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Summary record of the 13th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 1 November 2021, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. González López (El Salvador)

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Agenda item 63: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (*continued*) ([A/76/23](#) and [A/76/68](#))

1. Mr. de Rivière (France) said that France had been cooperating in the political process on the question of

New Caledonia since 1998 within the framework of the Nouméa Accord. The process had involved three votes on the Territory's accession to full sovereignty. The first two, held in 2018 and 2020 respectively, had concluded in favour of remaining part of the French Republic. The Congress of New Caledonia had called for the third and final vote in April 2021. In May 2021, upon the invitation of the French Prime Minister, pro- and anti-independence political leaders had held discussions to determine the process of political dialogue that would follow the third vote, an area in which the Nouméa Accord gave little guidance. The implications of "yes" and "no" votes had been examined in detail, and a reference document had been published to assist voters. The statement issued on 1 June 2021, following the discussions, marked a watershed moment by setting out the way to continue on the path of dialogue. Regardless of the outcome of the vote, the parties had agreed to a transition period of 18 months in order to establish the political structure of the Territory. That transition period would end in an additional vote, by June 2023 at the latest, to allow the people of New Caledonia to approve the new political structure. Within the scope of that timetable, and after consulting all parties, the French Government had, in accordance with its functions, scheduled the third vote for 12 December 2021.

2. The French Government had made several additional commitments with a view to defining the future of New Caledonia within a consensus-based framework. For instance, it had renewed its commitment to guarantee the constitutional right to self-determination; confirmed that it would not request the removal of New Caledonia from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories during the transition period; reaffirmed that it would not reclaim competences transferred to the Territory; and ruled out the possibility of partitioning the Territory. If the outcome of the vote was in favour of independence, France would stand by its word and accompany New Caledonia in that transition, genuinely seeking to build friendly relations and specific partnerships with the new Government. Those commitments would foreground New Caledonians and help to limit the effects of institutional uncertainty.

3. France had chosen to work closely with the United Nations on the political process to provide it with transparency and legitimacy, complementing the fundamental principles of neutrality, dialogue and respect for democratic choices that were guaranteed by the State. The United Nations had dispatched electoral experts and helped review electoral lists and oversee the voting. The Special Committee on decolonization had visited the Territory twice, in 2014 and 2018, and had

been invited to do so again. Following the visits, it had made recommendations, particularly with regard to the importance of the public information campaign on the implications of the vote. The reference document drafted in May 2021 was one example of the French Government's response to those recommendations.

4. As a result of assistance made available by the French Government, New Caledonia had initially been spared by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In September 2021, however, a wave of infections had caused 265 deaths to date. The French Minister for Overseas Territories had visited the Territory in October 2021. The French Government had deployed significant medical assistance in the form of staff and equipment, not to mention providing financial support for local businesses and covering the local government's costs. Those efforts had borne fruit, as had the vaccine campaign conducted by the French Government since January 2021, and the situation was steadily improving. His Government would continue to follow the health situation carefully, and would ensure that it did not hinder the exercise of the political rights of the people of New Caledonia.

5. The inclusion of French Polynesia on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories ran counter to the democratic choice of the French Polynesian people. The President of French Polynesia had requested the removal of French Polynesia from that list and had presented the grounds for its removal, such as the high level of autonomy that French Polynesia had within the French Republic, including a democratically elected President, a Government to manage Polynesian affairs and a legislature, the Assembly of French Polynesia, with members elected by popular vote every five years. That status respected the identity, history, culture and specificities of the Territory and suited Polynesians, as demonstrated at elections that met democratic standards. His delegation hoped that the inclusion of French Polynesia on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories would be reviewed in light of the wishes of the French Polynesian people.

6. Multilingualism was a fundamental value of the United Nations and was essential to the fulfilment of its mandates and shared purposes, particularly in light of the spread of infodemics and false information.

7. **Mr. Rodríguez Cuadros** (Peru) said that the priority of the Committee and the Special Committee on decolonization over the following years should be to secure the right to self-determination and independence for those still living in colonial situations in the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. Peru fully recognized the sovereignty rights of Argentina

over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The question of the Malvinas represented a special and particular situation to which the principle of self-determination did not apply, because the replacement of the local population had radically altered the demographic composition of the islands. The two parties should resume negotiations as a matter of urgency, in line with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX) and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations on the peaceful settlement of disputes, with a view to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to that sovereignty dispute. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 31/49, they should also refrain from unilateral action in the disputed territory. At the same time, confidence-building measures would help to create the necessary conditions for the resumption of dialogue, consultations and direct negotiations.

