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Summary record of the 7th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 9 October 2023, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Joyini (South Africa)
later: Mr. Woszczek (Vice-Chair) (Poland)
later: Ms. Joyini (South Africa)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 54: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (continued) (A/78/23 and A/78/63)

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1. **Ms. King** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that, at the CELAC Summit held in January 2023, the Heads of State and Government of the Community had renewed their commitment to continue working to make the region of Latin America and the Caribbean a territory free of colonialism. Within the framework of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, CELAC called on the administering Powers to adopt the measures necessary to attain the rapid decolonization of each of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, while taking the individual situations of the Territories into account, including the fact that some of them were “special and particular” colonial situations involving sovereignty disputes. The administering Powers should also regularly communicate accurate information on each of the Territories under their administration. CELAC was grateful to the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples for its tireless work and for its report (A/78/23).

2. CELAC supported the work done by the Department of Global Communications and the United Nations information centres, with the assistance of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, to disseminate information about decolonization. It urged those bodies to redouble their efforts to that end.

3. At the 2023 CELAC Summit, the States members of the Community had reaffirmed their position with regard to the question of the Malvinas Islands and reiterated their strong support for the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. They had reaffirmed their abiding interest in the resumption of negotiations by the Governments of the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom in order to find, as soon as possible, a peaceful and definitive solution to the dispute, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX) and other relevant resolutions. They had also called on the Secretary-General of the United Nations to renew his efforts to fulfil the mission of good offices entrusted to him by the General Assembly with a view to the resumption of negotiations, and to report on the progress made. CELAC had further reiterated the importance of observing General Assembly resolution 31/49 calling on both parties to refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the islands were going through the process recommended by the General Assembly, and highlighted the continuous constructive attitude and willingness of the Argentine Government to reach, through negotiations, a peaceful and definitive solution to that anachronistic colonial situation.

4. On 8 December 2022, CELAC had adopted a statement condemning the intention of the United Kingdom to incorporate members of the Kosovo “Security Forces” into its infantry army in the Malvinas as an unjustified provocation and a violation of numerous resolutions of the General Assembly and other international forums, including General Assembly resolution 31/49.

5. With regard to the Special Committee’s 41 resolutions and decisions on Puerto Rico reaffirming the inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence, the Heads of State and Government of CELAC had highlighted the Latin American and Caribbean character of Puerto Rico at the 2023 Summit and had committed to continue working, within the framework of international law and particularly General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), to make the region of Latin America and the Caribbean a zone free of colonialism. CELAC member countries recalled the Havana Declaration of 2014 calling for progress on the question of Puerto Rico.

6. With regard to the small island Territories of the Caribbean and the Pacific, which constituted the majority of existing Non-Self-Governing Territories, continued efforts were needed to facilitate the sustained

and balanced growth of their fragile economies, particularly in the aftermath of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Those Territories should be allowed to exercise their right to self-determination. CELAC remained concerned at the situation in the Turks and Caicos Islands and underscored the need to guarantee a truly inclusive, democratic and representative governmental approach to allow the people of that Territory to participate meaningfully in determining their own future. Similarly, special attention should be paid to key issues affecting small islands, such as accelerating loss of territory due to natural disasters and rising sea levels resulting from climate change.

7. CELAC endorsed all the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council on the question of Western Sahara, including General Assembly resolution 77/133, and reiterated its strong support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Staffan de Mistura, to reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution leading to the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant resolutions. CELAC trusted that the multilateral efforts to promote more intensive and substantive negotiations between the parties would continue under the auspices of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, in accordance with international law, to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions with a view to achieving a definitive solution to the long-standing situation.

8. **Ms. Chan Valverde** (Costa Rica) said that efforts should be focused on actions that directly benefited the people living in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. With regard to the question of Western Sahara, Costa Rica advocated a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council as a framework for action. Her delegation appreciated the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to continue the political process in the Territory, and called on all parties to support those efforts with the aim of lowering the tensions and listening to the voices of the Sahrawi people regarding their right to self-determination.

9. The right to territorial integrity must be upheld in decolonization processes. In that regard, Costa Rica firmly supported the legitimate sovereign rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. In a context of increasing global militarization and geopolitical instability, the question

of the Malvinas Islands, like any other dispute between States, could be resolved only through negotiations and strict respect for international law. On the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 37/9, the good offices mission of the Secretary-General remained valid and urgent, and the working papers prepared by the Secretariat should include more information on those efforts.

10. Renewed dialogue between administering Powers and the Non-Self-Governing Territories should be aimed at transforming colonial ties in the shortest possible time. Almost 2 million people were still waiting to enjoy self-determination, freedom and their rights. That struggle was a duty of the entire membership of the United Nations.

11. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia) said that Member States must support the eradication of colonialism, since development could not be sustained in the absence of a recognition of the inalienable right to self-determination. Namibia continued to advocate a viable, enduring and realistic solution to the question of Western Sahara. Member States must respect the sovereign will of the Sahrawi people and their inalienable right to decide their own political future in accordance with international law. His delegation appreciated the ongoing strengthening of engagement between the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General and the parties to the conflict, and welcomed his recent visit to the region. The engagement between the President of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Brahim Ghali, and the Secretary-General in the past month was also encouraging. Nevertheless, despite receiving significant investment over the past 32 years, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) had been unable to implement its mandate in full. Namibia called for MINURSO to ensure a free and fair referendum and declare the results. In addition, a visiting mission should be deployed to Western Sahara with a view to gaining more accurate information on the situation on the ground.

12. The Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law must be applied consistently, as they were fundamental to bringing about meaningful and lasting change for the countries and peoples that remained under colonial occupation. That included the people of Palestine, who had for decades borne the brunt of the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, the expansion of settlements and conditions that were not conducive to peaceful coexistence. The recent escalation of violence was a painful reminder that the international community

had failed to use the tools at its disposal to find lasting solutions to long-standing global conflicts.

13. Namibia had won its independence thanks to multilateralism, international solidarity and diplomacy, as well as its own armed struggle. His delegation hoped that, as in its own case, the Committee and the international community would stand by the people in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and support their inalienable right to self-determination.

