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FOURTH COMMITTEE

4th meeting

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at 3 p.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BOYA (Benin)

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AGENDA ITEM 92: ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH ARE IMPEDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA AND IN ALL OTHER TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION AND EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE COLONIALISM, APARTHEID AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 92: ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH ARE IMPEDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA AND IN ALL OTHER TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION AND EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE COLONIALISM, APARTHEID AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (continued) (A/34/23 (Part III))

1. Mr. JAMES (Australia) said that in recent years the Committee had taken an unfortunate direction on the agenda item under consideration. The item had originally been included in the agenda because of a deep-seated concern that the activities of certain foreign economic interests in southern Africa were contributing to the continuation of colonial rule and exploitation. Successive sessions of the General Assembly, however, had seen the perversion of the original objective and resolutions indiscriminately condemning all foreign economic interests in dependent Territories had failed to draw important and essential distinctions.
2. His delegation was genuinely concerned at the exploitation of peoples in colonial Territories. Australia had firmly endorsed all moves designed to bring about genuine majority rule in Zimbabwe, such as the settlement process envisaged at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, held in Lusaka in August 1979, and the current Constitutional Conference convened in London by the United Kingdom Government. Australia was committed to an independent Namibia under majority rule recognized by the international community, and would continue to demonstrate its commitment through active participation in the work of the Council for Namibia. Moreover, his Government had repeatedly shown its strong opposition to the policies of apartheid and to racism in all its forms, an opposition which had recently been reaffirmed in the Declaration of the Commonwealth on Racism and Racial Prejudice, which had been proposed by Australia and adopted at the Lusaka meeting.
3. His Government condemned the operations of those foreign economic interests which had caused suffering in southern Africa, deprived Africans of their fundamental rights and frustrated the achievement of genuine independence and self-determination. However, his Government could not and would not accept propositions which condemned all activities of foreign economic and other interests in all Non-Self-Governing Territories. While it appreciated the dangers of economic dependency on the colonial rulers and exploitation by irresponsible foreign investors intent only on maximizing profits in the short term, it did not believe that all foreign investment (including both public and private flows of capital and the introduction of new technology and managerial talent) had been harmful to the development of Non-Self-Governing Territories. On the contrary, the responsible introduction of appropriate foreign economic resources had, in many instances, been fundamental to the economic development and industrialization of developing countries. All foreign economic activities in dependent Territories should therefore not be the subject of blanket condemnation and of draft

(Mr. James, Australia)

resolutions - such as the Committee had adopted at previous sessions - calling for the total cessation of those activities. Such resolutions were at odds with those adopted by other United Nations organs endorsing the responsible role of outside interests in assisting development. They were also difficult to reconcile with the position adopted at times by the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which had requested administering Powers, in consultation with the Governments of Territories under their administration, to provide all possible bilateral and multilateral assistance in order to strengthen and diversify their economies. At the previous session the Fourth Committee itself had adopted a number of resolutions - such as those on the questions of American Samoa (33/34) and Bermuda and a number of other Territories (33/35) - endorsing the position that some forms of external economic activity were beneficial, provided that they helped the people of dependent territories and contributed to the process of self-determination. On the other hand, in resolutions proposed and adopted at previous sessions under the item now under consideration, the same administering Powers had been castigated for their efforts to provide such assistance. His delegation did not believe that it was possible to support both positions and urged the Committee to take a position in line with the recommendations of the Special Committee of 24 concerning Territories on its agenda.

4. He hoped that the Committee would approach the item under consideration with a sense of fairness, balance and objectivity. Such an approach required the traditional procedure of consultations among delegations aimed at achieving wide agreement on the text of a draft resolution that would carry the moral authority which the Committee provided when it spoke with one united voice. At the previous session, there had been no attempt to follow that procedure with regard to the item and he urged the Committee to facilitate the process of decolonization in a constructive way during the current session.

5. The CHAIRMAN agreed that consultations should be as complete as possible, within the time available, with a view to achieving a consensus within the Committee. He assured the Committee of his own full co-operation in that regard.

6. Mr. SEMICHI (Algeria) said that increasingly a conspiracy of silence surrounded the extent of the activities of foreign economic and other interests which were a source of alarm to most Members of the United Nations. The victims of colonial oppression, who placed much of their hope of achieving self-determination and independence in the United Nations, were rightly troubled by the squandering and over-exploitation of their natural resources by colonial Powers or by transnational corporations, which derived quick and exorbitant profits from those resources regardless of the rightful owners. Such a tragic situation, common to virtually all dependent Territories, was particularly acute in southern Africa: Southern Rhodesia still attracted clandestine investments, Namibia was being drained of its mineral wealth by illegal occupiers, and the detestable régime in South Africa was receiving assistance to help it to become a nuclear Power.

