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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL  
COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

SUB-COMMITTEE I

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE THIRTIETH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Monday, 12 September 1966, at 10.50 a.m.

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Mauritius, Seychelles and St. Helena (A/AC.109/L.279 and Add.1 and  
Add.1/Corr.1) (continued)

PRESENT:

Chairman:

Mr. MALECEJA

(United Republic of  
Tanzania)

Members:

Mr. KAFOD

Denmark

Mr. THIAM

Mali

Mr. JOUEJATI

Syria

Mr. SAHLI

Tunisia

Mr. SHAKHOV

Union of Soviet Socialist  
Republics

Mr. MTINCWA

United Republic of Tanzania

Mr. JANEVSKI

Yugoslavia

Also present:

Mr. BROWN

United Kingdom of Great  
Britain and Northern  
Ireland

Secretariat:

Mr. POLYAKOV

Secretary of the  
Sub-Committee

MAURITIUS, SEYCHELLES AND ST. HELENA (A/AC.109/L.279 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1)  
(continued)

Mr. SAHLI (Tunisia) recalled that the question of Mauritius, Seychelles and St. Helena had already been considered by the Special Committee and had also been the subject of General Assembly resolutions 2066 (XX) and 2069 (XX). Those resolutions reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of those Territories to freedom and independence and invited the administering Power to take effective measures with a view to the immediate and full implementation of resolution 1514 (XV).

Recalling that the United Kingdom representative had outlined the future of the islands at the previous meeting, he expressed the hope that the proposed electoral system would not have the effect of accentuating racial differences in the Territories but might, on the contrary, promote the interests of the various sectors of the population. Nevertheless, a serious economic and social problem remained. The main features of the economy of Mauritius, Seychelles and St. Helena, which was rudimentary and colonial in nature, were a heavy loss of revenue, the impossibility of increasing employment and the impossibility of bringing payments into balance, because exports were less than imports. The situation was so unsatisfactory that 3,250 workers had gone on strike in the Seychelles on 13 June 1966, and the administering Power had had to use troops to break the strike.

In addition, while resolution 2066 (XX) invited the administering Power to take no action which would dismember the Territory of Mauritius and violate its territorial integrity, it was clear that such dismemberment had already taken place. On 10 November 1965, the Secretary of State for the Colonies had stated that new arrangements had been made, with the agreement of the Governments of Mauritius and Seychelles, for the administration of the Chagos Archipelago and of Aldabra, Farquhar and Desroches. Those Territories, which had formerly been administered by the Governments of Mauritius and Seychelles respectively, were now called the British Indian Ocean Territory, and the United Kingdom and United States Governments would be able to construct defence facilities there. The administering Power had therefore dismembered Mauritius and Seychelles in order to set up a military base on the islands. The establishment of such bases in countries which were still

(Mr. Sahli, Tunisia)

colonized was reprehensible in every respect, and he recalled that his own country had experienced the same problem with the base of Bizerta. The Sub-Committee should therefore recommend to the Special Committee that it should invite the administering Power to take steps to implement resolution 1514 (XV), to lead the populations of the islands to independence, to abandon the plan to dismember Mauritius and Seychelles and to install military bases there, and to permit and encourage the sending of United Nations visiting missions to the Territories.

Mr. MTINGWA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the United Kingdom representative's statement at the previous meeting seemed to mean that, because they had been uninhabited when the French and the English had arrived, Mauritius, Seychelles and St. Helena belonged to nobody. Without going into detail on that matter, he believed that the inhabitants of the islands, whatever their origin, were none the less subjected to colonial domination. It was precisely that domination, depriving them as it did of the right to choose their own form of government, which the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania condemned. There had been nothing new in the statement of the United Kingdom representative: he had merely avoided the main issue, the obligation to allow the populations of those Territories to exercise their right of self-determination. There could be no possible doubt on that matter: that obligation was one of those laid upon the administering Power both by resolution 2066 (XX) on Mauritius and by resolution 2069 (XX) on, inter alia, the Seychelles and St. Helena. So far as the latter Territories were concerned, resolution 2069 (XX) also requested the administering Power to allow United Nations visiting missions to visit the Territories, and to extend to them full co-operation and assistance. Those were perfectly natural requests and there should be no difficulty in implementing those resolutions if the administering Power were to honour its obligations and respect the decisions which the General Assembly had taken in accordance with the Charter. But what had happened since the adoption of those resolutions? The Chagos Archipelago had become part of the new British Indian Ocean Territory. That decision had been taken scarcely a month before the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2066 (XX), which invited the administering Power to take no action which would dismember the territory of Mauritius and violate its territorial integrity. The present

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situation therefore made it highly unlikely that Mauritius would accede to independence in 1966, as had been envisaged. Instead of implementing the General Assembly resolutions, the United Kingdom Government had endeavoured to delay the important steps which it should have taken by forming an electoral commission, which had produced what might be called a scientific constitution. The strong opposition to that strange constitution was therefore quite natural, and indeed it was most unlikely that the United Kingdom Government had ever expected the Mauritians to accept it. In that connexion, the agreement which had been reached between the Under-Secretary of State for Colonies and opposition representatives in Mauritius was of no significance because there was no evidence that the discussions had been held freely. The United Kingdom Government should remember, however, that every time it had endeavoured to draw up the constitution of one of its former colonies without taking due regard of the interests of the population, those constitutions had always come to nought and had been replaced by genuinely democratic instruments.

