

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIVE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-THIRD MEETING

Held on Friday, 8 March 1968, at 3.35 p.m.

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Mr. MESTIRI

Tunisia

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QUESTION OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA (A/AC.109/284, 285, 286; A/AC.109/L.443 and Add.1)
(continued)

At the Chairman's invitation, Mr. de Pinies, representative of Spain, took a place at the Committee table.

At the Chairman's invitation, Mr. Saturnino Ibongo Iyanga, representative of the United States Committee of the Movimiento Nacional de Liberación de la Guinea Ecuatorial (MONALIGE) and Mr. Francisco Salcme Jones, representative of the Joint Guinean Secretariat of the Constitutional Conference on Equatorial Guinea, took places at the Committee table.

Mr. ESFANDIARY (Iran) thanked the petitioners for the valuable information they had previously given to the Committee and which supplemented that received from the administering Power.

Although Spain had declared its acceptance of General Assembly resolution 2355 (XXII), doubts seemed to persist about the date of independence, the Constitutional Conference, the provisional Government and, to some extent, the presence of the United Nations to supervise the preparations for independence. He would like to ask some questions in the hope of dispelling some of those doubts and of reaching an understanding. He asked first what role the petitioners envisaged for the United Nations in the course of the Constitutional Conference.

Mr. IBONGO (Movimiento Nacional de Liberación de la Guinea Ecuatorial) said that the role of the United Nations would be to perform the tasks implicitly defined in operative paragraph 7 of resolution 2355 (XXII) and to help the Guineans overcome the technical, constitutional and legal difficulties which would arise in drafting the treaties reflecting the talks with the Spanish delegation. United Nations technical advisers could be attached to the Guinean delegation.

Mr. ESFANDIARY (Iran) pointed out that the object of the Constitutional Conference was to work out the modalities for the transfer of power, including the drawing up of an electoral law and a constitution. Apart from those two items, he asked whether the petitioners had contemplated the discussion of other matters, such as the future co-operation of Equatorial Guinea with Spain. The Spanish Government had considered that it would be opportune for the Conference to discuss that question. He also asked the petitioners for their views on the additional matters which might be included in the agenda of the Conference.

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Mr. IBONGO (Movimiento Nacional de Liberación de la Guinea Ecuatorial) said that, in his opinion - and he believed that it was also the opinion of Mr. Francisco Salome Jones - the Conference should be the place to work out the constitution of Equatorial Guinea for the purposes of independence. Its main task would not be to examine relations between Guinea and Spain; those relations, once independence had been obtained, would be the normal ones between two independent States. Also, that would be the time to discuss the participation of Spain in technical assistance and educational programmes and to settle all kinds of questions within the framework of bilateral agreements. Equatorial Guinea would then need the technical aid of various Spanish Ministries but the question did not arise for the moment. Bilateral matters would be taken up when the Government had been formed.

Mr. ESFANDIARY (Iran) said he wished to return to the question of a United Nations presence during the preparations for independence. The Constitutional Conference could be considered as one of the stages leading towards independence. In that case, as the petitioners had indicated, the United Nations presence would be in conformity with the spirit of paragraph 7 of resolution 2355 (XXII). On the other hand, if the United Nations was asked to provide technical advisers, it would have to be done on an informal basis. However, he doubted whether the role of the United Nations at that juncture would be technical. It would be primarily a political role, designed to ensure that the participating organizations, namely the different political parties of Equatorial Guinea, took part in the work of the Constitutional Conference and had complete freedom to state their views. He would like to know if the petitioners had any comments on that point.

Mr. IBONGO (Movimiento Nacional de Liberación de la Guinea Ecuatorial) explained that in requesting a United Nations presence the petitioners had never wished to give the impression that the groups they represented were not free to express themselves at the Constitutional Conference. The members of the Guinean delegation to the Conference needed United Nations assistance because they were facing technical difficulties. They hoped that the United Nations would tell them in particular how to submit their problems to the Spanish delegation, how to envisage the Conference and draft the electoral law.

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Mr. ESFANDIARY (Iran) said that his last question concerned the provisional Government. Paragraph 5 (c) of resolution 2355 (XXII) referred to the transfer of "effective power to the Government resulting from the elections". That implied that during the period preceding the elections the day-to-day responsibilities of administering the Territory would be handled by the administering Power. He would like to know whether the parties concerned would like to have a provisional Government composed of all the parties or would prefer Spain to assume that responsibility before the holding of elections and the formation of a Government.

