



FALKLAND ISLANDS LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**STATEMENT TO THE REGIONAL SEMINAR UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION
ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES**

UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE OF 24

26 MAY 2026

by THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL GOSS

MEMBER OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Madam Chair, distinguished members of the Committee, honoured guests, representatives of the territories and nations gathered here.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this forum. My name is Michael Goss. I am a Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Falkland Islands, representing Camp — the rural constituency that covers the farmland and outlying settlements of the Islands.

I am a sixth-generation Falkland Islander. My ancestor originated from Stoke-on-Trent in England and landed at Port Louis in 1841. He, and likeminded men and women, helped to build the infrastructure of the fledgling capital of Stanley from almost nothing, like many other settlers. His sons and daughters became the first of my lineage born in the Islands. They became integral to construction, trade and, eventually, agriculture. To that end my family has farmed in the Falklands ever since.

Before I became a Member of the Assembly, I lived and worked on my family farm, in my younger years I trained as a mechanical engineer. During my years in agriculture I also spent fifteen years as a tour driver and guide — taking visitors out to see extraordinary wildlife that makes our islands one of the most remarkable places on Earth.

I am not a diplomat or career politician. I am here because I am a Falkland Islander, and decisions about our future should be informed by the voice of someone who actually lives it.

The delegations gathered here have spoken powerfully this week about the right of peoples to determine their own future. We ask only that the principle be applied consistently, that the standard upheld for other peoples is not denied to ours.

Different situations should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Different states and territories have chosen different paths as they have grown, some choosing independence, others choosing to modernise their relationships with administering powers. The Falkland Islands have chosen the latter, and we ask that this decision, freely made and internationally observed, be respected by the international community as part of our right of self-determination.

The Falkland Islands are a self-governing democracy. We write our own laws. We manage our own budget — funded entirely by our own economy, not by the UK taxpayer. Our immigration policy is ours to set; permanent residency can be granted by the Falkland Islands Government without any involvement from London. The United Kingdom supports us only in defence and international affairs — and those are required because Argentina continues to claim our home as its own.

Our economy is built on the responsible use of our natural resources. Farming — wool and meat. Fishing, managed to world-leading sustainability standards. Tourism, growing carefully to protect the environment that makes the Islands extraordinary. We built this economy ourselves.

We are diverse. In a community of around 3,600 people, there are 62 nationalities. People from around the world have chosen to make the Falkland Islands their home. They are welcome. They are Falkland Islanders too.

This committee is asked, year after year, to consider a resolution calling for negotiations between the United Kingdom and Argentina over the future of the Falkland Islands. I want to be direct about what that resolution means in practice.

It calls for two governments to decide the future of our community — without us. Argentina's own constitution establishes the recovery of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands as a permanent and non-renounceable objective. That means there is only one permissible outcome of any negotiation: the transfer of the Islands against the wishes of the people who live there.

That is not dialogue. That is a demand dressed as a diplomatic process.

And this committee — established to give colonial peoples a voice in their own future — is being asked to support a process that removes our voice entirely. I would ask every delegate here, particularly those from nations that have fought for the right of peoples to determine their own future: is that what decolonisation means?

We have already exercised our self-determination. In 2013, we held a referendum. 92% of Falkland Islanders turned out to vote. 99.8% voted to remain a self-governing British Overseas Territory.

That referendum was independently observed by an international mission led by the United States — with observers from Canada, Mexico, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, and New Zealand. Their conclusion was clear. I will quote it directly: *"the Falkland Islands referendum process was free and fair, reflecting the democratic will of the voters of the Falkland Islands."*

Last December, we held a general election for our Legislative Assembly — the election that gave me my seat. That election was observed by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, whose mission found it to be a calm, well-administered process. In my constituency, Camp, turnout was 90%.

Two democratic exercises. Both internationally observed. Both found free and fair. That is a democratic record which many older and larger nations would be proud of.

This committee exists to uphold the right of peoples to determine their own future. We have held a referendum. We are governed by democratically elected members. Our economy and laws are fully administered by our own government. We owe no taxes to the United Kingdom.

We renew our open invitation to this committee to send a visiting mission to the Falkland Islands. To every member state represented here today: come and see our unique culture and community for yourselves so that you can consider our situation on a case-by-case-basis. We have nothing to hide and everything to show.

The theme of this seminar is advancing progress, renewed commitments, and innovative approaches.

The Falkland Islands want to be a responsible partner in the South Atlantic. We have demonstrated that willingness in concrete terms.

In September 2024, a cooperation package was agreed between the United Kingdom and Argentina — covering fisheries data exchange, improved connectivity including the resumption of the São Paulo flight, and humanitarian cooperation including a visit by relatives of Argentine soldiers buried on the Islands.

The Falkland Islands delivered. In December 2024, we organised and facilitated that next-of-kin visit. Argentine families came to the Islands to visit the graves of their loved ones. We welcomed them.

Argentina has not delivered on any other element of the package. The São Paulo flight has not resumed. Fisheries data exchange has not taken place.

We remain willing. We are still here, extending the hand of cooperation. We ask only that commitments made are honoured.

To the members of this committee, and other delegates, I want to close with this.

I am not asking you to take sides in a dispute between two governments. I am asking you to recognise the existence of a third party: the people who actually live on the Falkland Islands.

We are real. My family have been in the Falklands since 1841 and made something remarkable in a remote corner of the world.

Self-determination is not a principle we invoke only in forums like this one. It is the daily reality of how we govern ourselves. It is the referendum we held. The elections we conduct. The laws we write. The land we farm.

All we ask is that you see us.

Thank you.