8. Peru had begun to re-establish its diplomatic relations with the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic in September 2021, in full application of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and international law, with a view to developing friendly and cooperative relations between the two peoples and nations. By doing so, his Government hoped to contribute more actively to the definitive decolonization of the Territory, in the context of the decisions and the process led by the United Nations and the Special Committee. That decision also upheld the principle of universality in diplomatic relations that characterized Peruvian foreign policy, and as such, was independent of the ongoing fruitful relations between Peru and the Kingdom of Morocco and its people. The recent events in the territory of Western Sahara, which had led to the breakdown of the ceasefire, gave cause for alarm. His delegation hoped that the appointment of the new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General would lead to a new ceasefire and towards a lasting and peaceful solution that would ensure the decolonization of the Territory.

9. Peru welcomed the progressive development of the three basic principles of peacekeeping operations to include respect for human rights, the promotion of gender equality, the strengthening of the rule of law, poverty eradication and the building of solid institutions to consolidate peaceful coexistence. Peru had contributed an engineering company to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). It planned to deploy a demining team, a rapid reaction squad and a helicopter unit. Peru was also working to

uphold its commitment to the full integration of women in peacekeeping operations.

10. **Mr. Ladeb** (Tunisia) said that his delegation commended the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), along with host and donor countries, for their commitment to maintaining vital services for Palestine refugees despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It encouraged the Commissioner-General of UNRWA to endeavour to expand the Agency's donor base and identify innovative means of funding. The resumption of support for UNRWA by the United States of America was welcome, as were the Agency's efforts to meet standards of transparency and effectiveness. His delegation deplored any attempt to cast doubt on the Agency's mandate and impartiality.

11. The international community should intensify its efforts to salvage the two-State solution and relaunch serious negotiations on the basis of United Nations resolutions and internationally agreed terms of reference, with a view to upholding the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, ending the Israeli occupation and facilitating the establishment of an independent, sovereign and geographically contiguous Palestinian State on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, and resolving all final status issues, including the Palestine refugee question. Israeli practices in the occupied Arab territories, including continued settlement activity, confiscation of land and home demolitions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, constituted violations of the most fundamental human rights.

12. His delegation reiterated its appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the Organization's role in maintaining international peace and security through his Action for Peacekeeping and Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiatives. Peacekeeping missions should have clear mandates and specific objectives and be given adequate resources and capabilities. Peacekeeping missions should assist host country authorities in their bid to combat the pandemic, in accordance with Security Council resolution [2532 \(2020\)](#), whose adoption had been the culmination of a joint Tunisian-French initiative. Tunisia endorsed the use by peacekeeping operations of modern technologies for monitoring, early warning and protection.

13. More should be done to ensure the full and effective participation of women in peacekeeping operations and conflict resolution efforts. For its part, Tunisia continued to increase the proportion of women among its peacekeepers. Tunisian troops served in six missions; in particular, Tunisia had contributed a C-130

aircraft and 75 personnel to the air force peacekeeping unit of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and a helicopter unit and 130 personnel to MINUSCA. His delegation commended the professionalism and courage of peacekeepers and paid tribute to those who had lost their lives in the line of duty.

14. His delegation welcomed the Verified campaign, which had been launched in 2020 by the Department of Global Communications in order to combat fake news regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and promoting recovery and the equitable distribution of vaccines. The Department should continue its effort to increase awareness of the need for global solidarity and cooperation to combat the economic, social and humanitarian impacts of COVID-19 and accelerate pandemic recovery, especially in developing countries and least developed countries. It was equally important to support programmes on empowering women and young people and bridging the digital divide. In that connection, his delegation valued the Department's partnerships with social media platforms, which helped to reach the widest possible audience, especially among the young. It welcomed the Department's efforts to provide reliable, accurate information in the six official languages and in other languages. It hoped that media coverage of United Nations meetings would be provided in more of the official languages of the United Nations.

15. **Mr. Araba** (Benin) said that his delegation supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and the relevant Security Council decisions in working towards a realistic, practical and lasting solution, based on compromise, to the question of Western Sahara. Such a solution would significantly contribute to lasting stability in the Maghreb and to African integration. Benin welcomed the agreement by Morocco to a lasting ceasefire that would help to relaunch the political process.

16. His delegation commended Morocco for cooperating with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to coordinate the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and for accepting the appointment of the new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General. The holding of two round tables in 2018 and 2019 with the participation of Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and the Polisario had represented a definite step towards compromise; but that outcome depended on the full commitment of all parties, who must show a spirit of realism and compromise to find fair and mutually acceptable solutions that would lead to the definitive settlement of the issue.

17. **Mr. Ndong Mba** (Equatorial Guinea) said that Equatorial Guinea was a firm defender of the principles of territorial integrity and self-determination of peoples, which must be achieved through dialogue, respect and cooperation. In order fully to implement the Declaration on decolonization, all stakeholders should negotiate towards peaceful, just and lasting solutions.

