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FOURTH COMMITTEE  
17th meeting  
held on  
Thursday, 25 October 1979  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 17th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BOYA (Benin)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS (A/C.4/34/3/Add.7 and 8 and A/C.4/34/10)

1. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that he had received requests for hearings from Mr. Bruce P. Cameron of Americans for Democratic Action (A/C.4/34/3/Add.7) and Father Francisco M. Fernandes (A/C.4/34/3/Add.8), both concerning the question of East Timor.
2. Mr. JUWANA (Indonesia) reaffirmed his delegation's strong opposition to the granting of hearings to petitioners on the subject of East Timor and asked that that position should be reflected in the summary record.
3. The CHAIRMAN said that if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee decided to grant the requests for hearings by Mr. Cameron (A/C.4/34/3/Add.7) and Father Fernandes (A/C.4/34/3/Add.8).
4. It was so decided.
5. The CHAIRMAN said that he had also received a request for a hearing from Mr. Robert A. Leslie of the Belizean Independence Secretariat (A/C.4/34/10) concerning the question of Belize. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee decided to grant that request.
6. It was so decided.

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7. Mr. CASSANDRA (Sao Tome and Principe) reaffirmed that his country was committed to the cause of decolonization and supported peoples and countries deprived of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence embodied in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). There was no doubt, in his delegation's view, that the recommendations and aims of that resolution were also fully applicable to the Territory of Western Sahara. Since the invasion and occupation of their Territory by foreign forces, the people of Western Sahara, under the leadership of the POLISARIO Front, had resorted to armed struggle in an effort to recover its homeland and exercise its right to self-determination. That just struggle had been crowned with success at the military and diplomatic levels, the victories won on the battlefield against the aggressor forces being matched by increasing international recognition for the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic.

8. Many aspects of the Western Sahara issue still remained obscure. For example, even though the Prime Minister of Spain had stated that his Government would defend the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination, in 1975 that Government had signed the so-called Madrid Agreement with Morocco and Mauritania. Morocco had used that agreement as a pretext for its alleged claims to the Territory of Western Sahara and had tried for more than three years to prevent the United Nations and the non-aligned movement from considering the question, on the grounds that OAU was seeking a solution to the problem. At the meeting held at Monrovia, Liberia, however, OAU had condemned the attitude of the Government of

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(Mr. Cassandra, Sao Tome  
and Principe)

Morocco and declared itself in favour of the exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of Western Sahara. His delegation called upon the Moroccan Government to abandon its negative attitude, which endangered the peace and stability of the region and the world. It was grateful to the Government of Mauritania for showing a sense of responsibility and understanding in signing a peace treaty with the POLISARIO Front, with which Sao Tome and Principe reaffirmed its unfailing solidarity.

9. Mr. PENAZKA (Czechoslovakia) said that while the priority task of the decolonization process was the solution of the problem of southern Africa, the importance of the problem of other colonial and dependent Territories should not be underestimated regardless of their small size or population or their scanty economic resources. The provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples applied equally to them, and those documents embodied the principle that all peoples had an equal right to self-determination. The special features of the Territories, their geographical situation and their level of socio-economic development could in no case be used to justify delays in granting them independence, for just as the situation in southern Africa represented a threat to peace in that region, the small colonial Territories throughout the world were also a source of tension in their respective regions.

10. Consequently, his delegation found it regrettable that the decolonization process in those small Territories was not being carried out in accordance with the Declaration. Some colonial administering Powers were still trying by every means to strengthen their positions in the small Territories which they administered and to delay, under various pretexts, the realization of the right of the peoples of those Territories to self-determination and independence. Those Powers were even arrogating to themselves the right to decide the future constitutional and political development of the Territories under their administration, generally annexing them to the metropolis, and trying to divide them artificially with a view to disrupting their territorial integrity and national unity.