(Mr. Semichi, Algeria)

7. Despite the many economic and political measures taken against such shameful and dangerous régimes in recent years by the world community - an international mobilization which should have enabled the oppressed peoples of southern Africa to achieve their legitimate aspirations quite rapidly - those régimes were still oppressing and exploiting their enslaved peoples and intimidating neighbouring countries which had never ceased to manifest their complete solidarity with the liberation movements that were gaining strength in the colonial Territories.
8. Annex I to the relevant chapter of the report of the Special Committee (A/34/23 (Part III)), which provided information on Southern Rhodesia, was in itself a crushing indictment of the Western countries whose past and continuing complicity was an affront to morality and the most elementary principles of international relations. Behind the screen of pseudo-independence and the campaign for the lifting of sanctions against Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, the unscrupulous white minority and a few African accomplices were conspiring to amass illicit fortunes by intensifying their economic exploitation of the people. Only the genuine liberation of Zimbabwe, a goal for which the Patriotic Front was fighting, would promote the advancement of the people of the Territory and establish a climate favourable to international co-operation in accordance with their legitimate aspirations.
9. The economic importance of Namibia's vast supply of strategic minerals attracted investments by transnational corporations that were made all the more profitable by the humiliating and inhuman policy of apartheid imposed on the African workers by South Africa, the illegal occupier of the Territory. Annex II to the relevant chapter of the report of the Special Committee (A/34/23 (Part III)) clearly revealed that the true obstacle to the implementation of the United Nations plan for a peaceful settlement of the Namibian situation set out in Security Council resolution 435 (1978) was to be found in strategic considerations, in particular the question of access to Namibia's natural resources. His delegation had always urged strict compliance with Decree No. 1 for the Protection of the Natural Resources of Namibia, enacted by the United Nations Council for Namibia, and insisted on the right of the Namibian people, after independence, to claim reparations for their depletion.
10. The occupying Powers never overtly alluded to the exploitation of the human and natural resources of the Territories under their domination, but referred instead to their own civilizing mission.. The peoples of the third world could no longer be taken in by such hypocrisy. The huge profits derived from the natural resources of the Territories were at no time used for the benefit of the people of those Territories. It was indeed clearly established that most foreign profits were not even reinvested in the Territories but returned to the Western countries themselves.

(Mr. Semichi, Algeria)

11. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) had thus been right in condemning unequivocally all countries which had taken part in the depletion of Africa's resources, the oppression of its peoples or the strengthening of the retrograde régimes still in power in southern Africa, and all countries which continued to maintain relations with South Africa and Southern Rhodesia in violation of the resolutions of the United Nations and OAU, in particular the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Israel, Japan, Belgium, Italy, and some Latin American countries. He reaffirmed the commitment of the African continent to the cause of decolonization, and called on all people of goodwill to join Africa in the struggle to eradicate the scourges of colonialism, racism and apartheid.

12. Mr. MWAWADO (United Republic of Tanzania) said that although the United Nations and other international organizations adopted resolutions condemning racism almost every year, those resolutions were not followed by concrete action. The racist minority régimes in southern Africa continued to defy world public opinion, to maintain their stranglehold over the enslaved peoples of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, and to plunder the natural resources of Zimbabwe and Namibia with scant regard for the future of the Territories. Those régimes were able to continue their despicable rule thanks to the support of several Western capitalist countries. The installation of Muzorewa as a puppet Prime Minister in Zimbabwe was to the advantage of foreign economic interests and represented an attempt to delude the international community into believing that power had been transferred to the African majority. The international community had, however, rightfully rejected the so-called internal settlement.

13. His country supported the agreement on Zimbabwe reached at the meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government at Lusaka and hoped that the current Constitutional Conference in London would be crowned with success. If that Conference did not achieve its objective, the United Republic of Tanzania would be forced to intensify its support for the Patriotic Front in its struggle for national liberation. Meanwhile it was imperative for the sanctions against Southern Rhodesia to be maintained.

14. His delegation deplored the continued exploitation of the human and material resources of the Namibian people by South Africa, with the help of its Western partners. Western companies engaged in the exploitation of Namibia's mineral resources had completely ignored Decree No. 1 for the Protection of the Natural Resources of Namibia, enacted by the United Nations Council for Namibia.

15. It should not be forgotten that the conflict in Namibia was between the South African colonial administration and the Namibian people as represented by the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). The Democratic Transvaal Alliance was a puppet of South Africa and the foreign mining companies and could not be regarded as a force in the process leading to independence. His country would continue to support the armed struggle in Namibia until South Africa was ready to give the Namibian people their independence through elections supervised by the United Nations.