18. On the question of Western Sahara, his delegation welcomed the progress made and the parties' will to reach a fair, lasting, mutually acceptable agreement to the benefit of both parties. In particular, the Kingdom of Morocco had made commendable efforts to advance its autonomy initiative, implement its socioeconomic development plan for the region, and combat COVID-19 by making vaccines widely available to the population. Those measures demonstrated its commitment to reaching a solution that would guarantee peace, stability and security in the region. Equatorial Guinea supported the political process under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General, in order to reach a realistic, viable and lasting political solution to the dispute on Western Sahara, based on compromise, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The holding of the round tables with the participation of Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and the Polisario, and the appointment of the new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, were welcome developments in that regard.

19. In order to improve their effectiveness, peacekeeping operations and special political missions should work closely with regional and subregional organizations, host countries and people with first-hand knowledge of the situation on the ground. In Africa, for instance, it was important to collaborate with the African Union in order to strengthen the fulfilment of mandates, which must be clear, concise and adapted to the realities of each country. The women, peace and security agenda must be rapidly and effectively implemented to ensure the fundamental inclusion of women at all stages of conflicts and in all mission structures.

20. **Mr. Maniratanga** (Burundi) said that the resolution of the long-standing dispute concerning Western Sahara was of critical importance, given the growing instability and lack of security in the Sahel and surrounding regions and, in particular, because the persistence of the dispute was hindering the further integration of the Maghreb region. Burundi supported the ongoing political process, held under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General, aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable, negotiated and pragmatic political solution to the regional dispute over Western Sahara, based on a spirit of realism and compromise, as

recommended in Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007.

21. Burundi supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a compromise solution in line with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. It welcomed the renewed momentum generated by the two round tables with the participation of Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and the Polisario, which should remain committed throughout the political process and demonstrate a spirit of realism and compromise. The achievement of a political solution, together with enhanced cooperation between the States members of the Arab Maghreb Union, would contribute to stability and security in the Sahel region, as stated in Security Council resolutions 2414 (2018), 2440 (2018), 2468 (2019), 2494 (2019) and 2548 (2020). The appointment of the new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General was a positive development, and all parties should support the resumption of the round table process in order to build on the work of the outgoing Personal Envoy.

22. Burundi welcomed the new development model for the Sahara launched by Morocco in 2015, which had led to progress in autonomy, development and human rights in the Sahara. The participation of the elected representatives of Western Sahara in the regional seminars, Special Committee meetings and at the two round tables in Geneva were encouraging. His delegation commended Morocco for holding general, legislative, local and regional elections throughout the country, with high turnout in the Sahara, and for the measures taken to combat COVID-19, notably the vaccination campaign. Lastly, it was essential for refugees to be registered in accordance with international humanitarian law, the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the recommendations of the Secretary-General and all relevant Security Council resolutions.

23. **Mr. Gimolieca** (Angola) said that his Government welcomed the efforts of the Special Committee on decolonization to promote the implementation of the Declaration and ensure the decolonization process continued in the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. In Western Sahara, the efforts of the Secretary-General and the recent appointment of his new Personal Envoy were welcome steps towards a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, based on compromise, that would allow the people of Western Sahara to exercise self-determination in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. For over three decades, the Sahrawi people had been waiting for a referendum and had put

their trust in the United Nations system, constructively engaging in the peace process. In order to prevent further crises, the international community must work together to end colonialism and the associated practices of segregation and discrimination.

24. The recent escalation of violence between Israel and Palestine was concerning, as it had renewed the conflict in the Middle East and threatened the ceasefire agreement brokered in May 2021. Angola supported the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, in accordance with the Declaration. It commended the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and welcomed all initiatives to establish peace and security in the Middle East, including the international ministerial conference on UNRWA convened by Jordan and Sweden and to be held in Brussels on 16 November 2021. The international community must strive to create conditions of peace, stability and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, based on the principles of equal rights and self-determination of all peoples.

25. **Ms. Cerrato** (Honduras) said that the United Nations must ensure the continuation of ongoing self-determination and independence processes. The continued existence of Territories without the right to self-determination hindered the decolonization process, which should be completed through continuous dialogue between the administering Powers, the Special Committee on decolonization and the peoples of the Territories themselves.

26. Honduras appreciated the valuable work done by the Special Committee on decolonization in its consideration of the question of the Malvinas Islands since the adoption, in 1965, of General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX). Honduras recognized the efforts of Argentina and the United Kingdom to make progress in their bilateral relations, which would help to create conditions for the resumption of negotiations and allow Argentina to fully exercise its legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

27. Her delegation recognized the role of the University for Peace in fostering understanding, tolerance, cooperation and peaceful coexistence between peoples and had collaborated with the University in areas such as the rule of law and education. The Department of Global Communications was adapting effectively to virtual methods of coverage, interpretation and dissemination in response to the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department had responded flexibly to the pandemic by launching its Verified initiative, designed to encourage the sharing of convincing and science-based information. As multilingualism was one of the key drivers of unity and mutual understanding at the United Nations, the Department should continue to uphold that principle by encouraging parity in the use of the six official languages.