11. Those practices, which dated from past eras, constituted a direct violation of the United Nations Charter, Article 73 of which expressly laid down the obligation of the administering Powers to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples and to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions.

12. Also in contradiction with the principles embodied in the decolonization documents of the United Nations was the practice of some Powers of maintaining military bases and installations in small Territories. That constituted an obstacle to the free exercise of the right of the peoples of those Territories to self-determination and independence. Czechoslovakia's position with respect to the colonial Territories was based on its unequivocal support of the principle of the unconditional recognition of the equal rights of all peoples and countries, and therefore Czechoslovakia would continue to support the efforts of the United Nations to speed up and complete the process of decolonization and to eliminate the remnants of colonial domination in all dependent Territories.

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13. Mr. DIATTA (Niger) said that a careful study of the conclusions of the important report submitted 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 brought out a sad reality: 19 years after the General Assembly had adopted resolution 1514 (XV), many Territories were still under the yoke of dependency and colonialism and had had no opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination. That was due essentially to the fact that the administering Powers were reluctant to permit the peoples of those Territories to exercise their full sovereignty and were applying policies which tended to perpetuate the administering Powers' domination over them. His delegation unreservedly supported the conclusions of the Special Committee, in which it reaffirmed the inalienable right of colonial peoples to self-determination and independence and invited the administering Powers to speed up the decolonization process and safeguard the right of peoples to dispose of their natural resources in a way best suited to their interests.

14. His delegation believed that the question of Western Sahara was one of the most important to be considered by the General Assembly at the current session. The Niger had followed with great interest the evolution of the situation in that Territory, and recent developments gave no cause for optimism either with regard to the future of the Territory and its inhabitants or with regard to stability and peace in the region. The situation was most urgent because it could degenerate into a serious conflict which would involve the entire region, so rich in traditions of brotherhood and solidarity, unless the international community adopted measures to resolve it. The Government of the Niger believed that the time had come to enter into urgent and honest negotiations in order to facilitate the attainment of a new era of harmony and fraternal co-operation in the region. In that connexion, the resolution adopted at Monrovia by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU could constitute a suitable instrument for arriving at a definitive solution of the problem. The Niger, which for long years had maintained friendly and fraternal relations with the countries concerned, appealed to all of them to refrain from complicating the situation even further and to facilitate the task of peace-making by co-operating with the Special Committee which OAU had established to attempt to solve the problem by peaceful means. It also requested other countries to do nothing that would worsen the situation and to co-operate in creating an atmosphere of détente that would bring peace to that region of the African continent, which, after centuries of colonialism and oppression, yearned for tranquillity and stability.

15. Unfortunately, the situation in some colonial Territories did not augur well for a happy solution in the near future, but the Niger was nevertheless convinced that thanks to the praiseworthy efforts of the Special Committee and, above all, the solidarity of all States with the struggle of peoples against oppression and colonial domination, the universality of the United Nations would one day become a reality.

16. Mr. MOKHOVIKOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that in the nearly 20 years since the United Nations had, on the initiative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, adopted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the map of the world had changed, enormous

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(Mr. Mokhovikov, Byelorussian SSR)

transformations had taken place and, thanks to the struggle of peoples for national liberation, new States had arisen whose voice and influence were being felt in international political life. Nevertheless, decolonization in southern Africa and in the so-called small Territories remained a question of current importance because there was still much to be done to eliminate all the consequences of colonial oppression and the hotbeds of racism.

17. In the debates of the Fourth Committee and in the numerous documents adopted by bodies in the United Nations system it had been emphasized that the activities of foreign economic and other interests in dependent Territories were among the main obstacles to the realization by peoples of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. Such activities had also led to the plundering of those Territories' natural resources, and that prevented the indigenous inhabitants from enjoying the wealth of their own country. Thus, colonial exploitation through monopolies had retarded the economic and social development of the peoples that were still under colonial domination. His delegation could not accept the statements of certain Western countries which attempted to minimize the importance of the question and to equate the process of decolonization of small Territories with an automatic process of economic development.

