SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD
TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON
THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL
COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

LETTER DATED 20 OCTOBER 1964 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM ADDRESSED TO THE CHAIRMAN OF
THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Note by the Secretariat: The following text is circulated
in accordance with a decision taken by the Committee at its
297th meeting on 29 October 1964

I have the honour to refer to the decision by the Special Committee at its
234th meeting, in approving paragraph 9 (a) of the seventh report of the
Working Group (A/AC.109/L.104), to hear statements by administering Powers on
territories for which they are responsible in plenary meetings of the Special
Committee rather than in the Sub-Committees. In subsequent discussion of this
decision, the Special Committee agreed that administering Powers' statements might
be made where convenient in the Sub-Committees, but the view was expressed that
wherever possible such statements should be made in plenary meetings.

In the event it has proved to be appropriate for a number of statements by
the United Kingdom delegation on territories for which the United Kingdom
Government is responsible to be made in Sub-Committees rather than in the Special
Committee. Since this has precluded some members of the Special Committee from
hearing these statements, and in view of the fact that verbatim records of the
statements are not available to members of the Special Committee, my delegation
feel that it might be helpful to the Committee if verbatim texts of these
statements were made available for the Committee's discussions of the reports
by the Sub-Committees. Accordingly, I have the honour to enclose copies of the main statements made by my delegation in the Sub-Committees, and to ask you to arrange for their circulation, together with this letter, as official documents of the Special Committee.

(Signed) C.E. KING

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ANNEX

STATEMENTS MADE BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM IN SUB-COMMITTEES I, II, AND III OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

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The Falkland Islands consist of two large and about 200 small islands with a total area of around 4,700 square miles lying in the South Atlantic about 400 miles northeast of Cape Horn. The territory's Dependencies are South Georgia the South Sandwich Islands, and a number of rocks. Recent geological research and studies of the fossil forms of the Falkland Islands suggest that over the centuries the group may have moved from an original position off South-Eastern Africa, and that the Falklands were once part of what is now Natal and Eastern Cape Province in the Republic of South Africa. I leave the Sub-Committee to draw whatever conclusions it wishes from this, but I emphasize that the islands have moved, if the theory is true, from South-East Africa, not South-West. The population of the Falkland Islands, excluding the Dependencies, was 2,172 in 1962, the date of the last census. Of these 1,733, that is almost exactly 80 per cent, were born in the territory, 339 were born in the United Kingdom and nine in Argentina. Almost all the people are settlers or descendants of settlers from Britain. In terms of nationality, all but thirty-six of the population were British citizens; and of these thirty-six, fifteen were Chileans and three Argentinians. The only town is Stanley, the capital, with a population of about 1,000 and the largest settlement outside Stanley comprises only about 100 people. The population of the Dependencies fluctuates with the whaling season; in the summer it is about 500 and in the winter about half that number.

The economy of the Falkland Islands depends on the wool industry and the prosperity of the Island is therefore largely dependent on the world price of wool, which has declined since the time of the Korean War although it has risen slightly in recent years. As there are no national income or product figures for the territory, probably the best indication of its prosperity is the rising trend of the figures for the export of wool by volume. In 1938 the figure was 3,618,000 lbs. Since 1959 the figures have risen steadily from 4,546,000 lbs. to 5,061,000 apart from a slight drop in 1962. A further indication of the level of prosperity of the territory is revealed by the number of motor vehicles per head; this now
exceeds that of the United Kingdom. The Falkland Islands' Government places great emphasis on the improvement of pastures and action is now being taken to put into effect the recommendations of an expert in hill farming in Scotland who visited the Islands in 1960/61 to advise on pasture improvement and the sheep industry generally. The development of secondary industries is inhibited mainly by the smallness of the market and by the demands of the sheep farming industry on labour and enterprise - there is what the economists disapprovingly call over-full employment in the Islands. The Government of the territory has over the past fifteen years undertaken considerable development work to which the British Government has contributed nearly $700,000 from Colonial Development and Welfare funds. This sum includes about $224,000 for the improvement of the Stanley roads, $145,000 for water supplies, $39,000 for a vessel for communication between the Islands, $36,000 for a power station, $39,000 for a new Town Hall for Stanley and $98,000 for hospital improvements. A further $140,000 has recently been made available for the three years 1963/66 which is to be spent mainly on school buildings. It is broadly true to say that there is no real poverty in the Islands and that the standard of living is slightly higher than that in Britain.