The manner in which the British Indian Ocean Territory had been set up and the haste with which it had been done could not but engender suspicion. His delegation had reason to believe that the Territory was to become a military base. Apart from the threat posed by such bases to neighbouring countries in the event of war, the example of Ascension Island, which had been used by mercenaries as a base for attacking the Congolese freedom-fighters, could not be forgotten. The Special Committee should therefore aim at guaranteeing the territorial integrity of Mauritius, Seychelles and St. Helena, and ensuring that they would not be used for military purposes.

The economic situation of those Territories was scarcely satisfactory at the moment. There had been a considerable decline in both agriculture and industry, which in 1964 had represented 24 and 15 per cent, respectively, of the gross national product of Mauritius, while unemployment was increasing rapidly. Monoculture should therefore be abandoned on Mauritius, as well as on Seychelles and St. Helena, if social disturbances were to be avoided. While it was doing nothing to stop the Southern Rhodesian Government from depriving 4 million Africans of the right to rule their own country, the United Kingdom Government had seen fit to send two warships to the Seychelles to compel strikers to resume work.

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(Mr. Mtingwa, Tanzania)

In conclusion, he hoped that reason would prevail and that the administering Power would eventually leave the peoples of Mauritius, Seychelles and St. Helena to rule their country as they wished.

Mr. JANEVSKI (Yugoslavia) recalled General Assembly resolution 2066 (XX) on the question of Mauritius, in which the Assembly had, in particular, invited the administering Power to take no action which would violate the integrity of the Territory; the Assembly had likewise adopted resolution 2069 (XX) concerning a number of small Territories, including Seychelles and St. Helena. It seemed that, in spite of the provisions of those resolutions, the administering Power had not only failed to take effective measures for ensuring the independence of those Territories, in accordance with the provisions of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, but it had even undertaken some measures contrary to those provided for in the Declaration.

His delegation considered that the development of those Territories was still very slow, because of the interests which the administering Power hoped to preserve there as long as possible. As early as 1964, the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Cairo, had condemned the intentions expressed by imperialist Powers of establishing military bases in the Indian Ocean, holding that such bases would constitute a threat to the new Afro-Asian countries and impede the process of decolonization. The course of events had shown that the Conference had been right, for in November 1965 the United Kingdom had decided to establish the new British Indian Ocean Territory as the site of defence bases for the United Kingdom and the United States of America. In spite of the resignation of three Ministers of the Mauritius Social Democratic Party and the protests raised in Mauritius following that decision, the administering Power had not changed its position on the establishment of those bases, as was evident from the statement of the United Kingdom Defence Secretary, contained in the Secretariat working paper (A/AC.109/L.279, para. 34).

As it had already stated, his delegation held that the United Kingdom was not entitled to dismember the Territory of Mauritius for the purpose of military installations. It considered that the Sub-Committee was duty bound to recommend to the Special Committee that the peoples of the Territories in question should

(Mr. Janevski, Yugoslavia)

accede without delay to independence, in accordance with their freely expressed wishes and with the provisions of the Declaration contained in resolution 1514 (XV). It further thought that the problem of the establishment of military bases through the dismemberment of Mauritius should be given particular attention, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2066 (XX).

Mr. KOFOED (Denmark) expressed his satisfaction that the Territory of Mauritius was to accede to independence the following year, in accordance with the agreement established at the Constitutional Conference in London in September 1965. Following negotiations between the administering Power and the island's three main political parties, the electoral provisions made in the original draft Constitution, which had aroused some criticism by the parties, had been modified and subsequently approved by all concerned. In that connexion, the electoral system drawn up for Mauritius might seem at first to be unduly elaborate, but a similar and equally elaborate system had been functioning in Denmark for a long time, to everyone's satisfaction. Experience had shown that the system fulfilled its purpose perfectly, which was to assure fair and equal representation of all voters. The elections which were to take place on Mauritius would ensure the establishment of an autonomous Government and subsequently, after an interval of six months, accession to independence. The economic and social situation in the Territory seemed satisfactory, thanks to the determined efforts made by the authorities and the people to overcome the severe difficulties due to the losses caused a few years ago by two cyclones. Moreover, the authorities had been trying for some years to diversify the island's economy, which, at present, depended largely on its sugar production. The Danish Government thought, therefore, that the Territory of Mauritius could advance confidently towards independence, and it was looking forward to maintaining the best of relations with the new State.

With regard to Seychelles and St. Helena, his delegation considered, as it had often stated, that it was for the people of those Territories, and for them alone, to determine their constitutional future. The size, population and economy of those Territories might justify the adoption of special constitutional arrangements, which should not be ruled out, provided they met with the support of the population.

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(Mr. Kofod, Denmark)

His delegation thought that in its report to the Special Committee, the Sub-Committee should express its satisfaction with the considerable progress made by the Territory of Mauritius on the path towards independence and should express the hope that the forthcoming elections would be another proof of the population's desire to accede to independence. With regard to Seychelles and St. Helena, the Sub-Committee's recommendations should take account of the special circumstances prevailing in those Territories and should, therefore, not contain any proposals which might be incompatible with those circumstances and perhaps with the wishes of the population concerned.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.