18. It was even being argued that the exploitation of their natural resources by the administering Powers was advantageous to those countries and Territories. The truth was the administering Powers made a practice of using those Territories as sites for military bases which created a serious threat to international peace and security, as in the case of the Guam base, which had been used to carry out aggression against Indo-China. In the case of Micronesia, a base might cover the whole Territory and artificially delay the process of self-determination. His delegation considered that the future of the small Territories was inseparable from the question of decolonization and that in all cases the objective must be to ensure the right of countries and peoples to independence in accordance with the Charter and with the Declaration on decolonization.

19. At the current stage of the struggle of colonial countries for real and effective self-determination and for independence, the role of the United Nations had increased considerably, and so had the role of the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations. Some of those agencies and institutions, particularly UNESCO, ILO, WHO, UNCTAD, UNDP and UNICEF, had recently stepped up their efforts in that connexion in their respective spheres of competence, as stated in the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/34/208 and Add.1-3). However, the Special Committee of 24, in its resolution adopted on 10 August (A/AC.109/586), had expressed "its concern that the assistance extended so far by the specialized agencies and other organizations within the United Nations system to the colonial peoples, particularly those of Zimbabwe and Namibia, and to their national liberation movements is far from adequate in relation to the actual needs of the peoples concerned".

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(Mr. Mokhovikov, Byelorussian SSR)

20. It was regrettable to note that there were some agencies which year after year, despite the urgings of the United Nations, continued to ignore the demands of the colonial peoples and their liberation movements. In its resolution 33/41, the General Assembly had stated that it "regrets that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have not yet taken the necessary measures towards the full and speedy implementation of the Declaration and other relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, deplores ... the fact that those agencies continue to maintain co-operation with the colonialist racist minority régime of South Africa and urges the executive heads of those agencies to draw the particular attention of their governing organs to the present resolution with a view to formulating specific programmes beneficial to the peoples of the colonial Territories, particularly Zimbabwe and Namibia". What had been the response of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to those appeals? The Secretary-General's report (A/34/208) quoted a vague reply from the World Bank, while the International Monetary Fund merely stated that "General Assembly resolution 33/41 has been brought to the attention of the Fund's Executive Board, which is responsible for the conduct of the business of the Fund as stated in article XII, section 3 (a) of the Fund's Articles of Agreement". In other words, there had been virtually no response from those agencies, and there was no point in expecting any. Because of the control exercised over them by the Western countries, they were continuing to help South Africa and encourage the colonialist racist régimes to pursue their policies. That attitude was unacceptable and must be categorically condemned.

21. Lastly, his delegation hoped that the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations would take concrete and effective measures to contribute as speedily as possible to the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and other relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

22. Mr. MATANE (Papua New Guinea) said that, although the number of Territories now becoming independent was encouraging, it was disheartening to note that there were others which were still not being given the opportunity freely to express their will. The administering Powers should take steps to ensure that the peoples were fully aware of their right to self-determination and independence, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter, and the attitude of those who defied General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and various other relevant resolutions calling for complete decolonization of the Territories was therefore to be deplored. The refusal even to allow United Nations visiting missions must be regarded as an obstacle to the implementation of the mandates of the Fourth Committee and the Committee of 24.

23. The 1970s had been an era of massive decolonization for the Pacific. No less than seven former colonial Territories had gained self-government and independence and had taken their rightful places in the world community. His Government offered its gratitude to the Governments of the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand for the constructive and accommodating manner in which they had complied with United Nations resolutions in granting independence to their Territories in the region.

