STATEMENT BY DR. CHARAN DAS MAHANT, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, ON GENERAL DEBATE OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE AT THE 65TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY [FOURTH COMMITTEE] ON OCTOBER 11, 2010

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee to the Sixty Fifth Session of the General Assembly and also the members of the Bureau on their election. I would also like to congratulate former Chairman, the Permanent Representative of Qatar, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for the way he conducted the work of this Committee during the 64th session.

As a founding member of the UN and the Special Committee of 24 on Decolonization, the deliberations on decolonization are of special significance for India. I assure you of my delegation’s full cooperation and support during this 65th session of the UN General Assembly.

My delegation broadly aligns itself with the statement of the Chair of the NAM delivered on October 4, 2010.

Mr. Chairman,

That we continue to grapple with the vestiges of colonialism, a bygone system that runs contrary to the fundamental principles of this Organization—even after 65 years reflects poorly on all of us. Colonialism is not only anachronistic, archaic and outmoded but also contravenes the fundamental tenets of democracy, freedom, human dignity and rights.
On 14 December 1960, the General Assembly adopted the resolution 1514 on “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to the Colonial Countries and its Peoples” thereby formulating an institutional framework aiming to “end colonialism in all its manifestations”. This year we would be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the resolution. Again in December this year, second international Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2000-2010) is coming to an end. While noting these landmark events, there is a need to assess the progress achieved and review the existing work methods to attain the remaining goals.

Mr. Chairman,

Decolonization is in fact one among more visible achievements of the United Nations since its formation in 1945. 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. However, there is still a long way to go. The journey is not complete until the last milestone is crossed.

Mr. Chairman,

As we commemorate 50th year of the resolution, we have to maximize our efforts and reaffirm commitment to advance the process of decolonization. We need to approach the task with sense of urgency and activism on the one hand, and sensitivity and circumspection on the other. Ascertaining the political aspirations of the people in each of these remaining 16 Territories and taking into account the stages of development of each Territory are critical inputs for making decisions towards decolonization. It is indeed happy to note that many of them already have threshold to form functional institutions that can thrive on their own. We welcome efforts of Special Committee on Decolonization (Committee of 24) to engage the administering Powers in a positive and constructive manner to end colonialism. The administering Powers are require work with the Committee in a spirit of cooperation and flexibility.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation is happy to note efforts made by Special Committee on Decolonization to disseminate information on legitimate political options available to the people in the Territories. The Pacific Regional Seminar conducted by the Special Committee of 24 on Decolonization at Noumea, New Caledonia in May this year is an attempt in the right direction. Such seminars help to mobilize world opinion to support and assist the peoples of the Territories in speedily ending colonialism.

Mr. Chairman,
India appreciates the efforts taken by the Special Committee on Decolonization in formulating the report (A/65/23) and its recommendations. India also welcomes the recommendation of launching of Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism in view of outstanding decolonization issues.

In India our milestone poverty eradication programmes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme devised by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singhji and UPA Chairperson Mrs. Sonia Gandhiji, aim at ensuring inclusive growth so that the benefits of development reach every section of our society and thus we are able to do away with even the residual vestiges of colonialism exacerbated societal divisions and disadvantage.

Mr. Chairman,

The State of Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and people of Jammu and Kashmir have regularly exercised their franchise in elections conducted in a free and fair manner.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to conclude with a quote of Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhiji which is more appropriate in the current context. He said:

“Just as a man would not cherish living in a body other than his own, so do nations not like to live under other nations, however noble and great the latter may be”

Mr. Chairman,

India-as always, is a strong believer in ideals of democracy, human rights, dignity and peaceful co-existence which are the corner stones of a civilized society. We commit ourselves to decolonization efforts to ensure that the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories attains them sooner than the later.

Thank you.