Mr. IECONGO (Movimiento Nacional de Liberación de la Guinea Ecuatorial) said that that question had been under discussion since December 1967. Everything depended on the political attitude of the administering Power. In fact, at the moment, the Government of Guinea was not a parliamentary Government because the political parties were not recognized. In those circumstances, Spain could not designate a party to form the Government. That problem could have been solved by the Decree-Law. If, at the same time, Guinea had had an electoral law which could have served as the basis for the formation of a provisional Government, a political campaign lasting some fifteen or twenty days would have been enough to constitute that Government. For that reason, MONALIGE had proposed dates in the petition which it had submitted. It wanted the administering Power to proceed by stages for the promulgation of the electoral law. Mr. Salome Jones had spoken of the position of the political parties and had said that they wanted a coalition Government. It was understandable that Spain did not wish to entrust the formation of a Government to a particular individual, when the degree of influence he had in the country was doubtful. However, that doubt would not be dispelled by the Decree-Law which had just been promulgated.

Mr. ESFANDIARY (Iran) assured the petitioners that they would have the full support of his delegation in their efforts to achieve an independent and united Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. SHAKHOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, after hearing the petitioners and the representative of Spain on the situation regarding the application of resolution 2355 (XXII), his delegation had the impression that the measures proposed by the Spanish Government ran counter to the decisions adopted by the United Nations.

According to General Assembly resolution 2355 (XXII), Equatorial Guinea was to achieve independence before 15 July 1968. The representative of Spain had declared that his country had accepted that resolution. However, time was passing and the Constitutional Conference was continually being postponed. That could not fail to cause concern to the Special Committee. The resolution of the General Assembly had been adopted on 19 December 1967. On 26 December 1967, as the representative of Spain had stated, the representatives of the three political parties making up the Guinean delegation at the first phase of the Conference had sent a letter to the Spanish Government asking it to reconvene the Conference and to consider the question or the questions arising from resolution 2355 (XXII). In other words, only a week had elapsed between the adoption of the resolution and the request of the three political parties. However, so far the Conference had not reconvened. He would like to know whether the representatives of the political parties had received a reply from the Spanish Government, either officially or unofficially.

Mr. IBONGO (Movimiento Nacional de Liberación de la Guinea Ecuatorial) replied that, in accordance with information he had just received from the representative of the Secretariat of the three political parties in Madrid, the Spanish Government had fixed no date for the resumption of the Conference, either officially or unofficially. In fact, that elementary and minor problem should have been settled by the Spanish Decree-Law. Since it had not been settled, the petitioners, assuming the role of the administering Power, had on the previous day fixed the date of 15 March. However, they felt it was not for the Guineans to decide on a date, for their representatives had to go to Madrid and could do so only with Spain's authorization.

Mr. SHAKHOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted that the administering Power had not either officially or unofficially fixed a date for the resumption of the Constitutional Conference, in spite of the invitation by the General Assembly to do so. The representative of Spain had stated that during the second stage of the Conference two questions would be considered, namely, the future political status of the Territory and co-operation between Spain and the Government of Equatorial Guinea. Since Mr. Francisco Salome had drawn up an agenda for the Conference, there were apparently two agendas, one submitted by Spain, which was in contradiction with the decisions of the General Assembly, and the other submitted by the three national liberation organizations. He asked whether conversations were taking place between Spain and the representatives of the three parties and whether the three parties agreed on the agenda proposed by the Spanish Government.

Mr. IEONGO IYANGA said that no official or unofficial talks were being held at the present time. Spain was trying to bring pressure to bear on Equatorial Guinea to accept a political status as remote from independence as possible. For the petitioners, the only acceptable political status was full and complete independence, with everything that being a State implied: a flag, a national anthem, a constitution and an administrative apparatus. That was the position of MONALIGE and probably of all the other political parties. It was not the political status that was at issue but rather the constitution. Spain should act as arbitrator and should seek to smooth out differences and guide the Territory towards decolonization. Co-operation was not a topic to be discussed at the Constitutional Conference. Depending on the atmosphere prevailing at the Conference, it might be possible for a bilateral agreement to be drawn up in accordance with the law of treaties, such agreement to be subsequently ratified and deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. From the moral standpoint, the inhabitants of the Territory had every right to self-determination, and they were quite capable of carrying out the duties and obligations of a free people.

Mr. SHAKHOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thanked the petitioner for his reply. The General Assembly resolution clearly stated that the administering

(Mr. Shakhov, USSR)

Power should hold an election in the Territory before independence, transfer power to the government resulting from that election and set the date for independence. However, the agenda proposed by Spain did not meet the terms of that resolution. According to the Spanish representative, the Conference was to discuss the future status of the Territory, the organization of the Government and the question of economic ties between Spain and the Territory, whereas the petitioners stressed that the question of future relations with Spain could be settled only after independence had been attained.

