

**Statement presented to the United Nations Pacific Regional Seminar  
on Decolonisation**

*Statement of the Independent Expert on the  
Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

**Presented by  
Dr. Carlyle Corbin  
Independent Expert on Governance**

**Shangri La Resort  
Yanuca, Fiji**

**29 November 2006**

## **Introduction**

**The importance of the participation of the non self-governing territories in the work of the United Nations system is a longstanding mandate of the United Nations. There is an important organic link between the process of political development of the non self-governing territories (NSGTs), and assistance to these territories from the wider United Nations system.**

**This assistance is critical to developing the readiness of these territories in assuming the powers of full self-government, especially as many of the economies of these territories require a heightened measure of human resource development in relation to their engagement with the globalised economy.**

**The General Assembly has included the participation of the territories in the UN system in its resolutions since its very first session in 1946, and a series of resolutions continue to present day to this effect, with the aim of stimulating participation in the UN system.**

**This participation is facilitated in two ways. First, many of the territories have access to assistance from the UN agencies, usually through coordination of the *United Nations Development Programme*. In many cases the territories have country programmes facilitated by *UNDP* with input from relevant agencies depending on the scope and nature of the requirements of a territory. In some cases, these territories participate in regional programmes of specific agencies.**

**The second method of participation is direct membership, associate membership, and/or observer status, mainly in the UN specialised agencies and UN regional commissions, depending on the rules of procedure of the specific agency.**

**A number of the specialised agencies have heeded the call by the General Assembly to facilitate the participation of the territories in their work, including the *World Bank***

As the Organization, the Commission on Economic and Social Affairs, the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Commission on International Law, the Commission on the Status of Children and the Commission on the Status of Women.

The extent of participation of the territories in these UN bodies is not as extensive as it could be, owing mainly to insufficient awareness on the part of the territories regarding their eligibility to join such UN bodies. It is also the case that many of the agencies do not consider the participation of the territories a priority, despite annual resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council requesting that the issue be taken up in the governing councils of these agencies.

Thus, when the Secretary-General makes his annual request for information from the specialised agencies on their assistance programmes to the territories, only a few agencies reply. Even a number of agencies which include territories in their programmes do not reply. A better approach needs to be found for the UN system to acquire this important and relevant information.

### Participation in UN Regional Commissions

Perhaps the best illustration of success in terms of inclusion of the territories in a UN organisation is with the UN regional commissions. Accordingly, in the Pacific, all of the NSGTs except one are associate members of the Commission on Economic and Social Affairs. In the Caribbean, all but Belize and the Cayman Islands belong to the Commission on Economic and Social Affairs. In the Americas, all but the territories of the Caribbean belong to the Commission on Economic and Social Affairs.

The rules of procedure of the regional commissions provide for full participation without the right to vote. Thus, the territory of Puerto Rico served as chairman of ECLAC from 2004-06.

ECLAC also has a ministerial level Commission on Economic and Social Cooperation of which the territory of Puerto Rico has served as chairman from 1988-89, and again from 2004-06.



**ECLAC member states sought to explore future modalities for their associate members in participation in some of the work of the *cono c nd oc Co nc***

**on overly restrictive and “control-based” considerations.**