

Distinguished President, distinguished participants, good afternoon.

I am an independent researcher, and I would like to talk about the research undertaken with Professor Peter Clegg of the University of the West of England, Bristol, and the resulting article published by the *Small States and Territories* journal based out of the University of Malta.

The focus of our research was on the current status of the Free Territory of Trieste, and the events that have created this international political and legal anomaly. I believe a consideration of Trieste is relevant for this forum, specifically in relation to initiatives for the further implementation of Article 8 of the “Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities”.

The position of the Free Territory of Trieste is an interesting one. Trieste’s status and the questions surrounding it are particular and have become rather unclear over the last 70 years. In the late 1940s and early 1950s significant efforts were made to implement the specific status of Trieste under the auspices of the UN Security Council.

However, Cold War politics and the general intractability of achieving the full implementation of the Free Territory meant that alternative and temporary arrangements were made. Since then, these initiatives have solidified the de facto temporary administration of Trieste and lessened the original centrality of the de jure approach, in part as neither the Security Council nor the international community more generally have questioned the existing status quo.

But there are risks in not trying to find a more permanent solution. The research evaluated some possible alternatives, but none provides an easy way forward.

The first is the possibility of a referendum, being the most democratic expression of a peoples’ will. However, referenda are complex, and despite the high ideal they too often do not provide the level of true democracy and fairness for which we would hope. We explored different examples of referenda around the world, and few have brought about real change.

The second option we identified was a direct intervention by the UN, by nominating a temporary governor in substitution of the current temporary administration. This option would be the only one truly adhering to international law, and could be a first step towards the full application of UN Resolution 16 and the 1947 Peace Treaty.

The third option is maintaining the status quo; however, the de facto situation would mean not applying international law.

Although there are good reasons why Trieste’s status remained unresolved, it should not be dismissed or ignored. At the very least, there should be greater diplomatic and academic scrutiny of the present situation of the Free Territory of Trieste because there are undoubtedly issues of concern. The attainment of self-determination is universal and Trieste is no exception. Indeed, finding a resolution may open the way for future opportunities for other minorities as well.

So, thank you for your attention and your time, I am happy to continue the discussion later.