14. **Mr. Carmona** (Argentina) said that, in 1833, the United Kingdom had militarily occupied the Malvinas Islands, violating the territorial integrity of Argentina and expelling the authorities and Argentine population based there. In 1965, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 2065 (XX), in which it recognized the existence of a sovereignty dispute, characterized the question of the Malvinas Islands as a special and particular colonial situation, and called on the parties to find a peaceful negotiated solution. In 1982, the United Kingdom had unilaterally decided to halt the negotiations, which had taken place in the period following the adoption of the resolution. Since then, Argentina had patiently and persistently expressed its willingness to find a peaceful and negotiated solution consistent with international law. It was seeking justice before the international community in light of the flagrant and ongoing violation of international law by the United Kingdom in the question of the Malvinas.

15. The question of the Malvinas Islands differed substantially from the other colonial questions in that it consisted of a special and particular colonial situation involving a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom. It must be settled through bilateral negotiations between the only two parties, taking into account the interests of the inhabitants of the Islands. In 1966, following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX), the United Kingdom had agreed with Argentina to enter into negotiations, and the Secretary-General had been notified accordingly. In the course of those discussions on sovereignty, which had lasted for 16 years, various options had been considered, including transfer of the exercise of sovereignty to Argentina, joint administration or the leaseback of the Islands, without losing sight of the interests of the inhabitants of the Islands. To that end, special safeguards had been considered and practical measures had been implemented that improved the living conditions of the Islanders and strengthened the ties between the mainland and the Islands. To raise awareness of that lesser-known period of the sovereignty dispute, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina had prepared a publication detailing the

proposals and options that had been discussed, and would provide a copy to the Chair.

16. In 1982, the United Kingdom had unilaterally decided to halt the negotiations. Negotiations had not resumed in more than 40 years, during which time Argentina had established itself as a democracy and had amply demonstrated its commitment to recovering its exercise of sovereignty by peaceful means, while respecting the way of life of the inhabitants of the Islands, which was enshrined in its Constitution. On 2 March 2023, Argentina had proposed a new bilateral agenda on the South Atlantic to the United Kingdom, which would entail the establishment of a formal process of regular, transparent and good faith negotiations to address issues of mutual interest, including the resumption of sovereignty negotiations, the connectivity of the Islands with the Argentine mainland, practical measures to safeguard the interests and way of life of the inhabitants of the Islands, the conservation of natural resources and the demilitarization of the disputed areas. Argentina had also conveyed its willingness to continue with the humanitarian tasks of identifying former combatants, so as to fulfil the obligations arising under international humanitarian law and to provide answers and comfort to the families. Thus far, the Argentine Government had not received a favourable response to its proposal from the United Kingdom. It remained willing to work with the Secretary-General in his efforts to bring the parties together in the context of his mission of good offices.

17. The United Kingdom maintained that it would not enter into negotiations unless the inhabitants of the territory so wished. That reasoning had no basis in international law. In fact, none of the resolutions on the Malvinas Islands made any reference to the wishes of the population of the territory or the principle of self-determination. Moreover, in 1985, the General Assembly had rejected an attempt by the United Kingdom to incorporate references to the principle of self-determination into the resolution on that question. The principle of self-determination did not apply in the case of the Malvinas Islands because there was a territory colonized by the United Kingdom but not a people subject to colonial subjugation, domination or exploitation. Starting in 1833, the United Kingdom had occupied by force the territory, which had been under the control and jurisdiction of the Government of Argentina, expelled the authorities based there and taken steps to implant British subjects with the aim of establishing a demographic composition that would allow it to strengthen its colonial rule.

18. The Argentine position enjoyed broad support in the Latin American and Caribbean region and beyond,

as illustrated by the statements made by different groups calling for a resumption of negotiations, including the Group of 77 and China, the Organization of American States, the Ibero-American Summit, the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic, the South American and Arab Countries Summit and the Africa-South America Summit. The European Union had, for the first time, recognized the position of Latin America and the Caribbean in the question of the Malvinas Islands in a joint declaration adopted at the recent European Union-CELAC Summit, which also highlighted the importance of dialogue and respect for international law in the peaceful settlement of disputes.

19. Regrettably, in addition to ignoring calls by the international community for the resumption of negotiations, the United Kingdom continued to carry out illegal exploration and exploitation of renewable and non-renewable resources in the disputed area and to maintain a disproportionate military presence. The most recent example was the deployment in the Islands of the so-called Kosovo Security Force, which amounted to the introduction of foreign military forces in a territory involved in a sovereignty dispute.

20. His delegation urged the United Kingdom to cease its unilateral actions and to comply with General Assembly resolution 31/49. Until then, Argentina would continue to take all possible action under international law and the relevant resolutions to protect its legitimate sovereignty rights over the natural resources. Argentina remained willing to find a peaceful and negotiated solution to the colonial situation in the Malvinas Islands that was in line with the resolutions of the General Assembly.

21. **Mr. Habashneh** (Jordan) said that Jordan was committed to further developing its strong relationship with Morocco. It consistently supported the unity and territorial integrity of Morocco and stressed the need to find a solution to the question of the Moroccan Sahara that was consistent with international law. Accordingly, it welcomed the efforts made by the Secretary-General and by his Personal Envoy, including the latter's recent visits to the region with a view to relaunching the political process and reaching a realistic and lasting solution. Jordan welcomed the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which was consistent with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

22. **Ms. Alghali** (Sierra Leone) said that the situations in the Non-Self-Governing Territories should be handled on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the relevant resolutions. The Committee should collaborate more closely with the administering Powers,

encouraging them to provide the resources and support needed to build resilience and thus promote the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. As established in the Charter of the United Nations, the administering Powers must transmit information regularly concerning the Territories. They should also submit road maps to the United Nations charting the way to self-determination. Sierra Leone welcomed the role of specialized agencies and other regional organizations in accelerating socioeconomic progress in the Territories on a case-by-case basis. It was imperative to assess the well-being of the inhabitants, especially given the threats posed by climate emergencies and geopolitical tensions.

23. Sierra Leone reiterated its unwavering support for the ongoing political process in Western Sahara under the auspices of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, which aimed to reach a mutually acceptable and lasting solution to the regional dispute. The round-table process should resume in the same format and with the same participants, in accordance with Security Council resolutions. Sierra Leone supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which offered a realistic compromise for a lasting solution, and commended Morocco on its efforts address the health and development needs of the inhabitants of Western Sahara through a new development model, which had boosted the region's human development index.