28. The pandemic had made it necessary to review of the working methods of the Organization. For instance, it was essential to ensure that preparedness measures for health-related and other emergencies were incorporated into peacekeeping mandates. The Action for Peacekeeping initiative had led to improvements in the safety of peacekeeping personnel and the protection of civilians, and had helped to address shortcomings in such areas as training, leadership and accountability.

29. Member States must implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on the women, peace and security agenda, and subsequent related resolutions. Twenty years since the adoption of that resolution, the number of female staff officers and military observers had increased. Further progress should be made in that regard, given the significant value contributed by women to peacekeeping. Honduras paid tribute to all peacekeepers, including those who had lost their lives in the cause of peace, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic. Peace and development were interlinked; the Sustainable Development Goals could not be achieved in unstable, conflict-affected areas. Peace and security were prerequisites for the mobilization of adequate resources and the development of the cooperation required to implement the 2030 Agenda.

30. **Mr. Mlynár** (Slovakia) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had risked reversing the gains made by countries in transition and post-conflict countries. In addition, effective communication with media partners and local communities to counter the spread of misinformation was more critical than ever. One year after the launch of its 2020 global communications strategy, the Department of Global Communications had increased its agility, the scope of its activities and its engagement with all stakeholders, including civil society and young people in the context of peacekeeping missions.

31. His delegation paid tribute to all peacekeeping personnel for their sacrifice in the service of peace, and supported the robust and comprehensive approach taken by the United Nations to ensure that political processes continued, stability was maintained and civilians were protected during the pandemic. Peacekeeping personnel continued to face such risks as insufficient pre-

deployment training and material and technological support. His delegation commended the Secretary-General's efforts in that regard, including through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. The uniformed gender parity strategy 2018–2028 was another important step towards meeting the goals set at the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial held in London in 2016. Slovakia had also endorsed the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and was committed to supporting its implementation, including by ensuring that Slovakian peacekeepers conducted themselves in a responsible and disciplined manner.

32. His delegation supported the full and equal participation of women in the maintenance of international peace and security and called for the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions. Women accounted for nearly 12 per cent of his country's armed forces and his Government was committed to increasing that proportion. The gender equality action plan of the Ministry of Defence was intended to integrate gender perspectives into such areas as operational planning, training and evaluation. Slovakia currently had personnel deployed to two United Nations peacekeeping operations and had contributed to the military and civilian missions of several other intergovernmental organizations. Of the Slovak military personnel deployed to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), 11 per cent were women. In total, Slovak women accounted for over 44 per cent of the Force's uniformed female personnel.

33. Security sector reform was one of the keys to effective conflict prevention and successful post-conflict rebuilding and stabilization. Numerous United Nations and African Union peace operations had shown that a nationally led and inclusive security sector reform process could help to address the root causes of insecurity and fragility and create an enabling environment for sustainable development and peace. In addition, security sector reform was directly linked to the protection of civilians and the rule of law, critical tasks that had become an integral part of almost every peace operation. The equal and effective participation of women at all stages of the security sector reform process was essential, to ensure the development of security sector institutions that were non-discriminatory, representative of the population and capable of effectively responding to the specific security needs of diverse groups.

34. His delegation welcomed such initiatives as the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians and the voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual

exploitation and abuse. As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission, Slovakia stood ready to promote partnerships in connection with the withdrawal of peacekeepers from operations and subsequent transitions. The United Nations must ensure smooth transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and promote a joined-up approach that included the United Nations system, donors and other stakeholders.

35. **Ms. Baños Müller** (El Salvador) said that, at the outset of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, her country remained committed to supporting United Nations efforts towards the application of the Declaration on decolonization. El Salvador supported the legitimate rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, and hoped that Argentina and the United Kingdom would resume negotiations with a view to finding a just, peaceful and definitive solution to the dispute as soon as possible, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Her delegation acknowledged the constructive attitude of the Government of Argentina, its willingness to resolve the dispute through dialogue and its interest in resuming bilateral negotiations. The good offices of the Secretary-General were of the utmost importance to finding a peaceful solution to the question of the Malvinas Islands.

36. Her delegation supported the efforts of the Kingdom of Morocco to find a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution to the dispute over Western Sahara and considered that the autonomy initiative advanced by Morocco in 2007 constituted a viable solution that respected the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Morocco. El Salvador reaffirmed its support for the political process under way under the auspices of the Secretary-General and the recent appointment of his Personal Envoy to help the parties to reach a negotiated and mutually acceptable political solution.