I now turn to the constitutional position. The present constitution, which dates from 1951, provides for a Legislative Council which is empowered to pass laws for the peace, order and good government of the territory. The Council is presided over by the Governor and consists of three officials, four members elected by universal adult suffrage, and four members nominated by the Governor, two of them non-official members. There is thus a majority of non-official members, and although two of the six non-official members are nominated by the Governor they are in no sense government men. The Legislative Council must meet at least once a year and usually has several sessions, including the budget session. The non-official members play an important part in the government of the territory. For example the Standing Finance Committee of the Legislative Council comprises only the elected and non-official members and this committee may approve or object to any item of proposed governmental expenditure.

The Governor, who is the Queen's representative and Head of the Administration, is advised by an Executive Council. The Executive Council takes decisions on all
matters affecting the internal government of the territory. It consists of three officials and five other members nominated by the Governor. By an arrangement recently introduced the six non-official members of the Legislative Council are invited to recommend the appointment of two of the non-official members of the Executive Council. The Governor may act against the advice of the Executive Council only in certain circumstances, such as where the Royal prerogative is involved, but the number of such occasions is rare, if indeed it has ever happened.

There are no political parties, although there is a trade union (the Falkland Islands Labour Federation) and a Sheepowners' Federation.

There is a Town Council in Stanley which consists of six elected members and three members nominated by the Governor. Elections are held biennially, three of the six elected members retiring every two years. The Council is responsible for the usual local government services. Appointments to the public service are made by the Governor, assisted, when necessary, by members of the Executive Council. Of 158 Government posts now filled, 108 are occupied by Falkland Islanders. The entire staff of the key departments of the Secretariat and the Treasury, with the exception of the Colonial Secretary, are Falkland Islanders. There is no difference in the conditions of service of expatriates and Falkland Islanders in permanent and pensionable Government posts. They enjoy the same rates of pay and similar leave conditions.

After the recent general elections in the Colony, the members of the Executive and Legislative Councils discussed constitutional changes with the Governor, and agreed on proposals for changes in the composition of both Councils. These proposals were then put to the British Government. The proposals are that the non-elected membership of the Legislative Council should be reduced by omitting one of the three ex-officio members and the two nominated members. The Council would then consist of the Governor, the Colonial Secretary and the Colonial Treasurer, two nominated independent members and four elected members. In the Executive Council one of three official members would be omitted and the unofficials would consist of two appointed members and two elected members of the Legislative Council chosen by a ballot of the elected and independent members of Legislative Council. The object of these changes is to increase the influence of the elected members in
the two Councils, giving equal numbers of elected and non-elected members in the Legislative Council, where at present there is an unofficial but not an elected majority, and formalizing the introduction of the principle of election in the appointment of members of the Executive Council. These proposals have been accepted by the British Government and will be brought into effect as soon as the necessary constitutional instruments are prepared.

It is for the Islanders to determine what their ultimate constitutional status should be and the British Government are always ready to consider any proposals for constitutional change that the Islanders may advance. For the present the Islanders have made it clear that they do not want independence. Members of the Sub-Committee and of the Special Committee will have seen the message from the elected members of the Falkland Islands Legislative Council to the Chairman of the Committee of Twenty-Four dated 3 August in the following terms:

"We, the elected members of the Legislative Council of the Falkland Islands, understand that the Special Committee proposes to discuss the Falkland Islands in September. We accordingly wish to make known to members of the Special Committee the wishes of the people of this colony. We are proud to be citizens of this British Colony which was settled and developed by people from the United Kingdom. We wish to retain and strengthen our link with the United Kingdom and to state in the strongest possible terms that any constitutional association with a foreign power would be completely repugnant to us. The unofficial nominated members of both the Executive and the Legislative Council wish to be associated in the fullest possible degree with this statement of ours and respectfully request you to arrange for this telegram to be circulated to all members of the Special Committee."

In the light of this unequivocal statement of the wishes of the people of the Falkland Islands, made by their own elected representatives, there can be no doubt about the desires of the people of the territory. My delegation urges distinguished delegates not to lose sight of this fundamental point, because it may well be that efforts will be made to distract attention from it.

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* The elected members of the Legislative Council unanimously adopted a declaration in similar terms on 2 April this year. The unofficial nominated members of the Executive and Legislative Councils associated themselves with the declaration which was formally conveyed at the elected members' request to the British Government.