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(Mr. Matane, Papua New Guinea)

24. His delegation noted with satisfaction the progress being made in the New Hebrides and American Samoa. It had also noted the favourable developments on the question of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, St. Helena, the British Virgin Islands, the United States Virgin Islands, Bermuda, and so on. It was conscious of the ongoing dialogues between the administering Powers and their Territories and was eager to see steps taken towards self-determination and independence. His delegation was equally looking forward to the day when the remaining Pacific Territories under colonial administration would become masters of their own destiny. It was appalled to note that, despite the calls by the people of New Caledonia, the administering colonial Power had not seen fit to give them the chance to express their views and political aspirations. The pro-independence groups in New Caledonia did represent the legitimate wishes of the indigenous population; therefore, in order to expedite the process of self-determination, his delegation considered that New Caledonia must again be listed as a non-independent Territory, that the question of New Caledonia must be discussed in the Committee of 24, and that a visiting mission must be sent to the Territory to report its findings to the Committee of 24, and, that the question of New Caledonia must be included as an item for the next session of the General Assembly.

25. Mr. TALUKDER (Bangladesh) said that, although the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization had been fruitful, there was still a long way to go, since there were still more than 20 countries and Territories under colonial rule. They differed in their political, economic, military and social situations. There were also the varied attitudes of the administering Powers and the varied levels of development and aspirations of the peoples concerning the achievement of independence. In some cases questions of sovereignty were involved, in others there was a question of integration with neighbouring States, and in some of the small Territories there were questions of the viability of their independent existence. The diversity gave rise to problems, but solutions had to be found, since otherwise exploitation and injustice would not be eradicated.

26. His delegation deplored the continuing events in southern Africa, where the logical conclusion of the decolonization process was being impeded by the flagrant denial of rights and the total disregard of universal opinion.

27. In the case of East Timor, the people had regained their independence when the colonial Power had voluntarily withdrawn from the Territory and the inhabitants had voluntarily chosen to become a part of Indonesia. Consequently, his delegation saw no justification for the question to be the subject of further discussion in the Committee.

28. Indonesia was governing the Territory effectively and was making every possible effort to bring East Timor into the mainstream of activities under the Indonesian development programme. There had already been improvements in roads and in the education system and investment in agriculture, although there was still, of course, a need for assistance from the various agencies of the United Nations and other countries.

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(Mr. Talukder, Bangladesh)

29. In the case of Western Sahara, Bangladesh welcomed the recent steps taken by OAU in an attempt to solve the problem peacefully.

30. With regard to Belize, his delegation reaffirmed the position taken by its Government at the recent Conference of non-aligned countries in Havana, and called for full implementation of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. It also exhorted all States to support Belize's speedy progress towards immediate and secure independence with strict respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

31. Although the administering Powers were attempting to impart experience and build a financial and organizational infrastructure in the Territories within their jurisdiction, there had not been sufficient economic progress and development to ensure the viability of the Territories as independent entities, for which the co-operation of the specialized agencies and other organizations within the United Nations system should be sought.

32. His delegation reiterated its determination to assist in the decolonization process and urged all States Members of the United Nations to continue their concerted efforts, under the leadership of the Security Council in exercise of the powers conferred on it in Chapter VII of the Charter.

33. Mr. HERMIDA (Nicaragua) expressed the sympathy and solidarity of Nicaragua with peoples throughout the world struggling for liberation, peace, independence and democracy and against imperialist, colonialist, neo-colonialist, racist and Zionist aggression and apartheid. His country regarded the struggles of peoples for self-determination as a natural and just process for achieving peace; its policy would therefore be in accordance with the objectives and spirit of the United Nations Charter and, in particular, with the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the fundamental principles and common objectives of the policy of non-alignment.

34. The elimination of colonialism was not simply a matter for the conscience of mankind but was also a prerequisite for reducing world tension, strengthening relations of equality between countries and safeguarding peace; the principles of peaceful coexistence would be of no avail if they did not also include the right of peoples to independence and to choose their own social, political and economic system. Nicaragua therefore supported the heroic people of East Timor in its struggle for independence and considered that that question should be dealt with fully at the current session and the next session of the General Assembly.

