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GENERAL DEBATE

Letter dated 19 October 1973 from the Permanent Representative  
of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to  
the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the statement of His Excellency the Foreign Minister of the Argentine Republic at the 2139th plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 3 October 1973, 1/ in which he spoke of the differences outstanding between his Government and my Government over the Falkland Islands.

In his address the Foreign Minister of the Argentine Republic referred to the state of "stagnation" which he said the discussions between the two Governments had reached. If this is the case it has not come about at the seeking of the United Kingdom Government. As explained to Your Excellency in my letter of 21 August (A/9124), it was not the United Kingdom Government which refused to continue the most recent round of talks nor was it my Government which declined to honour an agreement previously reached between both Governments as to the basis for these talks.

My Government stands ready to renew discussions at an early date and continue to explore with the Government of the Argentine Republic in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX) all possible means of finding a solution to the problem defined in that resolution. My Government accordingly welcomes the statement by the Foreign Minister of the Argentine Republic that his Government intends to adhere to the path of negotiation.

Your Excellency will recall from earlier communications addressed to Your Excellency's predecessor by both my Government and by the Government of the Argentine Republic that progress in the discussions between the two Governments in recent years has been considerable. This progress is to be measured not only by what has taken place at the conference table but equally - bearing in mind the

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1/ A/PV.2139, p. 77.

provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the principles underlying General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and the inalienable right of the inhabitants of the Falkland Islands to self-determination - at the practical level of communications. In this respect, the Argentine contribution has been considerable and has done much to end the isolation from their continental neighbour of the inhabitants of the Falkland Islands.

In his address the Foreign Minister of the Argentine Republic referred to the history of the Falkland Islands in terms which I could not be expected to accept, and described them as part of Argentine national territory. I am instructed to state that my Government has no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and I wish formally to reserve the right of the United Kingdom Government on this question. At the same time I am instructed to say that whatever the views of the Argentine Government on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, my Government is reluctant to believe that the Government of the Argentine Republic would wish for any solution of the differences between our two Governments which was contrary to the expressed wishes of the inhabitants of the Falkland Islands.

Finally I would like to express the hope of my Government that future discussions will continue in the constructive spirit of the exchange of notes on 5 August 1971 and related arrangements between the two Governments providing for increased contacts and communications between the Falkland Islands and the Argentine Republic. My Government hopes that future discussions will contribute to the common aim of finding a solution to the problem as a whole, and reaffirm their intention to continue exploring with all concerned the means of doing so.

I should be grateful if this letter could be circulated as a General Assembly document.

(Signed) Donald MAITLAND

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