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My Government’s position in regard to the Falkland Islands is thus fully consistent with the principle of self-determination. I wish to reaffirm the statement in the letters from the head of my delegation addressed to the Chairman of the Special Committee and to the Chairman of this Sub-Committee, and circulated as document A/AC.109/81, that my Government have no doubt as to their sovereignty over the territory of the Falkland Islands.

In the opinion of my delegation, the request by the distinguished representative of Argentina to participate in the work of this Sub-Committee constitutes, especially in view of the wording employed in the request, an intervention in the affairs of this territory in which Argentina is not properly concerned. The claim advanced by the Government of Argentina to sovereignty over the Falkland Islands is in effect a bid to annex those Islands in defiance of the clearly expressed wishes and interests of the people of the territory, wishes and interests which according to the United Nations Charter and the Declaration on the granting of independence to non-self-governing territories and peoples should be paramount. In the view of my Government, the Special Committee and this Sub-Committee are not competent to attempt to consider or discuss territorial claims; indeed, my delegation are convinced that quite apart from the issue of competence, the Committee would be most ill advised to try to deal with this difficult and inevitably time-consuming question of sovereignty, which does not arise out of the resolutions establishing the Special Committee or out of the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial peoples. It may be suggested, as it has been suggested in the past, that operative paragraph 6 of resolution 1514 (XV) constitutes a mandate to the Committee to consider questions of sovereignty; but in my delegation’s view this reading of paragraph 6 is not borne out either by the wording of the paragraph itself, which clearly refers to possible attempts at disruption in the future and not to issues of sovereignty dating back to distant history, or by the remainder of the Declaration which indeed is very specific in stating that "all peoples" - and I repeat the crucial words, "all peoples" - "have the right to self-determination". It seems to my delegation, and I think it will be agreed by any fair-minded person who reads the terms of the Declaration without preconceived ideas, that paragraph 6 cannot possibly be construed as imposing a
limitation of such importance on the universal application of the principle of self-determination, which is indeed guaranteed under the Charter itself.

While therefore the United Kingdom Government cannot agree to participate in discussions of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, either in this Sub-Committee and Committee or indeed in bilateral talks with the Argentina Government, I am authorized to say that my Government are always willing to discuss with the Government of Argentina ways in which we, they and the Falkland Islanders can avoid damage to the good relations between us from the dispute which unhappily exists; and my Government have so informed the Government of Argentina.
Mr. Chairman, for the reasons which I explained very fully in my statement to this Sub-Committee on 8 September, my delegation cannot recognize the competence of this Sub-Committee to consider the question of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, the question to which most of the statement by the distinguished representative of Argentina on 9 September was devoted. However, the Argentine statement included a number of misconceptions about conditions in the Falkland Islands, and I shall be grateful if the Sub-Committee would spare me a short time to correct some of these inaccuracies.

First the distinguished representative of Argentina suggested that the status of the Falkland Islands as a British colony is an anachronism in the modern world. Mr. Chairman, my Government have made it clear that it is for the Falkland Islanders themselves to choose their constitutional future and it is the Islanders themselves who wish to retain the British connexion. I leave it to this Sub-Committee to decide whether the attitude of my Government, or the attitude of the Argentine Government which wishes to annex this small territory against the wishes of its inhabitants, is more in accordance with the enlightened thinking of modern days.

