

## **STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 50/2007**

17 May 2007

The annual regional seminar of the UN dealing with the Eradication of Colonialism takes place next week in the Caribbean island of Grenada. The Leader of the Opposition Joe Bossano will be attending the week-long seminar and in his absence Dr Joseph Garcia will be Acting Leader of the Opposition from next Monday.

Last year the seminar was held in the Pacific but was delayed and eventually took place on 30 November. The Leader of the Opposition was unable to accept the invitation to attend because the dates clashed with the Referendum on the Constitution.

This year's seminar will review the progress towards achieving decolonisation in the 16 remaining colonies and will be looking in particular at the situation in Tokelau where a self-determination referendum was held recently and the proposed constitution designed to achieve decolonisation for the territory by exercising the Free-Association option was rejected because it failed to obtain 65% support.

The UN declared the referendum a valid exercise of the realisation of the right to self-determination notwithstanding that the result was to retain the existing constitution and remain a colony. Currently, the holding of a new referendum under UN supervision is being considered for later this year in discussions with New Zealand, the administering power and the people of the territory.

As well as representatives from non-government organisations from some of the other territories, and some elected representatives, the seminar will include a Spanish representative and an Argentinian representative from the permanent missions of these two countries at the UN.

In the last Caribbean seminar held in St Vincent in 2005, the Spanish representative did not make a statement, however, the Argentinian representative attacked the position of the Falklands, arguing that the Falkland Islanders were imported British citizens who were not entitled to have a right to self-determination and that the issue was one of restoring the territorial integrity of Argentina which was partly under British occupation.

This position was in turn attacked by Joe Bossano in the seminar because the Falklands were not present. The Spanish representative did not support the Argentina position. It remains to be seen what will happen this year given that Rafael Estrella recently took up the position of Spanish Ambassador to Buenos Aires and made a strong speech in support of Argentina over the Falklands on his arrival.

The debates that take place in the seminar and the views and conclusions that emerge from it are usually produced in a report which is then annexed to

the conclusions of the deliberations of the Committee of 24 following the sessions to hear petitioners which is held in New York next month.

The documents regarding what takes place in the seminar and what takes place in New York are then placed before the 4<sup>th</sup> Committee in October which in every year previously has taken a decision without a vote on a text negotiated between London and Madrid which calls on both parties to negotiate a solution to Gibraltar's decolonisation.

It remains to be seen what will happen this year in October.

**ENDS**