Madam President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Asian Group and would like to express appreciation of all members of the Asian Group to you for taking this initiative to organize this meeting on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples.

I wish to place on record my appreciation to the delegation of Pakistan as chair of our open ended working group on coordinating such statements for having done in this case too.

In the late 1940s when many countries in Asia were emerging from the dark shadow of colonial rule, the cardinal importance of independence from colonial rule was highlighted like never before. Indeed, birth of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) also echoed this sentiment.

Madam President,

The Charter provisions on Non-Self Governing Territories were given a new thrust when this august body adopted the landmark 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Many Asian countries were co-sponsors of the Declaration. The Declaration solemnly proclaimed the necessity of bringing to a speedy and unconditional end, colonialism in all its forms and manifestations. The right of peoples under alien subjugation, domination and exploitation, to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development was recognized as a result of these initiatives in which Asian countries were at the forefront.
The following year, the Special Committee on the Implementation of the Declaration on Decolonization was established to study, investigate and recommend action to bring an end to colonialism. India was elected the first Chairman of the Decolonization Committee. As members of the Committee of 24, as it came to be called, Asian countries have ceaselessly struggled for an end to colonialism.

Today, the majority of the membership of the UN comprises former colonies; this is clearly a measure of the success of the historic struggle against colonial rule. The fact that today, fewer than 2 Million people live under colonial rule in remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories when compared to 750 Million in 1945 is a testimony to the efforts to this august body and of the crucial role of the Declaration.

Madam President,

Asian countries have supported numerous resolutions in the UN fora on decolonization. For coming generations, colonialism may be a part of history: new challenges of tomorrow have to be faced. However, it was the struggle against colonialism, successfully waged in solidarity by the Asian countries, which has brought them to a stage where they can set the goals of economic and social development for their societies.

It should be our common endeavour to work with the people of the remaining non-self-governing territories to realise what they perceive to be in their best interest. They should be given an opportunity to determine this freely from a well-informed standpoint. The way ahead must be a judicious mix of urgency and activism on the one hand, and on the other, one of sensitivity and circumscription, that takes into account, first and foremost, the needs of the people of the Territories and their special circumstances.

Today, as we commemorate the Fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration, let us re-dedicate ourselves to the cherished ideals of freedom, democracy, human rights, dignity and peaceful co-existence, while also reaffirming our commitment to achieve the goal of decolonization to which, we are as member of the UN family, have subscribed.

Madam President

Please allow me also to say a few words in my national capacity coming as I am from the land of Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru two of the tallest leaders among tall leaders fought against colonialism and the right of the need of justice for all.

Given that we are a country which experienced colonialism, and earned independence through a non-violent struggle in the exercise of its right of self-determination, India has always supported the legitimate right of peoples to self-determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination as
adopted under the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

I thank you Madam President.

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