The Argentine representative referred to what he called the "stagnant" population of the Islands as evidence that they have relatively poor social and economic standards, and suggested that they would enjoy greater prosperity if linked with Argentina. Mr. Chairman, I wish to protest against this use of the word "stagnant". It is true that the population has increased very little during this century; it was 2,043 in 1901 and 2,172 in 1962, the date of the last census. But a stable population need not be a stagnant one; on the contrary, the Falkland Islanders are very much alive and full of energy, with a prosperous and thriving economy. The Argentine statement quoted some arrival and departure figures for the Islands as if these had great significance. For the record, the correct figures are: 1960, 224 arrived, 292 left; 1961, 276 arrived 326 left; 1962, 368 arrived, 411 left. These are not, however, emigration and immigration figures. They are accounted for largely by people coming and going on holiday, leave and business. The small population decline of recent years has been attributable mainly to the natural attraction of more varied employment opportunities outside
the Islands, and the consequent tendency to emigration has partially offset the natural population increase. The picture drawn by the Argentine representative of this community as the only shrinking family in America is wholly misleading. The birthrate in Argentina itself has been declining ever since 1956. As for comparisons between the prosperity now enjoyed by the Falkland Islanders and that which they could expect if joined to Argentina, I made it clear in my statement on 8 September that the Islands are prosperous, and indeed by most measurements enjoy a rather higher standard of living than the United Kingdom. One indicator of their general social well being is the infant mortality rate, which according to the latest United Nations demographic Year Book was 20.4 per thousand live births in the Falkland Islands in 1962 compared with a figure of 62.1 in Argentina. The Falkland Islands rate of infant mortality has been the lowest of all the countries in South America for which figures are available in every year since 1956; in almost every year the Argentine rate has been twice or three times as high as that in the Falklands. Comparable statistics are hard to come by, but from the available facts and figures that there are, as an index of prosperity and general well being, I will mention the average size of dwellings. According to the United Nations Statistical Year Book for 1963, the average number of rooms in houses in Argentina is 2.4; in Britain it is 4.6 rooms, in the United States of America 4.9, and in the Falkland Islands it is 7.9. 53.3 per cent of all dwellings in the Falkland Islands have seven or more rooms, compared with 2.7 per cent in Argentina. In Argentina, 62.7 per cent of dwellings have only one or two rooms, compared with 2.2 per cent in the Falkland Islands. I do not therefore know on what evidence the Argentine representative bases his suggestion that the Falkland Islands would be better off as part of Argentina. They seem to be doing rather well as they are.

The distinguished representative of Argentina described the population of the Falkland Islands as a purely temporary and fluctuating one, presumably in support of his suggestion that the principle of self-determination ought not to be applied to this territory. Mr. Chairman, the facts are as follows: 80 per cent of the resident population of the Islands in 1962 had been born in those Islands. Of the present population, 1,629 out of just over 2,000 can trace their roots to persons settled in the Islands before 1900. Over 1,000 can probably trace their origins back to roots in the Falkland Islands before 1850. The demand for skilled
craftsmen and other labour from overseas accounts for some of the yearly arrival figures and the emigration trends to which I have already referred account for tendencies for yearly departures to exceed arrivals. Neither the importation of skilled craftsmen and other labour, nor these unremarkable emigration trends, affects the great bulk of the population, which as I have shown is permanently settled and has been so settled for many years.

My distinguished colleague from Italy spoke of these Islands as the population's "second home". But these people have no other home; these Islands are their first and only home. This is no artificial community maintained by deliberate decision of the United Kingdom Government: the islanders form a stable and settled community descended in most cases (as I have shown) from the original settlers and their children. The fact that they are largely of British descent by origin does not mean that they can be wished away; it does not mean that the principle of self-determination cannot be applied to them. The distinguished representative of Italy suggested that the problem is that of a colonial territory rather than of a colonial people. But how can we talk about the territory and forget the men, women and children who have made their homes there? How can this Committee, which has dedicated itself to the service of colonial peoples everywhere in the world, put rocks and sheep before human beings? My delegation has been unable to find anything in the Charter or in the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples to suggest that the principle of self-determination shall not be applied to communities of British descent, or to communities from which there is any emigration, or into which there is an inflow of persons from overseas with skills that are needed in the territory.

The Argentine representative referred in rather disparaging terms to the important role of the Falkland Islands Company in the economic life of the Falkland Islands. It is true that this company has a most important part to play in the Falkland Islands, and indeed it was very largely the enterprise of the company which originally developed the Islands. The system of taxation in the Falkland Islands, which has recently involved raising the level of company income tax and the introduction of a profits tax, ensures that the Falkland Islands community itself receives a fair share of the proceeds of operations of the company. In addition, the Islands of course benefit from wages and salaries and other expenditure by the company. This is a tiny community by international standards,
and it is quite unrealistic to imagine that it could support a complex competitive economy of the kind apparently envisaged by the Argentine representative when he talks of a monopoly in the Falkland Islands. The efficiency and scale of the Falkland Islands Company's operations enable it to make a much greater contribution to the territory's prosperity than a wool industry composed of numerous small farms could possibly expect to do.

