

Statement of the Indonesian Delegation in the exercise of its right of reply
to the Statement of the Franciscans International on Papua
(under item 9)

Geneva, 4 April, 2003

Madam Chairperson,

I am speaking in response to the baseless accusation made in the statement of Franciscans International on Papua, yesterday.

My delegation is, indeed, deeply regretful that a missionary organization such as Franciscans International with a long standing presence and well recognized role in Indonesia should engage in such a politically motivated statement.

We categorically reject the accusations of the organization to the effect that Indonesia practices racial and ethnic discrimination and treats Papuans as "primitive" people, as nothing but baseless accusations. The Government of Indonesia treats Papuan as it treats hundreds of other ethnic communities in Indonesia. They enjoy exactly the same rights as other Indonesians and exercise their right to vote or to elect their own representatives and local government just as other Indonesians do. The Papuans are also able to play their part in all aspects of national development and governance at the national level, as high-ranking military and civilian officials, mayors, governors, parliamentarians, cabinet ministers, and Ambassadors.

Papua, under international law, is an integral part of Indonesia. The Indonesian government is strongly committed to addressing the problems besetting the region, and at the same time, is also duty-bound to uphold the principle of national unity and safeguard the country's territorial integrity, to protect people (Indonesian nationals and foreigners) against terrorist tactics employed by an armed-separatist group (an obvious fact that the representative of the Franciscans International has turned a blind eye to in his so called "testimony" yesterday). Indeed, some dissatisfaction with human rights situations or differences in religious convictions or socio-economic disparities do not justify demands for self-determination which have in fact already been duly taken through the 1969 Act of Free Choice and sanctioned by the endorsement of UNGA resolution No 2504 (XXIV) on 19 November 1969. Thus, reviewing the 1969 AFC would not only fail to alleviate people's grievances, it would contravene the principles of the UN Charter and relevant UN resolutions, and would undoubtedly disrupt the vigorous development processes currently underway in the province.

By way of concluding, Madam Chairperson, let me briefly point out that the Government of Indonesia has recently taken a series of important measures to advance the primacy of dialogue, to show greater respect for human rights (including by pursuing legal cases referred to by Franciscan International) and to implement the special autonomy status for Papuas within the, unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia, based on Law No 21/2001 which ensures, among others, the fundamental rights of Papuan to govern themselves and to utilize a higher proportion of regional economic revenues towards their well-being and prosperity. These measures can only underline the government's full commitment to solving the problems of the region in a comprehensive manner.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.