledonia? Did not the French government in 1963 go back on the promise given in the draft law of 1956? Did the French government not establish reservations by 1967 although Governor Dubouzet in his declaration of 1855 gave the Kanaks his word that they would keep their lands? Have the French government not implemented the Nainville-les-Roches declaration?

As the Foreign Minister of Papua New Guinea stated on Monday, should Papua New Guinea deem the proposals submitted on Pisani inadequate we stand ready to submit New Caledonia to be enlisted on the non-self-governing territories list.

Mr Chairman and distinguished delegates, before the signature of the Evian Agreement, completing the plans for Algeria's independence, President Charles de Gaulle said on June 8, 1962 to the French people, "...over and above all the crisis and all the passions, it is through the free decision and reasoned agreement of two peoples that a new phase in their relations will open." Are the indigenous people of New Caledonia not entitled to ask for the exercise

of this 'free decision and reasoned agreement of two peoples?'

Distinguished delegates, New Caledonia needs not only political solidarity from member-states but objective 'information' about its cause to be widely disseminated.

Mr Chairman and distinguished delegates, like other independent Pacific island countries, Papua New Guinea is particularly concerned, apart from New Caledonia, with the remaining dependent territories of the Pacific region.

Papua New Guinea continues to believe that irrespective of the size, population or geographical location, the peoples of small territories have the same right to self-determination and independence as those of other territories. The United Nations reaffirmed this constantly in its resolutions and I wish to express my solidarity with those speakers who have addressed this issue before me.

Mr Chairman and distinguished delegates, it would indeed be remiss of me if I were not to address the only remaining trust territory of the Pacific islands in my statement. Whilst acknowledging that circumstances peculiar to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands itself have, perhaps necessitated the slow progress which the administering power has been able to achieve. We wish to urge the administering power concerned redoubles its efforts towards that end.

The exercise by the Marshall Islanders and the Federated States of Micronesia of their right to self-determination is indeed encouraging to our government. It is our hope that the United States Congress would soon formalise these compacts.

We also hope that Palau would soon exercise its right of self-determination early this year. To this end, we urge both the administering authority and the people of Palau to finalise consideration of an appropriate compact of Free Association and therefore enable the Trusteeship Council to terminate the Trusteeship Agreement through the Security Council.

Papua New Guinea will not condone attempts to circumvent that Palauan constitution and we will continue to advocate for the respect, by the administering power, of the provision in the Palauan constitution which outlaws the entry of nuclear weapons into Palau.

Papua New Guinea's concern for the elimination of the remaining vestiges of colonialism in the Pacific region also include the growing link which seems to pertain between the colonial and nuclear policies of certain powers. The distinguished representatives of the Fiji Anti-Nuclear Group has already



eloquently described the phenomena and I need hardly stress this subtle connection between nuclear testing and colonialism in the Pacific. This contention once seemed to Papua New Guinea abstract and remote to make. But, regrettably, it has become quite evident that certain powers who have territories in the region regard their presence there as a license to carry out nuclear testing programmes despite opposition from the peoples and governments of the region.

Mr Chairman, whilst colonialism is gradually been phased out, certain parts and peoples of the world continue to be saddled with the burden of conflicting territorial claims by metropolitan powers. Papua New Guinea hopes that the anguish and uncertainty of these peoples can soon be ended.

In this respect, we commend Great Britain and Spain for their recent 'settlement' over certain aspects the situation pertaining to Gibraltar.

In the North/Western part of the African continent, Papua New Guinea continues to follow with great admiration for the unrelenting efforts of the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations to find a peaceful and workable solution to the plight of the people of Western Sahara. Papua New Guinea therefore exhorts all parties to the conflict to cooperate with both the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations in their endeavours.

In the South-Atlantic, we note with much regret the continuing inability of both Argentina and Great Britain to find an acceptable solution of their conflict over the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands. It is perhaps pertinent to remind both parties that in their search for an acceptable solution to the problem, they should always bear in mind that they have an obligation to ensure that the inalienable rights, interests, wishes and wellbeing of the peoples of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) remain paramount in their considerations.

Mr Chairman, I stated earlier on, it is a great pleasure for me, often a recipient of your guidance and hospitality, to address this seminar on this occasion. Papua New Guinea is indeed very grateful that you have been able to all come here. Notwithstanding the rain, I hope that all of you have enjoyed yourselves and that you all will return to your homes with pleasant recollections of what you have seen and done here.

Once again, I ask all of us not to go away simply feeling satisfied and proud of the achievements the United Nations and we have accomplished in the area of decolonisation. Sadly, there is still a lot more to be done and it is up to us member-nations to rectify any deficiencies our organisation has so that we can strengthen and improve its capacity to facilitate the speedy resolution of the remaining decolonisation issues.