Reference was made in the Argentine statement to the fact that Montevideo is the only outlet from the Islands, and it was hinted that this limitation on the contacts of the islanders with the outside world should be laid at the door of their British connexions. Mr. Chairman, this is not so. There are regular voyages between the Falklands and Britain as well as the regular voyages to Montevideo by the mail vessel R.M.S. Darwin. As for contacts between the Islands and Argentina, Britain has never had any wish to put barriers in the way of contact or trade between the Falkland Islands and Argentina: the regrettable fact that such barriers do exist is to be ascribed to the policies of the Argentine Government. Merchant ships wishing to enter Argentine ports cannot do so if their last call was at the Falkland Islands, since there are no Argentine authorities to clear papers. Falkland Islanders cannot visit Argentina because they are treated there as if they were Argentine nationals, liable to Argentine taxes and military service. If the Argentine Government wishes to establish good relations with this little community so near its own shores, there are immediate and obvious measures which it could take to enable the Falkland Islanders to develop closer and better relations with them.

The Argentine representative based part of his argument on the fact that the Falkland Islands are situated on the continental shelf of Argentina, and spoke as if under international law and the Geneva Convention of 1958 this gave Argentina some kind of claim to sovereignty over the Islands. In fact, the Argentine Government has not yet ratified the Continental Shelf Convention although it appears from the remarks of the distinguished representative of Argentina to which I have just referred that his Government recognizes the Convention as definitive in international law. If so, it is to be regretted that the Argentine Government has failed to follow the principles of the Convention in almost every respect in drafting a law relating to the continental shelf. This Convention is now in force,
and the British Government has ratified it. Far from affording any basis for claiming that islands on the continental shelf belong to the State which enjoys certain rights over the shelf, the Convention goes so far as to make special mention of the fact that islands have their own continental shelf. The Convention confers on the coastal State sovereign rights only for the limited purpose of exploring and exploiting the natural resources of the shelf. It confers no right to full sovereignty over areas of the continental shelf, nor to the exercise of any rights apart from those connected with exploration and exploitation. The distinguished representative of Argentina did not refer to the principle established by article 6 of the Convention that States opposite one another on the same continental shelf shall determine boundaries between them on the shelf by agreement. In the absence of agreement, the Convention provides that unless another boundary line is justified by special circumstances, the boundary is to be the median. British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands confers upon Britain the rights described by the Convention over the continental shelf adjacent to the Falkland Islands, and my Government fully reserves these rights. Britain would of course be willing to determine appropriate boundaries on the continental shelf between Argentina and the Falkland Islands in accordance with the principles of the Convention.

I should now like to say a few words about the statement on 10 September by yourself, Mr. Chairman, in your capacity as the representative of Uruguay.

My delegation is glad to pay tribute to the great legal wisdom and knowledge which informed your delegation's statement, Mr. Chairman. I also wish to acknowledge with gratitude the friendly and constructive spirit in which your delegation's statement was conceived. However, I am sorry to say that my delegation cannot altogether agree with the interpretation which your statement appeared to place upon paragraph 6 of the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples. Whatever the history and background of the evolution of legal principles on the American continent, the meaning and interpretation of paragraph 6 of resolution 1514 (XV) must stand on its own; in my delegation's opinion, it cannot be a requirement for understanding a General Assembly resolution that one should be an expert in inter-American legal history. Words must be assumed to mean what they say, in General Assembly resolutions if not in documents of a more legal character. Mr. Chairman, if I understood your
learned exposition correctly, your contention was that paragraph 6 of this resolution gave international validation to an established principle of American law under which no country should accord recognition of sovereignty over territory acquired illegally or by the use of force. Leaving aside for a moment the question whether British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands was in fact so acquired, it seems plain to my delegation that paragraph 6 in fact says nothing of the kind. Let me read the text of the paragraph to the Sub-Committee:

"Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

Mr. Chairman, if words mean what they say, this paragraph is an injunction addressed to all countries to take no actions in the future - I stress "in the future" because the word used in the resolution is "attempt" - whose consequences would be to split existing territories or States or which would infringe their sovereignty in a manner inconsistent with the United Nations Charter, and in particular with Article 2 of the Charter. There is no justification for regarding this paragraph of resolution 1514 as constituting a limitation on the principle of self-determination assured by paragraph 2 of the same resolution and by Article 1, paragraph 2 of the Charter. Indeed, if it had been the intention of the General Assembly to indicate by paragraph 6 that, in cases where the principle of territorial integrity and sovereignty conflicted with the principle of self-determination, the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty should have precedence, then it must be obvious that a completely different wording would have been used both in paragraph 6 and especially in paragraph 2 of the resolution. If such a wording had been used, placing such an important and far-reaching limitation on the principle of self-determination, I venture to suggest that the resolution might well not have commended itself to a majority of Members of the United Nations in 1960 or at any other time.

