



FALKLAND ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

PRESS RELEASE

3rd April 2012

C24 decline invitation to hold Regional Seminar in the Falkland Islands

Member of the Legislative Assembly Sharon Halford today announced that the Falkland Islands Government had invited the UN Decolonisation Committee (the C24) to hold its annual Regional Seminar in the Falkland Islands this year. MLA Halford said the MLAs had just heard that the invitation had not been accepted. MLA Halford said:

"We are disappointed that our invitation was not accepted. It is our firm belief that the only way for anyone truly to know the Islands - and to know the facts behind our lives and our situation - is to visit our home. We offered to host the regional seminar and at the same time we repeated our invitation for any current or future Chair to visit the Islands. We also said we would welcome the Committee sending a fact-finding mission to the Islands. We hope that one or more of these things will one day take place - these offers remain on the table and we hope that some sort of visit in the future will then be used as a basis for the Committee's discussions."

Attached is the original letter dated 23rd March 2012 from Roger Edwards MLA to the Committee Chairman.



Falkland Islands Government

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Diego Moréjon Pazmino,
Chairman of UN Special Committee on Decolonisation
Republic of Ecuador
New York

Dear Chairman

The Falkland Islands is discussed annually by the Special Committee on Decolonisation at the United Nations. I write today, as the current Chair of the democratically elected Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Falkland Islands, because the people of the Falkland Islands consider it unusual that despite issuing annual resolutions on the Falkland Islands, neither the Special Committee nor its Secretariat have ever visited the islands in any official capacity.

The founding principles of the United Nations Charter and General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV), on which the Special Committee on Decolonisation is based, are clear on the primacy of respect for the principle of self-determination for all peoples. UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) states that "All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development". This right is not qualified, and all of the Republic of Argentina's attempts to qualify it within the United Nations have been rejected.

Our people, principally descendents of immigrants from Europe, first settled in the Falkland Islands 179 years ago. Before our people settled the islands, there were no indigenous people, and historical records prove no civilian population has ever been forcibly expelled. Geographical boundaries in Argentina had not yet fully formed 179 years ago, and its people, also principally comprising immigrants from Europe, had only recently declared their own right to self-determination following roughly 300 years of colonial rule.

All countries in the Americas have populations that include descendents from European immigration, and the majority have exercised their right of self-determination. For example the people of the United States famously exercised their right of self-determination 169 years after the majority of their first ancestors arrived from Europe and established settlements. The only unusual aspect of the Falkland Islands is that our immigrant ancestors did not join any indigenous peoples.

All the people of the Falkland Islands ask is that we are afforded the same right as all the other peoples of the Americas – the right of self-determination. This is an equal right for all peoples. I call on the Special Committee on Decolonisation to reflect on why it is not carrying out the mandate of the United Nations Charter and General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) by protecting the right of our

people to determine our own future. Neither the United Nations Charter nor General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) support the concept of two large sovereign states negotiating away the rights of self-determination of the peoples of any territory.

In this respect, it is with the full backing and blessing of all democratically elected Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Falkland Islands, and on behalf of the Falkland Islands people; that I write formally to invite the Special Committee on Decolonisation to consider holding its 2012 Regional Seminar in the Falkland Islands.

If the Special Committee on Decolonisation wishes to follow its original mandate and remain relevant in the 21st Century, our people consider it right that the Special Committee on Decolonisation have the opportunity to see the Falkland Islands and its people in person. Equally if it were not possible to hold the 2012 Regional Seminar in the Falkland Islands, we would welcome extending our hospitality to an official of the Special Committee on Decolonisation, for a fact-finding mission.

Lastly, I wish to remind the Special Committee on Decolonisation of the open invitation, issued on 7 December 2010 and circulated at the United Nations, and repeated in my speech to the Committee on 23 June 2011, for any current or future Chairman of the Special Committee to visit our beautiful islands.

I look forward to your reply. I have also asked that the United Kingdom Permanent Mission to the United Nations send a copy of this letter and invitation to the United Nations Secretary-General and request its circulation as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 45.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Roger Edwards". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Roger Edwards MLA
On behalf of Members of the Legislative Assembly