24. **Mr. Montalvo Sosa** (Ecuador) said that it was essential to promote dialogue and cooperation between the administering Powers and the Territories under their control with a view to implementing multilateral agreements and commitments in accordance with the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, which his delegation hoped would be the last of its kind.

25. The only way to resolve the question of the Malvinas Islands was for the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume bilateral negotiations, in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly and Special Committee resolutions. That position was supported by most of the international community.

26. The question of Western Sahara needed a mutually acceptable political solution in the context of arrangements consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. Ecuador hoped that such a solution would be realized in the near future.

27. **Mr. Ugarelli** (Peru) said that greater efforts were needed to overcome the inertia in the Special

Committee's agenda in recent decades, and strong political will and a case-by-case approach were fundamental to achieving that goal.

28. The question of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas was a *sui generis* case that merited a comprehensive assessment. As established by various General Assembly resolutions, it was a sovereignty dispute between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom, and should therefore be resolved through direct negotiations between the parties in accordance with the peaceful settlement of disputes.

29. Peru had consistently supported the legitimate sovereignty rights of the Argentine Republic over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. That position was based on historical, geographical and legal considerations; Argentina had exercised sovereignty rights over and possession of the Malvinas Islands until 1833, when the legitimate authorities had been expelled, prevented from returning and replaced by nationals of the occupying Power. Territorial integrity, not self-determination, was therefore applicable. The Secretary-General should continue his good offices mission with a view to helping the parties to the dispute to resume negotiations.

30. Confidence-building measures would help to create the necessary conditions for the resumption of dialogue, consultations and direct negotiations. Moreover, both parties must refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation, including the exploration and exploitation of renewable and non-renewable natural resources.

31. Concerning the question of Western Sahara, six decades after it had been added to the agenda of the Special Committee, there was no sign that the parties would show flexibility to find a mutually acceptable solution. The question must be addressed peacefully through diplomatic means with a view to finding a just and sustainable solution consistent with the resolutions of the United Nations, including those of the Security Council.

32. His delegation strongly supported the efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to foster dialogue among the concerned parties and create the conditions for a genuine ceasefire. The resumed political process should be aimed at finding a just, viable, durable and mutually acceptable solution, beginning with the maintenance of the ceasefire agreed

in 1991, and avoiding any action that could exacerbate tension.

33. Alongside efforts to relaunch the political dialogue, funding should be secured for the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP), in coordination with MINURSO, in providing humanitarian assistance to the refugee camps. Any interruption in those activities could result in serious food insecurity and malnutrition.

34. **Mr. Diome** (Senegal) said that there had been positive developments in the regional dispute concerning the Moroccan Sahara. The Government of Morocco had improved the human rights situation, strengthened democracy and promoted social and economic development throughout the Moroccan Sahara. Morocco had ensured that all the people of the Moroccan Sahara were able to exercise their rights, as exemplified by the participation of their representatives, elected in the Moroccan elections of 8 September 2021, in the round-table discussions held in Geneva on 5 and 6 December 2018 and on 21 and 22 March 2019, in the meetings of the Special Committee and in its regional seminars.

35. The Moroccan autonomy initiative was the best option for achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution. It was in line with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, and was supported by over 100 States. In recognition of its robustness, 30 countries, including his own, had opened a consulate in Laayoune or Dakhla.

36. His delegation welcomed the Personal Envoy's efforts to relaunch the political process under the exclusive auspices of the United Nations, including his visits to Rabat, the Tindouf camps, Algiers and Nouakchott in 2022, the informal consultations with the stakeholders in New York in March 2023, and more recently his visits to Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania in September 2023.

37. In order to consolidate that progress, all the parties needed to build on the momentum of the two Geneva round-table discussions and the visits to complete the United Nations-led process, showing realism and a spirit of compromise. In the interests of regional stability, it was essential to uphold the 1991 ceasefire. His delegation commended Morocco for doing so and for cooperating with MINURSO.

38. **Ms. Aljalhma** (Bahrain) said that, in relation to developments in the Gaza Strip between Palestinian

factions and Israeli forces, the protection of civilians should be the utmost priority. An immediate stop should be put to the escalation, and civilians should be afforded full protection in accordance with international humanitarian law. They must not be victims or targets in the current conflict. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict should be resolved on the basis of the two-State solution, in accordance with international law, the Arab Peace Initiative and the authoritative international resolutions.

39. Bahrain supported the efforts made by Morocco to find a political solution to the question of the Moroccan Sahara on the basis of the Moroccan autonomy initiative and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in a manner consistent with the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Morocco. Accordingly, it supported the efforts made by the Secretary-General to reach a realistic, practicable and lasting political solution.

40. The Islamic Republic of Iran should bring an end to its occupation of the three Emirati islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. It should respond in earnest to the endeavours of the United Arab Emirates to restore the exercise of its sovereignty over its territory either through negotiations or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

41. **Mr. Ruidíaz Pérez** (Chile) said that the Government and people of Chile had consistently supported the legitimate sovereignty rights of the Argentine Republic over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The Governments of the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom must resume negotiations in order to find, as soon as possible, a peaceful and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and other multilateral forums, including General Assembly resolution 31/49, which called upon the parties to refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the islands were going through the process recommended by the General Assembly. His delegation continued to support the good offices mission of the Secretary-General and urged the secretariat of the Special Committee to report to the Special Committee on the progress made.

42. **Mr. Pinto Berrío** (Panama) said that Panama supported the legitimate sovereignty claims of the Argentine Republic to sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. In line with General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX), the parties

should resume their dialogue with a view to finding a peaceful solution. Similarly, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 31/49, the parties should expedite their negotiations and refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the islands were going through the process recommended by the General Assembly. Only through dialogue would it be possible to put an end to the special and particular colonial situation in the question of the Malvinas Islands. A peaceful and definitive solution to the question of the Malvinas Islands should be found by way of understanding between the two countries, for their mutual benefit and for that of the international community.

43. **Mr. Ghelich** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that it was essential to eliminate colonialism in all forms and manifestations, including such modern neocolonial practices as economic exploitation, unilateral coercive measures and limitations on access to new technologies. Such policies could not be reconciled with the Charter of the United Nations or the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The decolonization process must therefore remain one of the major priorities on the agenda of the United Nations.