We welcome your recognition, Mr. Chairman, that neither this Sub-Committee nor the main Committee is competent to judge the merits of disputes over sovereignty. Your statement confirms us in the view that, apart from any other considerations, this is not the place in which to argue legal issues of this kind and that it is pointless and improper to attempt to do so. Your exposition of certain legal matters shows the deep waters into which pursuit of legal arguments as to
sovereignty can lead the Sub-Committee. We consider that the rules of international law relating to title to territory apply universally, without special rules for certain areas. Furthermore to talk in terms of the effects of acquiring territory by force or illegally simply begs the question as to the lawfulness of the acquisition of title: we for our part are entirely satisfied that our title was acquired lawfully.

The Argentine representative has given a lengthy and detailed statement of the history and legal aspects of his Government's claim to the Falklands. I do not wish to debate now precisely what occurred in the distant past in the Falklands but we firmly believe that British activities in those early days were sufficient to give us a good title by occupation: in addition British sovereignty over the Islands is established by open, continuous, effective and peaceful occupation for nearly a century and a half so as to give us a clear prescriptive title. So far from the Argentine Government's having protested "unceasingly" there have been very long periods, in one case amounting to thirty-five years (1849-1884), and another for twenty years (1888-1908), during which they remained silent.

The islanders are overwhelmingly British in origin. As I have already shown, the population is predominantly stable and permanent and the suggestion that it is temporary and floating is quite untrue.

The islanders have no connexions with Argentina nor do they wish for any other than the normal friendly relations which should obtain between neighbouring countries. They have made this abundantly clear in the elected representatives' declaration of last April and in their messages to the Committee. The plain fact is that these Islands have an established population of British origin dating back over about a century and a half of unbroken British administration and the wishes of their inhabitants cannot be set aside.

It has been suggested by several speakers, including yourself, Mr. Chairman, and the distinguished representatives of Italy and the Ivory Coast, that the Sub-Committee should appeal to Britain and Argentina to hold discussions of the problem and thus find a peaceful solution. My delegation of course appreciates and respects the spirit in which this suggestion is made. The reservation which I must express on the question of possible discussions between my Government and the Government of Argentina is made necessary not by any intransigence or unwillingness on the part of
my Government to settle problems by peaceful means, but by the inescapable facts of the situation. My Government has in its care the security and interests of a community of people who cannot be negotiated or compromised out of existence. These people have rights, and they look to my Government for the protection of those rights. My Government cannot disregard its obligations to the people of this territory simply in order to be able to respond to well-intentioned appeals to it to negotiate. When therefore it is suggested that a solution to the problem lies in negotiations between the parties directly concerned, I hope the Sub-Committee will remember that the party most directly concerned of all is the people of the Islands themselves, and that the British Government's first and paramount obligation is to them. The question of their own future and of sovereignty over the Islands is not therefore a matter on which my Government can or will negotiate with Argentina, or on which, in justice to the islanders, there can be any compromise. This does not of course mean that in my Government's view there is no role at all for fruitful discussions on this subject between my Government and that of Argentina, perhaps with the participation of representatives of the Falkland Islanders themselves. At the conclusion of my delegation's statement on 8 September, I said that although the British Government could not agree to participate in discussions of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, either in this Sub-Committee or with the Argentine Government, nevertheless the British Government were always willing to discuss with the Government of Argentina ways in which that Government, the Falkland Islanders and the British Government could avoid allowing the dispute over the Falkland Islands to cause damage to good relations between us. I also said that this willingness on the part of my Government had been communicated to the Government of Argentina. Once again, I reaffirm that my Government, which has no doubts as to its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, stands by the principle of self-determination for these Islands, and I hope that the Sub-Committee will do nothing that could be construed as limiting or weakening that principle. As I have said, it is for the Falkland Islanders themselves to determine what their ultimate status should be, and my Government is ready to consider any proposals for changes in their constitutional status that the islanders themselves may advance. In this conflict between, on the one hand, an attempt to annex a peaceful and prosperous community against its wishes, and on the other hand, the principle of self-determination as enshrined in the Charter, there should in my delegation's view be no question about the proper choice for this Sub-Committee.