37. With regard to the situation in the Middle East, El Salvador reaffirmed its support for a peaceful, just and lasting solution, based on the recognition of the right of Israel and Palestine to exist as free and independent States within internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

38. Despite the pandemic, United Nations peacekeeping operations had continued to fulfil their mandates; some had even expanded their activities in support of States' efforts to combat COVID-19. As a troop- and police-contributing country, El Salvador remained committed to peacekeeping and was mindful of the need for decisive action to overcome the

challenges facing peacekeeping operations. Special political missions also played a fundamental role in maintaining international peace and security.

39. Her delegation commended the work of COPUOS, which had made peaceful outer space activities a fundamental tool for complying with multilateral instruments on sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and climate change. Accordingly, it supported the development of the “Space2030” agenda and its implementation plan.

40. Multilingualism was a fundamental component of the United Nations, and the principle of equality between the six official languages must be respected. The University for Peace made an important contribution by promoting a spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence between peoples. In order to revitalize the work of the General Assembly, the working methods of the main Committees should be constantly reviewed and adapted.

41. **Ms. Ioannou** (Cyprus) said that the presence of UNFICYP in Cyprus remained indispensable while part of her country was still under foreign occupation. The mission consistently fulfilled its mandate by fostering a stable environment in which the peace process could take place. Peacekeeping missions were one of the most important tools of the United Nations. However, in order to ensure they remained effective, decisions governing their establishment, functioning and drawdown should be guided by the security situation on the ground and by an achievable mandate.

42. All peacekeeping operations should be able to prevent and respond to violations of the sovereignty of their host States and of the military status quo. They should also be able to address arbitrary restrictions imposed by non-cooperative actors on the ground that prevented the implementation of their mandate. They should aim for broad situational awareness and share such information with the Security Council. Peacekeepers should have the necessary capabilities to ensure the protection of civilians and must be mindful of their environmental footprint. Peacekeeping operations should have a cooperative, synergetic and accountable relationship with host States.

43. Special political missions should be equipped with an in-depth knowledge of local circumstances and be prepared to share best practices. They should be guided by parameters that guaranteed sustainable dispute resolution, such as functional political solutions; strong rule of law frameworks; full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; social and economic equality; and accountability and remedies for abuses suffered during conflicts. It was also important for

missions to create a safe space for women to contribute to dispute resolution, and to have a broad strategic outlook to account for any factors that could compound a conflict or act as crisis multipliers, such as climate change and resource scarcity.

44. In order to protect the integrity of the global system, it was essential to put an end to colonialism, including incomplete decolonization, something that could be done through a cooperative approach underpinned by the established rules and norms of the international legal order.

45. **Mr. Szczerski** (Poland) said that, despite the efforts of the international community, mines, unexploded ordnances and explosive remnants of war were still killing innocent people. They affected the most vulnerable individuals, including children, young people and internally displaced persons, as well as the construction and agricultural labourers who worked to rebuild conflict-stricken areas. Moreover, they negatively affected social and economic recovery by impeding the delivery of humanitarian aid. Mine action was therefore central to peace, security and development, and required sustained support. His delegation remained committed to collectively seeking solutions to the issue in line with the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) and urged all members of the Committee to join consensus on the draft resolution on assistance in mine action (A/C.4/76/L.15).

46. Poland had been voluntarily providing funds to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) since 2015. UNMAS was capable of performing under difficult circumstances and its projects deserved financial and political support. The drop in international funding for mine action in recent years, which would likely be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, was therefore a matter of concern. Comprehensive clearance operations should be undertaken on the ground, alongside education campaigns aimed at increasing the security of civilian populations. It was also useful for multi-stakeholder forums to coordinate and exchange experiences on the issue of mine action; the European Union had a special role to play in that global endeavour, including through its actions to support the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

47. **Mr. Da Silva** (Guinea-Bissau) said that the best way to achieve a durable solution to the question of Western Sahara was through the continued engagement of the parties concerned, under the guidance of the United Nations. The fact that the United Nations had

been able to bring together Morocco, the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), Algeria and Mauritania for two round tables was evidence of the relevance of the United Nations-facilitated process. His delegation commended the work of the former Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General and welcomed the appointment of his successor. It supported the efforts of the United Nations to find a way forward, including through the measures set out in the related Security Council resolutions.

48. The Moroccan autonomy initiative had great potential to stabilize the region politically and to improve the economic, social and cultural situation of the people in the region. His delegation commended Morocco for the investments it had made in the region, a positive step that had encouraged Guinea-Bissau and other African countries to open consulates in Dakhla and Laayoune. Amid the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Guinea-Bissau called for an increase in international humanitarian aid to the refugee camps in order to allow the Government of Morocco to continue helping the most vulnerable people in the region, including women, children and older persons.