44. Administering Powers should take all necessary measures to prevent any economic activity or military operations that could adversely affect the environment, health and economic development of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. All people who had suffered as a result of colonial rule or occupation should be compensated fairly for any human or material losses incurred. The political, economic, social and educational advancement of Non-Self-Governing Territories was a prerequisite for any decision to change their status.

45. The Islamic Republic of Iran expressed its sympathy with those peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories and occupied territories whose lives had been systematically ruined by imperialist, colonial, supremacist and neocolonial practices, such as the plundering of natural resources by foreign powers with a colonialist mentality. The legitimate aspirations of those people must be fulfilled in a timely and peaceful manner in order to boost their development potential and enable them to chart their own course.

46. With regard to the question of Western Sahara, his delegation welcomed any endeavour to decrease hostilities between the parties. It supported the ongoing process of negotiations towards a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the people of Western Sahara to exercise self-determination in accordance with General

Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and the Charter. The international community must ensure that all relevant resolutions were implemented and continue providing humanitarian assistance to the Sahrawi people. The Islamic Republic of Iran fully supported the aspiration of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, Palestine and Puerto Rico to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination.

47. **Mr. de Rivière** (France) said that, under the terms of the Nouméa Accord, the progress made in the emancipation process of New Caledonia should be brought to the attention of the United Nations. For that purpose, France had put in place an unprecedented form of cooperation with the United Nations. It was working with the Special Committee, including through a ministerial dialogue over the previous two years. France had organized a visit of the Special Committee to New Caledonia in 2018, and had invited it to repeat that visit.

48. The United Nations had monitored the three recent referendums and commended the smooth electoral process and lack of irregularities. The outcome of the referendums was that New Caledonia would remain within the French Republic. That outcome did not, however, mark the end of the process. Political dialogue had resumed, and discussions concerning the political and institutional organization of New Caledonia were under way. In an unprecedented step, an audit of the decolonization process had been conducted, in cooperation with the former Chair of the Special Committee, Keisha McGuire, with a view to reviewing the situation of New Caledonia in the light of the framework of reference of the United Nations.

49. Senior Government figures had engaged with the process. The Minister of the Interior of France had visited New Caledonia four times in order to consult with all political forces. All New Caledonian stakeholders, both pro- and anti-independence, had been invited to Paris three times for consultations including, most recently, from 4 to 8 September 2023. The President of France, Emmanuel Macron, had visited New Caledonia from 24 to 26 July.

50. In the Nouméa Accords, it was stated that the time for colonization had been in the past; the present was the time for sharing and realignment; and the future should be the time for expressing an identity in a common destiny. The President of France had recalled those basic premises and outlined several options, which were currently being discussed with the stakeholders. A shared path towards forgiveness should be developed through collective action in relation to remembrance. A pathway for the future should also be formulated. At the institutional level, that pathway should preserve the

gains of the Nouméa process, namely self-determination, local institutions, citizenship and devolution of power. It should also provide for change, particularly with regard to the unfreezing of the electoral roll. At the economic and social levels, action should be taken to develop agriculture; reform the nickel mining sector, which depended on State investment; and combat social and gender inequality.

51. While remaining part of the French Republic, New Caledonia should also be fully integrated in the Pacific region. The President of the Government of New Caledonia, Louis Mapou, had accompanied President Macron in his visits to Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. The incoming Permanent Secretary for the South Pacific would be based in Nouméa in order to ensure that the French State could better support the Government of New Caledonia.

52. **Ms. Al-Ali** (United Arab Emirates) said that her delegation was saddened at the loss of Israeli and Palestinian lives in the recent outbreak of violence. It called on both parties to put a stop to the escalation, avoid exacerbating violence and extend full protection to civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law.

53. Important efforts had been made to find a peaceful solution to the question of the Moroccan Sahara. Her delegation supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which the Security Council had described as serious and credible, and which was consistent with the Charter and United Nations resolutions. It also supported the work of the Personal Envoy and, in particular, his visits to Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania in September 2023. It hoped that the round-table meetings would resume with a view to finding a solution based on consensus.

54. Her delegation endorsed the intensive efforts of Morocco to improve the living conditions of the population of Moroccan Sahara, in particular through the new development model launched in 2015. It consistently supported the efforts made by Morocco to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity and defend its legitimate rights.

55. Iran should put an end to its occupation of the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. The sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over those islands was imprescriptible. Her Government would continue to press for a solution, either through direct negotiations or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

56. *Mr. Woszczek (Poland), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

57. **Mr. Ganou** (Burkina Faso) said that all stakeholders should work together within the framework

of the United Nations and international law to find peaceful, pragmatic and just solutions to the situations of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, in particular Western Sahara. Reaching a definitive political solution to that long-standing dispute and achieving enhanced cooperation among the States members of the Arab Maghreb Union would contribute to stability and security in the Sahel region. His delegation supported the ongoing political process conducted under the auspices of the Secretary-General aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable solution and welcomed the efforts of his Personal Envoy to promote dialogue, including through a visit to Western Sahara in September 2023. His delegation also welcomed the request of the Security Council that the main actors remain engaged in order to ensure a peaceful outcome.

58. The Moroccan autonomy initiative, which was consistent with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions and had the support of the main parties to the dispute, was the only solution to the dispute. His delegation welcomed the agreement of 16 September 2022 between Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) to relaunch the peace plan for Western Sahara, which had led to an exchange of prisoners, the release of political detainees and the return of refugees. Burkina Faso had opened a consulate in Dakhla in October 2020 to strengthen cooperation with Morocco, and welcomed the establishment of some 30 other consulates in Western Sahara, which would promote economic and social opportunities, development and stability. His delegation also welcomed the investments made by Morocco to improve the living conditions of the people of the Sahara.

59. **Mr. Edjo Memba** (Equatorial Guinea) said that the Committee played an important role in promoting the political, economic and social advancement of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation called upon the administering Powers to cooperate fully with the Committee and comply with the relevant resolutions and upon the international community to redouble its efforts to support peoples still living under colonial rule, with due respect for their aspirations, diverse cultures and history.

