

DECOLONISATION OF FRENCH POLYNESIA

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This is an edited version of the speech delivered by Dr Mareva Lechat-Kitalong to the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization (C24) on 12 June 2023.

Le texte qui suit est une version remaniée de son discours prononcé le 12 juin 2023 devant le comité chargé d'étudier l'application de la déclaration sur l'octroi de l'indépendance aux peuples coloniaux (dit Comité des 24), l'autrice représentante du Gouvernement de la Polynésie française, a vivement regretté lors des travaux relatifs à la rédaction de la résolution finale sur la Polynésie française la politique de la chaise vide de l'État français.

Elle a déploré son refus d'engager un dialogue sur le processus de décolonisation et d'autodétermination sous supervision des Nations Unies, dialogue qui lui apparaît d'autant plus justifié et nécessaire après la victoire du parti indépendantiste aux dernières élections territoriales.

On 17 May 2023, French Polynesia celebrated the 10th anniversary of re-inscription of French Polynesia on the United Nations list of non-self-governing territories, thus affirming the inalienable right of the people of French Polynesia to self-determination and independence in accordance with Chapter XI of the Charter of the United Nations and with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) which contains the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People.

A decade ago already...!

Unfortunately, it has also been a decade of silence from the empty seat of France.

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The government of French Polynesia regrets that the administering power has never responded to the request to submit information on French Polynesia under Article 73e of the Charter.

This is why language calling upon the administering power to "intensify its" dialogue is not correct as it has sadly never started. We would like to replace it by "initiate". And we trust that the administering power will initiate it this year. Why? Because France values democracy as much as our government does.

I stand here before you today because of democracy. I am here to represent the government that our people have chosen democratically. Our government trusts that the administering power will also hear and respect the democratic voice of *Maohi* people. In June 2022, the *Tavini Huiraatira No Te Ao Maohi* pro-independence party won the 3 seats in the National Assembly of France. The "blue" wave was only starting. Then came our general elections. The same party won the first round, then the second round in April 2023. The victory is unequivocal: the *Tavini Huiraatira* party won with 44% of the votes. The *Tapura Huiraatira* party led by former French Polynesia President Edouard Fritch and the "A here ia porinetia" party lost respectively with 38% and 17% of the votes. The results of the general election held on the 16 and 30 April 2023 are as follows.

The *Tavini Huiraatira* independentist party now holds 38 out of 57 seats of the deliberative Assembly of French Polynesia. Mr Moetai Brotherson was elected President of French Polynesia on 12 May 2022. The Prime Minister of France, Elizabeth Borne, congratulated him on his election during a session in the French National Assembly on 6 June. She also recognised a "deeply respectful parliamentarian. A firm opponent but committed to democratic debate and always ready for dialogue". She said "Our political choices are deeply distant, but our attachment to the values of democracy and the Republic will always bring us together". "The questions that arise are major, we will not seek to circumvent them, but we must take the time to converge on a method".

Our President met with the President of France, HE Emmanuel Macron the day after, on 7 June.

The government of French Polynesia confirms that it fully supports a proper decolonisation process and self-determination process under the scrutiny of the United Nations. I would also like to convey the invitation of the President of French Polynesia to the administering power for a democratic debate and dialogue over these processes. Our President is proposing a decolonisation process which could be held up as an example. The time to settle on a method has arrived.

The Resolution on the Question of French Polynesia needs to better reflect the democratic voice of our People. Some language needs to be added, and some deleted.

The reference to "the General Assembly Resolution 76/30 of 13 December 2022 entitled "Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons" needs to be added. Our President is now also in charge of "the consequences of nuclear tests", so it is very important to include all aspects of nuclear weapons.

The express reference to "resolution 77/149 of 12 December 2022" and previous resolutions requesting the Special Committee to carry out the actions approved by the General Assembly, and "to develop a constructive programme of work on a case-by-case basis for the Non Self-Governing Territories, to facilitate the implementation of the mandate of the Special Committee and the relevant resolutions on decolonization, including resolutions on specific territories" should be added. I repeat the call for the administering power to work together with our government to co-construct this programme.

Further some language of the resolution is now irrelevant. First, the reference to the "statement made by the President of French Polynesia Fourth Committee, in October 2021".¹ The President of French Polynesia also made a speech during this 76th session expressing the opposite. He exposed how the pandemic revealed the limits of the so-called "autonomy" of the Territory, and the « farce of a round table on the nuclear issue that had been held in Paris ». Instead of adding what our President said, we believe it to be more proper to strike this paragraph. The references to the 2020 municipal elections and the 2018 territorial elections should be replaced by the most recent ones.

Second it is also very important to delete para 3 referencing the "2019 reaffirmation of previous calls to delist French Polynesia from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, and 2013 resolution adopted by the Assembly of French Polynesia on 30 May 2013".

Third, what is also of utmost importance for the governments of French Polynesia is to emphasise the need to develop a political education programme for youth to foster an awareness of the right to self-determination already mentioned in para 2. Thus we suggest inserting a new para 8 written as follows: "Decides to initiate a constructive programme of work for French Polynesia to facilitate the implementation of the mandate of the Special Committee and relevant resolutions

1 See A/C.4/76/SR.3, paras 10–15.

on decolonization including resolutions on specific territories in accordance with OP8(d) of Resolution 77/149 of 12 December 2022, and requests the Secretary-General to provide the necessary support to ensure the implementation of the constructive programme of work for the territory".

Now is the time to initiate a frank and honest dialogue with the administering power to facilitate rapid progress towards a fair and effective self-determination process, and we look forward to it.