49. **Mr. Duarte Lopes** (Portugal) said that his delegation commended the relentless efforts of the United Nations to ensure that peacekeeping operations were able to fulfil their mandates during the pandemic, without compromising the safety of peacekeepers or host country populations. Portugal supported the Action for Peacekeeping and Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiatives, and was putting into practice the commitments set out in the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Portugal participated in a number of peacekeeping operations and related European Union missions. In order to achieve lasting peace, it was crucial to take an overarching and integrated approach, ensuring the promotion of sustainable development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Moreover, conflict prevention and peacebuilding were increasingly linked to poverty reduction. The role of regional organizations was also key in promoting trust and dialogue at the local level.

50. The protection of civilians should be a cross-cutting priority throughout conflict cycles. For that purpose, it was important to improve training and increase the active participation of women in operations. Accordingly, Portugal had been steadily increasing its deployment of female peacekeepers. Moreover, because peacekeeping operations could perform effectively only if given adequate material and financial resources, Portugal voluntarily paid its contribution early in the

year, based on provisional estimates using the current scale of assessment.

51. The Department of Global Communications played a crucial role in promoting public awareness of United Nations activities and principles, something that was instrumental for combating hate speech and misinformation. Multilingualism remained a key factor in reaching the broadest spectrum of audiences and in harnessing support for the Organization across different countries and communities. The Department should further expand its use of languages with global reach, including Portuguese, in relevant documents and communications. His delegation continued to appreciate the invaluable work of the Portuguese Unit of United Nations News, which had been establishing cost-neutral partnerships with media in Portuguese-speaking countries and States with significant Portuguese-speaking diaspora communities since 2013.

52. **Ms. Plakalovic** (Serbia) said that the involvement of Serbian military personnel in United Nations and European Union peacekeeping missions was an important element of Serbian foreign policy. In that vein, Serbia had recently deployed a military police squad to UNFICYP in partnership with the United Kingdom, and remained committed to contributing actively to the maintenance of international peace and stability. Since 2002, her country had consistently increased the scale of its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, and its participation had not decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of the Serbian Army were engaged in five United Nations peacekeeping operations, including the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and MINUSCA. Serbia dedicated special attention to its military medical capabilities in foreign environments. Of particular importance was the Serbian military hospital in MINUSCA, the quality of whose services, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, had been widely acknowledged. Her Government had also deployed members of its Ministry of the Interior to assist UNFICYP and members of its Ministry of Justice to assist the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

53. Her Government also made significant contributions to the operations and missions of the European Union under the Common Security and Defence Policy and the European Union Global Strategy. Serbia would maintain, and remained open to enhancing, its contributions to the peacekeeping missions of the United Nations and the European Union.

54. Serbia fully supported the Action for Peacekeeping and Action for Peacekeeping Plus

initiatives, including the efforts to increase the engagement of women in peacekeeping operations and to use the light coordination mechanism more proactively. Women accounted for almost 16 per cent of the Serbian peacekeepers currently deployed in peacekeeping operations, and represented 45.45 per cent of medical personnel in the context of MINUSCA. The Serbian Army ensured a high level of training for individuals and units prior to their deployment. As part of its commitment to capacity-building, her delegation also participated in the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System. The Action for Peacekeeping priority of improving cooperation with host countries was of particular interest to Serbia, which was itself the host country for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The latter must consistently adhere to Security Council resolution [1244 \(1999\)](#) and maintain the same level of engagement with an unchanged mandate.

55. **Mr. Henry** (Saint Lucia) said that given the role of the United Nations in its self-determination process, Saint Lucia attached great importance to the issues of self-determination and decolonization and was particularly concerned that the promise of decolonization for Non-Self-Governing small island Territories in the Caribbean and Pacific remained unfulfilled. The Special Committee should strengthen cooperation with the administering Powers, which in turn should provide information on the implementation status of the 2030 Agenda in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

56. On the question of Western Sahara, his delegation supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to facilitate the political process and welcomed the recent appointment of his new Personal Envoy for Western Sahara. Saint Lucia welcomed the round-table discussions held between Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and Frente POLISARIO, and hoped that a just and mutually acceptable solution could be reached through dialogue in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. Saint Lucia also noted the options for the resolution of the dispute that were under consideration, as well as the various initiatives taken by Morocco to that end, including the support it had provided for combating COVID-19.

57. Non-Self-Governing Territories had not been spared by the pandemic, and those located in the Caribbean and the Pacific were also extremely vulnerable to climate change. The same was true of Saint Lucia, despite its being one of the lowest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. His delegation therefore recognized the support given to the Non-Self-Governing Territories by the specialized

agencies of the United Nations to address such emerging challenges.