60. On the question of Western Sahara, his delegation welcomed the progress made to date and the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General to relaunch the political process, including by visiting Western Sahara in September 2023. His delegation appreciated the willingness and commitment of Morocco to work constructively with the Personal Envoy and with the international community to find a peaceful and lasting

political solution to the dispute. The Committee should support the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a realistic and pragmatic solution based on consensus and compromise. The development model for the southern provinces, which included infrastructure projects and community development, had promoted growth and development in Western Sahara and demonstrated the commitment of Morocco to improving the quality of life of the local population and encouraging their political participation. Equatorial Guinea had opened consulates in Dakhla and Laayoune to further promote economic and social opportunities.

61. His delegation called upon all parties concerned to work together and with the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to resume negotiations in good faith and in a spirit of compromise, with a view to reaching a realistic, pragmatic and lasting political solution. In that connection, he wished to highlight the commitment of Morocco to respecting the ceasefire and to cooperating fully with MINURSO.

62. **Mr. Henry** (Saint Lucia) said that his delegation attached great importance to the principle of self-determination and was particularly concerned that the promise of decolonization for the Non-Self-Governing small island Territories in the Caribbean and Pacific remained unfulfilled. His delegation endorsed the statement on the British Virgin Islands issued in July 2023 by the Caribbean Community Heads of State and Government and encouraged all concerned to agree to a clear and responsible path for the people of the British Virgin Islands to achieve the full measure of self-government in line with the political status options available under international law. The United Kingdom should revoke the Order in Council, currently held in reserve, which could remove democratic governance in the British Virgin Islands.

63. Genuine decolonization could be achieved only through implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The activities of the Special Committee, including the regional seminars, had been instrumental in advancing the decolonization process. The Special Committee should be provided with adequate resources to enable it to fulfil its mandate. Case-by-case work programmes and independent self-governance assessments were important inputs for the decolonization process. His delegation supported the mandates of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to provide assistance to the Territories, many of which were grappling with the adverse effects of climate change, and welcomed their inclusion in the programmes of work of certain specialized agencies and regional commissions.

64. Saint Lucia reiterated its consistent position with regard to the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. As noted by Special Committee, the way to put an end to the special and particular colonial situation in the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) was the peaceful and negotiated settlement of the sovereignty dispute between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom. His delegation therefore reiterated its support for dialogue between the parties with the aim of resuming negotiations to achieve a just and lasting solution pursuant to General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX).

65. On the question of Western Sahara, his delegation supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to facilitate the political process and welcomed the informal bilateral consultations held in March 2023 and the Envoy's visit to Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania in September 2023. It supported the resumption of the round-table process, urged all parties to remain engaged, and hoped that a just and mutually acceptable solution could be reached through dialogue. It also supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative, a compromise solution that had been described as serious and credible by the Security Council and was consistent with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions.

66. **Mr. Manzeri Ngondo** (Congo) said that the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was an important opportunity to take stock of what had been achieved and assess what remained to be done in the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories still under colonial rule. The mandate of the Special Committee was to end colonialism in all its forms, despite the challenges of doing so.

67. In his report on the Third International Decade (A/75/220/Rev.1), the Secretary-General had noted that upholding the collective duty to enable the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination, according to their particular circumstances, required strengthening action-oriented dialogue and identifying concrete and implementable steps to generate further momentum in the implementation of the decolonization mandate. The economies and health-care and education systems of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were very fragile. Accordingly, in his report, the Secretary-General had highlighted the need for cooperation with United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations. The Congo advocated cooperation and dialogue, and its foreign policy was based on a commitment to the

peaceful settlement of disputes and the primacy of international law.

68. *Ms. Joyini (South Africa) resumed the Chair.*

69. **Mr. Baghdadi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his country deplored colonialism both in its old form, which consisted of a direct, illegitimate military presence, and in its newer forms, which used insidious tactics to appropriate the resources of colonized peoples. Certain Western States portrayed themselves as defenders of human rights; but they focused on certain individual rights, while ignoring such fundamental collective rights as independence and self-determination. The international community remained unable to eradicate colonialism or to address its effects, including human rights violations, the plundering of wealth and natural resources, and the use of Territories as places to conduct scientific and medical experiments, bury nuclear and toxic waste, or install military facilities. Non-Self-Governing Territories did not need to be handed gifts or favours by administering Powers; they needed genuine case-by-case work programmes leading to self-determination. His delegation hoped that the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would be the last, and that the Committee would have no need to continue discussing the issue.

70. **Ms. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana) said that food insecurity, border conflicts, debt and climate change were having a devastating impact on the already fragile economies of Non-Self-Governing Territories. Her delegation urged the administering Powers to cooperate fully with the United Nations and regularly communicate accurate information on each of the Territories under their administration, with a view to expediting the eradication of colonialism for all peoples. The administering Powers should promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the Territories and protect their human and natural resources against abuse. Given the vulnerability of the Territories to extreme weather events and environmental degradation and the limited development opportunities available to them, the United Nations system should assist them in developing emergency response and recovery programmes and in responding to the sustainable development challenges they faced.

71. Her delegation reaffirmed its support for the resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly on the question of Western Sahara. The achievement of a solution to the long-standing dispute would contribute to stability and security in the Sahel region.

72. The situation in the occupied territories of Palestine, including the deterioration of human rights and the increasing displacement of individuals, was of grave concern. Her delegation was deeply concerned about the recent escalation of violence and called for the immediate cessation of hostilities. It supported the efforts of the international community to address the plight of the people of Palestine in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

73. **Mr. Birdi** (India) said that India had always been at the forefront of the struggle against colonialism. With the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism under way, the international community must step up its efforts to conclude the decolonization process. A pragmatic approach to decolonization would allow the legitimate wishes of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to be fulfilled. Cooperation with international agencies and actors should be enhanced with a view to channelling resources for building the capacities of the Territories. Since a particular delegation continued to deliberately misinterpret the principle of self-determination, his delegation wished to highlight that the United Nations had established that principle as a vehicle for promoting the decolonization of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, not as a justification for undermining the territorial integrity of any Member State.