(Mr. Mwawado, Tanzania)

16. Western investment reinforced the oppressive machinery of the South African régime and provided the economic buttress to apartheid, the vilest system of oppression of man by man. He urged the members of the international community, especially those countries with investments in South Africa, to use their economic leverage to force South Africa to abandon apartheid. The measures taken by the Swedish Government to discourage investments in South Africa were an encouraging development and he urged other Western countries to follow Sweden's example.

17. The people of southern Africa could wait no longer for their freedom. If the international community, especially the Western countries, did not take concrete action against the racist South African régime, all hope of peaceful change would be lost. There would then be no alternative but the intensification of the armed struggle of the people of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, a struggle which his country would unwaveringly support.

18. Mr. HAYDAR (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the racist régimes in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia had their origin in nineteenth-century colonialism, and were organically linked to imperialism and colonialism in Palestine and throughout the world. Without continued assistance from the countries which had helped to establish them, they would no longer be able to suppress the African people and their liberation movements, which, in his view, were the sole representatives of the people.

19. Economic and political activities were clearly linked. The political consolidation of the racist Israeli, South African and Southern Rhodesian régimes was fostered by economic investment and co-operation, in contravention of United Nations resolutions. His country condemned those activities, as well as the co-operation between Israel, South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. The Committee should do likewise. In particular, it should adopt a resolution condemning investment in countries governed by racist régimes, especially Zimbabwe and South Africa, and co-operation with those régimes, calling for a boycott of the racist régimes and for the application of the relevant United Nations and Security Council resolutions, and strongly condemning any violation of those resolutions.

20. There was an obvious, organic link between racism in Africa and zionism, which were the common enemy of independence movements throughout the world. The Syrian Arab Republic, like the repressed peoples of southern Africa, was fighting against racism and exploitation.

21. Mr. WECKMANN (Mexico) pointed out that the Committee had been discussing the item under consideration for 11 years. The relevant chapter of the report of the Special Committee (A/34/23 (Part III)), however, provided some hope that the efforts made by the United Nations to counter the adverse effects of the activities of foreign interests which were impeding the implementation of resolution 1514 (XV) might achieve their objective. The recent bankruptcy of the Commercial and Industrial Holdings company in Southern Rhodesia was directly attributable to the economic and financial sanctions imposed by the Security Council. The report of the Special Committee showed, however, that other interests were still bent on exploiting to the full what was not theirs.

(Mr. Weckmann, Mexico)

22. The dismantling of the colonial empires had left behind the equally pernicious phenomenon of economic imperialism, which transcended national boundaries. Neo-imperialism, represented by the transnational corporations, threatened both those Territories which had not yet achieved political independence and those countries which, although politically independent, had not yet consolidated their economic independence. The report of the Special Committee provided a long list of companies operating in Southern Rhodesia and Namibia, which were the principal foreign interests impeding effective decolonization. The Committee should not be deceived by recent cosmetic changes which those companies had effected; their aim was still to maximize their profits with no regard for the welfare of the local population. Foreign economic interests were accepted by the administering Powers since they allowed the latter to consolidate their economic and military position. Moreover, colonial and racist régimes encouraged penetration by such interests in a desperate attempt to stave off their own inevitable downfall.

23. Paragraph 17 of the resolution adopted by the Special Committee on the item (A/34/23 (Part III), para. 13) requested the Secretary-General to undertake a campaign aimed at informing world public opinion of the facts concerning the pillaging of natural resources and the exploitation of the indigenous populations by foreign monopolies and the support they rendered to colonialist and racist régimes. His delegation considered it imperative that world public opinion should be made aware of the situation. Many shareholders in transnational corporations were unaware of the fact that those corporations operated illegally in southern Africa. The United Nations, which was aware of the truth, should broadcast it to the world. His delegation would support the measures recommended by the Special Committee to put an end to foreign exploitation of the Territories under colonial domination.

24. Mr. ERAN (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement made by the Syrian representative was merely a pretext to launch an attack on Israel. As the former Ambassador of the United States, Mr. Andrew Young, had stated on 18 September 1979, Israel was too easy a scapegoat. The allegations made by the Syrian representative concerning Israel's links with South Africa had nothing to do with the item before the Committee.

25. Israel's trade with South Africa amounted to 0.3 per cent, a negligible amount compared with that of many other countries. Various Israeli spokesmen had emphatically and unequivocally affirmed Israel's abhorrence of any form of racism and discrimination. Israel had long been in the forefront of the struggle for human rights. Nothing could be more perverse than to associate Israel with policies based on discrimination.

26. Mr. HAYDAR (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his comments on Israel had not been irrelevant. The Committee had the right to discuss any country which traded with South Africa. The actual percentage figure was immaterial; it was the principle which mattered. The General Assembly had in the past adopted resolutions referring to Israel's links with South Africa and had equated zionism with racism. Israel's claim to be in the vanguard of the struggle for human rights was invalidated by its involvement in the situation in Palestine.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.