58. **Mr. Youssef Aden Moussa** (Djibouti) said that, in order to adapt to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on peacekeeping activities, it was important to focus on best practices. His delegation welcomed the adjustments made to working conditions and mandate implementation, based on the recommendations of the General Assembly and of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. Troop-contributing countries had shown a remarkable sense of responsibility, professionalism and solidarity. His delegation commended the work of the Group of Friends for the vaccination of United Nations uniformed personnel, the Secretary-General and the teams mobilized following the successful launch of the vaccination campaign.

59. Despite its limited resources and population size, Djibouti had consistently contributed to African and United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Horn of Africa. In light of the Security Council decision to increase the number of peacekeepers in the Central African Republic, Djibouti would deploy a police unit to MINUSCA.

60. His delegation paid tribute to all peacekeeping personnel for their devoted and courageous work in highly dangerous environments. Women, in particular, made a crucial contribution to the global peace and security agenda. In order to increase their participation, security should be improved and action should be taken to combat gender-based discrimination. Djibouti supported the Action for Peacekeeping and Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiatives.

61. On the question of Western Sahara, the extension of the mandate of MINURSO in line with Security Council resolution [2602 \(2021\)](#) was welcome. Djibouti supported the political process led by the United Nations aimed at achieving, through dialogue, a realistic, practicable and mutually acceptable political solution to the dispute. His delegation welcomed the Moroccan autonomy initiative and the appointment of the new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, as well as the resumption of the round-table discussions. The legislative elections held in Morocco, including in the Sahara, had been carried out in a free, transparent and democratic manner, and the Moroccan authorities had made major investments to develop the Moroccan Sahara and combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

62. With regard to the question of Palestine, Djibouti reiterated its support for the inalienable right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, for a fair and lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and for the creation of an independent and sovereign

Palestinian State, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. His delegation strongly condemned the settlement expansion, demolitions and seizure of possessions in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as the acts of violence that targeted Palestinian civilians. Those human rights violations had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The international community must support UNRWA to enable it to provide humanitarian assistance and essential services to Palestinians.

63. Multilateralism was not possible without multilingualism, which was a fundamental value of the Organization. Multilingualism was a powerful tool for inclusion, and the failure to ensure linguistic diversity in multilateral forums would both hinder discussions and obstruct the effective dissemination of information to a global audience.

64. **Mr. Cravid e Silva** (Sao Tome and Principe) said that, with regard to the dispute over Western Sahara, his delegation strongly supported the ongoing political process, conducted under the auspices of the Secretary-General, aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable political solution, as had been recommended by the Security Council since 2007. His delegation welcomed the holding of two round-table meetings with the participation of Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and Frente POLISARIO and was pleased that the parties had agreed to reconvene for a third time.

65. His delegation welcomed the institutional and economic reforms undertaken by Morocco, which had helped improve the living conditions and well-being of the populations in the Sahara, as well as the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which provided a credible and realistic settlement of the dispute. The Security Council had also deemed the initiative to be credible, pragmatic and in line with international law. Sao Tome and Principe reiterated its support for the political process under way and urged all stakeholders to show their commitment to achieving a lasting political solution. His delegation also welcomed the appointment of the Secretary-General's new Personal Envoy for the Sahara, and hoped that he would maintain the approach taken by his predecessor.

66. **Mr. Tito** (Kiribati) said that following the 87-year experience of colonialism in Kiribati, his country knew the sense of joy, pride and dignity that came from gaining freedom from the grip of a foreign governance system. The United Nations should continue to do all in its power to respond to calls for self-determination around the world, in accordance with the principles, frameworks and pathways agreed under its auspices. Many of those agreements had been in limbo for

decades, casting doubt on whether the Organization was serious about resolving such issues. Timely action was therefore needed in order to allow the peoples of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories to regain confidence in the processes of the United Nations.

67. Under colonialism, control had been held by peoples with an alien cultural perspective that was largely based on a cash economy, whereas indigenous and traditional ways of life had been based on a symbiotic relationship with nature in which the benefits of prosperity and progress were collectively owned by the community. Some colonized peoples had achieved independence, whether through negotiations or conflict; others, including many in the Pacific, had opted for internal autonomy. The latter should be able to review their form of self-determination periodically, and the means for achieving full independence should be safeguarded against manipulation by their colonial rulers. The United Nations should continue to consider and process, through the established peaceful channels, all requests for self-determination.

68. On the question of Western Sahara, his delegation supported the ongoing efforts of the United Nations and other stakeholders to encourage the parties to engage in negotiations, under the auspices of the United Nations, in a friendly, respectful and pragmatic spirit, building on the initiatives in place.

69. **Ms. McGill** (Liberia) said that her delegation was concerned at the resumption of hostilities in Western Sahara, which undermined the prospects of a political solution to the long-standing conflict. It recognized the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the operations of MINURSO and commended the achievements of Morocco in combating the virus, particularly its vaccination campaign. An inclusive political solution, under the auspices of the Secretary-General and in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, would enhance cooperation among member States of the Maghreb Arab Union and contribute to stability and security in the Sahel region.