74. It was unfortunate that Pakistan was misusing the Committee to spread malicious propaganda about India. The Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and of Ladakh were an integral and inalienable part of India. Pakistan had no standing to pronounce on, or interfere in, the internal affairs of India, including the Indian territories under the illegal and forcible occupation of Pakistan. The delimitation exercise in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir was a democratic one, based on extensive stakeholder consultation and participation. Pakistan must put an end to cross-border terrorism and dismantle its terror infrastructure, stop human rights violations in Pakistan-occupied Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, refrain from causing any further material changes to the status of those territories, and vacate the Indian territories that it had illegally occupied. Pakistan had a history of harbouring, training, financing and arming terrorists. A country that genuinely sought peace with its neighbours would never sponsor cross-border terrorism or protect those who had planned the horrific Mumbai terrorist attacks. Given its dismal record on the treatment of minorities, Pakistan should put its own house in order before lecturing others. Religious and ethnic minorities living in Pakistan faced systematic persecution, violence, the

vandalism of their places of worship and, in the case of young girls, abduction, forced conversion and marriage.

75. **Ms. Zalabata Torres** (Colombia) said that her delegation hoped that the protracted sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas would be resolved in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Colombia supported the rights of Argentina in that sovereignty dispute. Her delegation called for the resumption of negotiations and the strengthening of dialogue and cooperation with a view to finding a peaceful and definitive solution as soon as possible and putting an end to that special and particular colonial situation. Her delegation supported the good offices of the Secretary-General aimed at helping the parties to comply with the relevant resolutions. The first resolution referring specifically to the question of the Malvinas Islands, General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX), had been adopted in 1965, but the dispute had yet to be resolved. In accordance with resolution 31/49, the two parties should refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the islands were going through the process recommended by the Assembly.

76. **Mr. Blanco Conde** (Dominican Republic) said that the Dominican Republic supported the efforts of Morocco to achieve a credible and mutually acceptable political solution to the question of Western Sahara, acknowledged the efforts of the Secretary-General to reach a realistic and lasting solution, and called upon the parties concerned to cooperate with the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the Personal Envoy to facilitate the relaunching of the political process, including by visiting Rabat, the Tindouf camps in Algeria, Algiers and Nouakchott in 2022, and by holding bilateral consultations with representatives from Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and Frente POLISARIO in March 2023 in New York to discuss lessons learned from the political process, examine the positions of the parties and seek mutually acceptable formulas to advance the political process. The international community should support those efforts and work together to achieve a peaceful and lasting solution that respected the rights and aspirations of the parties involved.

77. The Dominican Republic supported the just claim of Argentina to the exercise of its sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The Dominican Republic reiterated its solidarity with the people and Government of Argentina and recognized

that a peaceful and negotiated solution to the dispute was the right course of action, as established in numerous General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolution 31/49. In the light of the just claim and willingness of Argentina to resolve the dispute, the only way to end the current situation was through a negotiated agreement between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom. His delegation fully supported the mission of good offices of the Secretary-General and called for all resources from the repeated General Assembly resolutions to be drawn upon so that negotiations could be resumed and a peaceful and definitive settlement reached.

78. **Ms. Dhanuirtto** (Indonesia) said that in order to address the unique and multifaceted challenges faced by each of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, including climate resilience, sea-level rise and economic growth, the constructive and practical engagement of the administering Powers, United Nations agencies, Member States and the Territories themselves was essential. At the Special Committee regional seminar held in Bali, Indonesia, in May 2023, participants had underscored the urgency of ensuring the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Territories, in particular the Goals focused on economic advancement, and of fostering economic frameworks that directly benefited the peoples of the Territories.

79. Given the uniqueness, inherent sociocultural dynamics and history of each Non-Self-Governing Territory, a case-by-case approach to decolonization was required. In addition to understanding each Territory, it was crucial to give a voice to all parties concerned, in order to arrive at meaningful and sustainable solutions. Deliberations should be balanced, careful and thorough. Continuous dialogue and regular consultations among pivotal stakeholders could help to ensure progress, bridge gaps and reach amicable settlements. The entire decolonization process should be aligned with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions, to ensure transparency and accountability.

80. **Mr. Pereira Sosa** (Paraguay) said that General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV) were the most suitable and transparent instruments for progressing towards the full exercise of sovereignty by all peoples. The work of the Special Committee, including its reports and recommendations, was crucial in advancing the decolonization process. Paraguay hoped that the Special Committee would be able to define measures to implement the Declaration, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

81. Paraguay reaffirmed its support for the legitimate sovereignty rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. Its support for the sovereignty rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, one of the last vestiges of colonialism in Latin America, was in line with its condemnation of all forms of colonialism. Paraguay called for negotiations to resume between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom, with a view to reaching a just, peaceful, definitive and mutually acceptable solution to the question of the Malvinas Islands, in accordance with the relevant resolutions.

82. His delegation underscored its support for the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions related to the situation in Western Sahara, and for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to facilitate negotiations, with a view to assisting the parties in finding a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the conflict.

83. **Mr. Kris** (United States of America) said that the United States proudly supported the right to self-determination and would continue to fully uphold Article 73 of the Charter of the United Nations. His delegation recognized the challenges faced by American Samoa, Guam and the United States Virgin Islands owing to their size, isolated locations and limited natural resources, as well as the impact on indigenous peoples of years of slavery, colonialism and wars, followed by tensions and social adjustment, including during the period of United States administration and the development of internal self-government. However, much progress had been made. There was a strong relationship between the Territories and the rest of the United States, as had been demonstrated by their inclusion in the same federal COVID-19 pandemic relief and recovery provided to all 50 States and in the roll-out and implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. The current Administration, as part of its policies aimed at recognizing and remediating racial and ethnic injustice, had acknowledged past and present federal actions and institutionalized practices that, in some cases and circumstances, had not been consistent with the protection of equal rights and opportunities for Americans in the Territories' diverse communities.

84. The United States recognized its obligations under Article 73 of the Charter to promote aspects of self-determination for the peoples of American Samoa, Guam and the United States Virgin Islands. Although they had the status of Non-Self-Governing Territories, they were locally self-governing, with residents free to decide on their priorities and how resources were spent.

The Territories also enjoyed federal political representation. Their elected representatives to the House of Representatives served on several important committees, where they participated in debates on national legislation. Territorial governors were regularly invited to Senate and House committees of jurisdiction to report on territorial status and to advocate for federal policy changes and initiatives. Each year, the Interagency Group on Insular Areas hosted governors and United States representatives from each territory at a senior plenary session, where they had an audience with representatives of the Administration and could register priorities and concerns related to the execution of federal policies and initiatives.