35. With regard to Western Sahara, he reaffirmed his support for the struggle of the Saharan people and his appreciation for the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic and the Frente Polisario as sole and legitimate representative of the heroic Saharan people, and supported the resolutions adopted at the Sixteenth Summit Meeting of Heads of State and Government of OAU. He also commended the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Frente Polisario for the peace agreement of 5 August 1979 and urged Morocco to follow their example, so that a just and lasting

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(Mr. Hermida, Nicaragua)

peace could be established in the region. Lastly, Nicaragua upheld the inalienable right of the people of Belize to self-determination and independence.

36. His delegation firmly supported the right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence and noted that, at the sixth Conference of non-aligned countries in Havana, the United States Government had been urged to refrain from any political or repressive manoeuvres designed to perpetuate the colonial situation of Puerto Rico. Nicaragua condemned the existence of military bases in the Caribbean.

37. He wished to place on record his delegation's resolve to lend its backing to any action aimed at eliminating colonial domination and racial discrimination and to support national liberation struggles.

38. Mr. GUNA-KASEM (Thailand) said that the actual process of self-determination could be accomplished by different means, according to local characteristics, historical background and circumstances and specific developments in each Territory. The fact remained that the exercise of the inalienable right to self-determination was one of the fundamental principles of the United Nations. With regard to East Timor, his delegation was of the view that Indonesia had demonstrated that it was ready to accept the freely and democratically expressed will of the people of East Timor, who, through their elected representatives, the members of the People's Representative Assembly, had exercised their inalienable right to self-determination on 31 May 1976 by choosing to become independent through integration with the Republic of Indonesia. His delegation was satisfied that there existed a complete equality between the population of East Timor and the population of other parts of the Republic of Indonesia, and it was therefore of the opinion that the process of self-determination had already taken place in East Timor. His delegation therefore felt that consideration of the question of East Timor by the General Assembly was no longer relevant.

39. Mr. SANE (Senegal) said that Senegal's position with regard to the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was based on a belief in dialogue as the means of resolving international disputes and on observance of the principles of the United Nations Charter relating to decolonization and the principles of the Organization of African Unity concerning the inviolability of the frontiers inherited at the time of decolonization.

40. His delegation agreed with all the speakers who wanted the General Assembly to reaffirm the inalienable right of people to self-determination in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). In that connexion, his delegation considered that the report of the Special Committee of 24 provided the Fourth Committee with a sound factual basis for the adoption of a resolution on the future of those Territories which were still under domination.

41. With regard to the question of East Timor, his delegation had listened with interest to the statement made in the Committee by the representative of Portugal,

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(Mr. Sane, Senegal)

the administering Power, who had said that his country recognized as a fundamental principle the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination, in accordance with resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV), and that Portugal's sole aim had been and continued to be to protect the legitimate rights and interests of the Timorese people. The Senegalese delegation considered that if the people of East Timor manifested its desire not to be integrated into a larger entity - as seemed to be the case - the United Nations should provide for the possibility of a referendum in order truly to determine the needs of the population and to meet its request.

42. With regard to the case of Belize, Senegal believed that the parties concerned must be persuaded to enter into direct negotiations so that they could, with the necessary assistance, catalogue all the causes of their disagreement and thus reach an amicable settlement. The terms of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) must be applied in that case also.

43. Where the problem of Western Sahara was concerned, his delegation felt that a distinction must be made between two kinds of resolutions adopted on the question by the United Nations: resolutions reaffirming the principle of self-determination and independence for the Saharan people, and resolutions upholding the principle of return to one's own country and the territorial integrity of States.

44. In the view of his delegation, agreement should be reached on the holding of a referendum, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations, to enable the Saharan people to opt for independence or the status quo. In accordance with its policy of always seeking a dialogue, his delegation believed that the heads of State of the two neighbouring countries, Morocco and Algeria, should agree to meet in order to work out together the details of an honourable and final settlement.

45. Lastly, Senegal took note of Mauritania's neutrality and pledged itself to safeguard the territorial integrity of that neighbouring sister country.

46. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/34/L.2) and said that Iran, Kenya and Sierra Leone had become co-sponsors.

47. Mr. BROCHENIN (France), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, noted that, during the debate, one delegation had referred to New Caledonia as being among the colonial countries and peoples.

48. Such a reference showed a complete lack of understanding of the situation in New Caledonia, where the wishes of the indigenous population were being carried out in a completely democratic manner and where France, as always, was applying its customary policy of following the preferences of its citizens. The reference to New Caledonia therefore represented unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of a State and a violation of one of the fundamental principles of the Charter.

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49. Mr MATANE (Papua New Guinea) said that he had raised the question of New Caledonia in the Committee on behalf of many New Caledonians living in New York who wanted to bring pressure to bear for their country's independence.

50. Mr. BROCHENIN (France) expressed regret that the representative of Papua New Guinea should have mentioned a Territory which was not on the Committee's agenda, and reminded him that there were far more New Caledonians actually living in their country who were not exerting any pressure for independence.

51. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Dowd (Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists) took a place at the petitioners' table.

52. Mr. DOWD (Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists), speaking also on behalf of the United Nations Association of Australia, the Australian Council of Churches, the Australian Council for Overseas Aid and Community Aid Abroad, said that the International Commission of Jurists in Australia and the other organizations he represented had made clear their opposition to the illegal annexation of East Timor by Indonesia, which they regarded as an act of aggression for which there could be no justification in international law.

53. They believed that the people of East Timor were entitled to the same opportunity as any other people to determine their own destiny and the right of self-determination guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. For Indonesia and its apologists to suggest that the "self-determination" by the council set up by the Indonesian Government had any validity at all was an insult to the Fourth Committee. There had never been an act of determination. For any nation to abstain from voting on the question of the self-determination for East Timor, or to vote against it, was to condone the invasion and justify future invasions.

54. Arguments based on "realism", suggesting that East Timor was economically non-viable and would be unstable without Indonesian control, were unacceptable, because that would suggest that there was a right to invade any neighbouring country on the ground that it was in financial difficulties or was not viable, and there were more than 20 nations with a smaller population than East Timor represented in the Committee.

55. The argument that what was involved was merely the joining of two parts of an island separated by colonial expansion must also be rejected, since four or five centuries of separate cultural, linguistic and religious development could not be set aside lightly. Canada and the United States had much more in common, and no one was suggesting that a take-over of either one by the other would be justified.

56. The people of East Timor were proud and independent, and they had a right to their own culture and tradition. To pass the Territory from one master to another would be to betray the lofty principles of the United Nations.

57. Disturbing, although unconfirmable, reports of the military excesses of Indonesia against the Timorese were reaching Australia. The Committee should take

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(Mr. Dowd)

action to ensure that independent international agencies, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, were given access to East Timor so that they could inquire into the real circumstances of its people. Australia, the United States and other countries which provided economic and military assistance to Indonesia had a responsibility to demand international access to East Timor as a condition of such aid.

58. The international community had responded to the call of Kampuchea, once it knew the real situation of the Kampuchean people, and it must also find out what the real situation of the people of East Timor was. International agencies must have complete access to all the people, including political prisoners and the population of remote areas.

59. The question of East Timor must remain on the agenda of the General Assembly, since its removal might be taken as an indication that all problems had been resolved, and the provision of humanitarian assistance would be hampered. On the other hand, its retention on the agenda would serve to remind the Australian public of its responsibility towards its neighbour, East Timor, and to counter Indonesia's efforts to cultivate favourable opinion in Australia.

60. He hoped that the Committee would continue its supervision of East Timor, restate its opposition to the illegal annexation of East Timor, continue to press for access for international relief agencies, continue to stimulate the provision of aid to East Timor, and remind the Indonesian Government that the people of East Timor were entitled to humanitarian aid from Indonesia and the world.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.