70. Liberia welcomed the appointment of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and supported the relaunch of the round-table process facilitated by his predecessor in accordance with Security Council resolutions [2494 \(2019\)](#) and [2548 \(2020\)](#). That new development would give the process momentum, particularly following the Security Council vote to extend the mandate of MINURSO. All parties to the conflict must remain constructively engaged throughout the process in order to ensure a successful and lasting outcome.

71. **Mr. Komara** (Guinea) said that the question of Western Sahara was of critical importance for the stability of the region. Guinea welcomed the two round tables held among stakeholders in Geneva, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, and the appointment of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for the Sahara, whose actions should build on those of his predecessor. Guinea believed that a solution could be reached only through inclusive dialogue and respect for the commitments made. His delegation called on all stakeholders to engage fully, in a spirit of realism and compromise in order to achieve a successful, realistic, pragmatic and enduring outcome.

72. Within the framework of its autonomy initiative, the Kingdom of Morocco had implemented significant institutional and economic reforms aimed at promoting human rights and development in the country's southern provinces. Guinea welcomed the general, legislative, local and regional elections that had been held in September 2021 across the entire national territory, including the Sahara, in a climate of peace and with a high rate of participation from the population of the Moroccan Sahara. The encouraging results of those elections showed the Moroccan autonomy initiative to be a compromise solution, in line with international law and General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. The good faith of Morocco had been made clear by its full respect for the ceasefire in the Sahara, and the fact that elected representatives of the Moroccan Sahara had participated in regional seminars of the Special Committee on decolonization and in the two round tables in Geneva.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

73. **Ms. Dix** (United Kingdom), replying to the comments made by the representatives of Peru, Honduras and El Salvador, said that the United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and surrounding maritime areas, or regarding the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in article 1 of the two International Covenants on human rights, by virtue of which they freely determined their political status and freely pursued their economic, social and cultural development.

74. The 2013 referendum, in which 99.8 per cent of those who had voted had wanted to maintain their current status as an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom, had sent a clear message that the people of the Islands did not want a dialogue on sovereignty. Those wishes should be respected.

75. It had been alleged that the Falkland Islanders were not entitled to self-determination. Those claims were untrue: prior to 1833, there had been no indigenous or settled population on the Islands and no civilian population had ever been forcibly removed. Several families had been living on the Islands for nine generations.

76. **Mr. Kim In Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation categorically rejected the allegation made by the representative of Israel at the previous meeting (A/C.4/76/SR.12) with regard to the emergency measures taken by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to protect its people from the COVID-19 pandemic. The allegation was an intolerable act of interference in internal affairs. Almost all countries were taking measures to confront the rapid spread of the pandemic in accordance with their respective situations, and the types of measures employed were an entirely internal matter that fell within the competence of each country. His Government took full responsibility for the lives, security and livelihoods of its people. There had been no COVID-19 cases in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The rights and interests of the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were given the highest and absolute priority, and their dignity was firmly guaranteed.

77. Israel was not entitled or qualified to talk about the human rights situation in other countries or humanitarian assistance. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories had provided details on the worsening human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. The deplorable human rights situation and humanitarian crisis suffered by the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation had been thoroughly documented in reports of other United Nations agencies.

78. The allegation made by Israel was merely a last-ditch effort to divert attention from its crimes against humanity. If Israel continued to pursue its expansionist policies and commit atrocities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and other occupied Arab territories, it would never escape international condemnation and isolation.

79. **Mr. Alvarez** (Argentina) said that his delegation reiterated the statements made by the President of Argentina at the General Assembly on 21 September 2021 (A/76/PV.4) and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina at the meeting of the Special

Committee on decolonization on 24 June 2021 (A/AC.109/2021/SR.6). 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 on decolonization had repeatedly adopted resolutions in the same vein, most recently the resolution adopted on 24 June 2021.

80. 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. In 1776, as part of the administrative restructuring of its possessions in the Americas, Spain had established the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, with Buenos Aires as its capital, bringing the Malvinas Islands under its administration. That situation had been evidenced by the appointment of numerous governors by the Spanish Government up until 1811, when 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 over the Islands.

81. The principle of self-determination, 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. Consequently, the 2013 vote held in the Malvinas Islands was simply a unilateral action undertaken by the United Kingdom, devoid of any legal value; it therefore in no way changed the essence of the question of the Malvinas, it did not resolve the sovereignty dispute and it had no effect on the legitimate rights of Argentina.

82. The interests and way of life of the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands were adequately addressed by the

relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and by the Constitution of Argentina. Lastly, 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 its national territory.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.