



Statements and Speeches

No. 75/39

DECOLONIZATION

Statement in the Plenary Meeting of the Thirtieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, by Mr. Marc Baudouin, Ambassador and Representative of Canada, November 26, 1975.

The renewed impetus given to the process of decolonization in Africa, in April 1974, by the new policies of the Government of Portugal has continued to be felt throughout the present year. The United Nations has welcomed to its membership at the present session three former Portuguese territories in Africa: Mozambique, Cape Verde, and Saõ Tome and Principe. It has similarly admitted Comoros to our membership. From other parts of the world we are drawing additional new members and strength. We have recently welcomed to our midst Papua New Guinea; and, in a week or two, we expect to welcome a new nation of the western hemisphere -- Surinam.

The United Nations is experiencing a growth in membership of a magnitude seldom equalled in recent years. A good measure of the credit for this expansion can be attributed to United Nations efforts to promote the implementation of Resolution 1514. The United Nations has assisted in the creation of an international atmosphere that demands that serious efforts be made to deal with situations that have so far inhibited peoples in various parts of the world from exercising their right to self-determination and proceeding to independence if that is their clearly-expressed will.

The areas that remain under colonial administration are few indeed. In most cases -- with the notable exceptions of Rhodesia and Namibia --, they are small territories, often isolated and lightly populated. Nonetheless these small territories warrant our attention and our assistance to ensure that the rights of their populations to determine their own future are accorded them. The Canadian delegation has been careful to point out, however, that self-determination does not always mean independence. Certain small territories may consider that their limited human and material resources make independent status impractical or unattractive. It is for the people of these territories to determine precisely what form of self-determination is most appropriate to their individual circumstances. The relation with New Zealand chosen by the people of Niue is an excellent example of one alternative.

We have maintained over the years our support for the right of peoples under colonial rule to self-determination and independence.