85. A number of delegations had expressed their support for the Puerto Rican people. Puerto Rico was an integral part of the United States, and Puerto Ricans were United States citizens. There was robust debate within Puerto Rico about the island's relationship with the United States. Recent referendums had indicated overwhelming popular support for either maintaining the existing level of integration with the United States or deepening it further. The Administration valued the opinions of Puerto Ricans regarding their relationship with Washington, D.C.; the same could not be said for many of the Member States that purported to speak for the people of Puerto Rico, yet silenced their own citizens.

86. **Mr. Alamri** (Saudi Arabia) said that the question of Palestine continued to be the core issue for Arabs and Muslims and was among the foremost priorities of the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia. His country had spared no effort in supporting the Palestinian people's endeavour to recover their territory, exercise their legitimate rights and establish an independent, sovereign State of Palestine on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the authoritative international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and other agreed terms of reference.

87. His Government was closely following the unprecedented situation which was unfolding between a number of Palestinian factions and the Israeli occupation forces, and which had exacerbated the cycle of violence on several fronts. It called for restraint, the protection of civilians and an immediate stop to the escalation between the two sides. It had long warned of the danger that the situation could be inflamed if the occupation persisted, the basic rights of the Palestinian people continued to be denied, and acts of deliberate provocation were perpetrated at their holy sites. The international community must fulfil its responsibility and activate a credible peace process leading to a two-

State solution that would protect civilians and achieve peace and security in the region.

88. Saudi Arabia supported the efforts of Morocco to find a realistic political solution to the question of Moroccan Sahara based on compromise, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and under the auspices of the Secretary-General. It endorsed the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a solution that preserved the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Morocco and was consistent with international law and the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. It rejected any action that would undermine the interests, sovereignty or territorial integrity of Morocco.

89. Saudi Arabia denounced the continued occupation of the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Those islands, along with their territorial waters, airspace, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone, were an integral part of the territory of the United Arab Emirates. Any actions taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran on the islands were null and void and had no effect on the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates. His delegation urged the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to the call of the United Arab Emirates for a solution to be found, either through direct negotiations or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

90. **Mr. Ghelich** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the representatives of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia had made baseless claims concerning three Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf. Those claims undermined his country's sovereignty and departed from the subject of the meeting, namely decolonization. His delegation consistently and categorically rejected the existence of any dispute between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates over the Iranian islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which were an inseparable and integral part of Iranian territory. Any claims to the contrary were unfounded and a significant violation of the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran had always pursued a policy of friendship and good neighbourliness towards all of its neighbouring countries, and it prioritized strengthening bilateral relations with the United Arab Emirates. However, the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its sovereignty over the three islands were non-negotiable. Any decision or measures taken by Iranian officials with regard to the islands had always been based on the principle that the islands were under

the territorial sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

91. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan), replying to the comments made by the representative of India, said that the Declaration, the Charter of the United Nations, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights all stated that peoples under alien subjugation had the right to self-determination. Year after year, India presented a position that was factually incorrect. Jammu and Kashmir was not an integral part of India; rather, it was internationally recognized as a disputed territory, as defined by multiple Security Council resolutions and on all official United Nations maps. Security Council resolution 47 (1948) clearly stated that the question of the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan should be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite. India had accepted that decision and was bound to comply with it in accordance with the Charter. Since August 2019, India had sought to transform the occupied territory from a Muslim majority State into a Hindu majority territory, in violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and international law.

92. The remarks made by the representative of India were intended to camouflage its own State-sponsored terrorism and the treatment of its minorities. In a recent report, Amnesty International had found that India had exploited Financial Action Task Force assessment reports to supplement its arsenal of counter-terrorism and money-laundering laws, which were routinely used to target civil society organizations and human rights defenders, including in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. In the report, Amnesty International had called upon the Task Force and its member States to ensure that such laws were not used to clamp down on dissent in India, a country that had systematically eroded freedom of association and expression.

93. Over 200 million Muslims, Christians and other minorities faced discrimination in India. The rise in Islamophobia in India was a consequence of the pursuit of the Hindutva agenda by the Bharatiya Janata Party-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Government and its support for anti-Muslim rhetoric. The United Nations and the international community should take note of the rapidly deteriorating situation in India and hold it accountable for its failure to ensure the security and well-being of its Muslim citizens. The Organization should demand that India end its State terrorism and abide by its obligations under international law, including implementation of the Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir.

94. **Ms. Meyrick** (United Kingdom), replying to the comments made by the representatives of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on behalf of CELAC and by those of Argentina, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Panama, Saint Lucia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Paraguay, said that it was unfortunate that Argentina continued to drag others into its illegitimate sovereignty claim. The United Kingdom was clear about the historical and legal position on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands. British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands dated back to 1765, some years before the Argentine Republic had even existed. No civilian population had been expelled from the Falkland Islands on 3 January 1833. An Argentine military garrison had been sent to the Falkland Islands three months prior in an attempt to impose Argentine sovereignty over British sovereign territory. The United Kingdom had immediately protested and had expelled the Argentine military garrison on 3 January 1833. The civilian population, who had previously sought and received British permission to reside on the Islands, had been encouraged to remain. The majority had done so voluntarily. In 1833, the territorial borders of the Argentine Republic had not included the geographical southern half of its present form, or any territory in the Falkland Islands, Antarctica or South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

95. The United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty and was steadfast in its support for the right of self-determination of the Falkland Islanders. That right was enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in article 1 of the two international covenants on human rights. The Falkland Islanders had as much right to determine their political status and to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development as any other people.

96. The year 2023 marked the tenth anniversary of the Falkland Islanders' referendum on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands. In that referendum, 99.8 per cent of voters had chosen to maintain the current status of the Islands as a self-governing territory of the United Kingdom. The referendum had been supervised by independent observers from Canada, the United States of America, New Zealand, Uruguay, Chile and Brazil. The Islanders had therefore made clear their overwhelming wish to remain an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom, meaning that there could be no dialogue on sovereignty unless the Falkland Islanders so wished.

97. The United Kingdom unequivocally supported the right of the Falkland Islanders to develop their natural resources for their own economic benefit. That was an integral part of right to self-determination, and was

expressly stated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Hydrocarbon exploration in the Falkland Islands was a legitimate commercial venture regulated by the legislation of the Falkland Islands Government in strict accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Argentine domestic law did not apply to the Falkland Islands, so its efforts to use extraterritorial influence to prevent the Falkland Islands from developing its hydrocarbon resources were inappropriate.

98. The armed forces of the United Kingdom routinely had exchange arrangements with partner armed forces. A small number of liaison officers from the Kosovo Security Force had been deployed to the Falkland Islands alongside a British army unit that had coincidentally been due to deploy to the Falkland Islands. The arrangement was part of a broader defence agreement that formed part of the continuing partnership of the United Kingdom with the Kosovo Security Force to promote interoperability. The United Kingdom was not militarizing the Falkland Islands. Its forces in the South Atlantic were entirely defensible and were maintained at an appropriate level to ensure the defence of the Falkland Islands against any potential threat. The United Kingdom would continue to keep its force levels under review. It regularly assessed the potential for military challenges to the Falkland Islands to ensure that it retained appropriate levels of defensive capabilities, as it had done since deploying its forces there in response to the illegal Argentine invasion of 1982.

99. **Ms. Mohammad** (United Arab Emirates) speaking also on behalf of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, said that Iran had no legitimate right to the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. It was regrettable that Iran continued to deny the historical fact that the three islands in the Arabian Gulf were an integral part of the United Arab Emirates. Although the issue was not, strictly speaking, part of the agenda of the Committee, the ongoing illegal Iranian occupation of the islands contravened the principle of self-determination, which was at the heart of the Committee's work. Accordingly, Iran should desist from making baseless claims and respond positively to calls for a peaceful solution to be found either through direct negotiations or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

100. **Mr. Alvarez** (Argentina), replying to the representative of the United Kingdom, said that his delegation reiterated the statements made by the President of Argentina to the General Assembly on 19 September 2023 (A/78/PV.5) and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina at the meeting of the

Special Committee on 20 June 2023 (A/AC.109/2023/SR.7).

101. The Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were an integral part of the national territory of Argentina and, being illegally occupied by the United Kingdom, they were the subject of a sovereignty dispute between the two parties, which was recognized by a number of international organizations. That illegal occupation had led the General Assembly to adopt 10 resolutions on the issue, all of which recognized the existence of the sovereignty dispute and called on the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume negotiations with a view to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute as soon as possible. For its part, the Special Committee had repeatedly adopted resolutions in the same vein, most recently the resolution adopted on 20 June 2023.

102. His delegation regretted the erroneous interpretation of the events of 1833 advanced by the United Kingdom with the aim of justifying an illegal occupation that, since its inception, had been repeatedly protested by Argentina. Since the era of the colonization of the Americas, the Malvinas Islands had been subject to Spanish rule, a fact that had been recognized by the other colonial Powers at the time, including the United Kingdom. The Islands had come under the administration of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata, following the May Revolution led by Buenos Aires. The link between Argentina and the Malvinas Islands was thus based on the principle of *uti possidetis juris* and on the continuous authority exercised by Buenos Aires.

103. The principle of self-determination of peoples, which the United Kingdom used as the basis for its refusal to resume negotiations on sovereignty, was inapplicable to the dispute in question, as affirmed in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee. The 2013 vote held in the Malvinas Islands was simply a unilateral action undertaken by the United Kingdom, devoid of any legal value; it in no way changed the essence of the question, it did not resolve the sovereignty dispute and it had no effect on the legitimate rights of Argentina. The interests and way of life of the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands were adequately addressed by resolutions of the General Assembly and by the Constitution of Argentina.

104. In relation to the characterization by the United Kingdom of its military presence in the South Atlantic as "entirely defensible", he wished to reiterate that, for the Argentine Republic, there was no other way to assert its rights than the path of diplomacy and peace, as was

demonstrated by its continuing willingness to resume the bilateral negotiation process with the United Kingdom in a constructive spirit, as called for by the international community, in order to find a peaceful and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute.

105. In its resolution 31/49, the General Assembly had called upon the two parties to refrain from introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the islands were going through the process recommended by the General Assembly. Argentina reaffirmed its legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which were an integral part of the national territory of Argentina.

106. **Mr. Ghelich** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, no matter how many times the claim made by the representative of the United Arab Emirates was repeated, it could not dent, undermine or refute the claims of his own country. His delegation reiterated its consistent and principled position that it did not recognize the existence of any dispute between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates over the three islands. The islands had been settled at a time when no country bore the name of the United Arab Emirates. Since then, they had been an integral part of Iran, and they would always remain so. In addition, the term "Persian Gulf" had been the only correct appellation for the body of water situated between the Arabian peninsula and the Iranian plateau for at least 2,500 years and would always be so.

107. **Ms. Shapir Ben Naftaly** (Israel) said that the representative of Namibia and others had addressed the recent violence in her country. The previous days had been devastating for every Israeli, and ought to be so for anyone who cherished human life. Israel had suffered an unprecedented, barbaric terror attack. Hamas terrorists had indiscriminately fired thousands of rockets into Israeli towns and cities. Hundreds of Hamas terrorists had infiltrated Israel and perpetrated barbaric pogroms of unparalleled magnitude. They had ruthlessly gunned down innocent Israeli civilians in the street; moved from house to house, shooting entire families at point-blank range; and abducted older persons, including Holocaust survivors. Children had been torn from their mothers' arms, and women recounted horrific stories of rape. Hundreds of young Israelis, who had been celebrating the holiday weekend, had been massacred not because of anything they had done, but because of who they were. Hamas had disseminated videos in which detainees and victims were paraded in the streets of Gaza. Delegates might not be able to digest such accounts of ruthless inhumanity; but they must unequivocally condemn Hamas, a genocidal Islamist

terrorist organization intent on destroying Israel and the Jewish people while using the people of the Gaza Strip as human shields. Israel was at the forefront of the war on terror, and it would prevail.

108. **Ms. Mohammad** (United Arab Emirates) said that the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa were an integral part of the United Arab Emirates and were, in fact, located in the Arabian Gulf. Her delegation hoped that the dispute could be resolved through peaceful means, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, either through good-faith bilateral negotiations or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.