Noting that, according to the comments on the legislative decree adopted by Spain (A/AC.109/286), the people of the Territory would be able, when the new political status of Equatorial Guinea had been established by the Constitutional Conference, to vote on the results of the Conference, and that the petitioners had objected to such a procedure, he asked them to clarify their stand in that regard.

Mr. IBONGO IYANGA said that if there was to be a plebiscite, the question to be decided must be the constitution of the future State. That was a legal practice followed in many countries. It was often the Assembly which had to ratify a constitution, either by a two-thirds majority or by some other majority, and in some cases ratification was the function of other territorial units. The plebiscite should make it possible to determine what consensus existed on the constitution drawn up at Madrid and whether or not it reflected the interests of the different groups, having regard for the economic, social and political structure of the country. However, the petitioners could not agree to Spain's asking Guinean people whether or not they desired independence. The political parties had been most explicit on that point. They would not agree to a referendum which would bring into question Guinea's right to self-determination. Equatorial Guinea had already made its choice.

Mr. SHAKHOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Territory's future independence was not, of course, at issue. The General Assembly and the representatives of the Territory's political parties had been very explicit on that point. The Territory was asking for and was entitled to full and complete independence and sovereignty. The Committee would have to give full weight to the petitioners' replies when the time came to take a decision, which would, of course, be in the spirit of the General Assembly resolution.

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Mr. PEJIĆ (Yugoslavia) said that the Committee must be guided in its discussions by the wishes of the people of the Territory, which had been very clearly and judiciously expressed by the petitioners. The statements by the representatives of the parties had been indispensable because of the light which they had thrown on a number of points. For example, it was stated in paragraph 27 of working paper A/AC.109/L.443 that the Spanish Government had been ready to grant independence to Equatorial Guinea on 15 July 1968. However, those provisions had been later replaced by others taken from the recently adopted legislative decree (A/AC.109/286), in which no mention was made of granting independence to the Territory on that date. It was the conviction of his delegation that in voting for resolution 2355 (XXII), the Spanish Government had made a definite commitment. That was a crucial matter because the people had expressed their wishes in the clearest terms, and the Committee and the administering Power must above all conform to those wishes. He would therefore like the petitioners to clarify some points and more particularly whether, during or after the Constitutional Conference, the Spanish Government had explicitly mentioned the date of 15 July, and if not, what was the reason for its attitude.

Mr. IBONGO IYANGA said that according to what Mr. Salomé had told him, and according, moreover, to the records of the Conference, Spain had neither accepted nor rejected the date proposed by the Guinean delegation. In the Fourth Committee, Mr. de Pinies had stated that Spain intended to comply with the Guinean delegation's request. It was surprising that the legislative decree which reflected Spain's intentions, made no mention of that date.

Mr. PEJIĆ (Yugoslavia), noting that Mr. Ibongo Iyanga had emphasized on several occasions that the people of Equatorial Guinea desired full and complete independence, with their own flag and their own system of government, asked whether the conclusion to be drawn was that the Spanish Government intended to give the Territory some status other than full independence.

Mr. IBONGO IYANGA said there was every indication that the Spanish Government had not yet taken a definite decision regarding the accession to sovereignty and independence by 15 July. In the first place, an official information bulletin of the Spanish Government indicated that various alternatives regarding the political future of Guinea, including independence, would be considered at the Constitutional Conference. In the second place, the Director-General of African Provinces had stated early in February that various problems regarding the establishment of "links" between Spain and the Territory would be considered. Third, although the political parties had submitted a proposal to Spain on 30 October on the granting of independence, the Spanish Government had accepted it, unofficially, only on 19 December. Fourth, a letter sent in 1963 by the Vice-President of the Government to the Governor-General of Equatorial Guinea had stated that Río Muni might be granted independence in the future and that Fernando Póo would become part of Spain. According to the correspondent of Le Monde at Madrid, some circles in Spain had at that time advocated the creation in Fernando Póo of a system similar to that of the Canary Islands. Fifth, when the Spanish Ministers had visited the Territory, they had been officially informed that Guinea desired independence; that statement had received no reply.

It was apparent from all those facts that Spain was not prepared to grant independence and that influential Spanish circles were determined to establish ties of association, indeed, of control, between the metropolitan country and Equatorial Guinea. That was why he had been anxious to explain the stand taken in that regard by MONALIGE. The document submitted to the Spanish Ministers clearly indicated that the majority of the States Members of the United Nations, national Governments, political parties, IFGE, MONALIGE and MUNGE were calling above all for the official and solemn proclamation of total independence by 15 July 1968 at the latest. However, all indications suggested that the Spanish Government was contemplating another status for the Territory.

Mr. PEJIC (Yugoslavia) assured the petitioner that his delegation shared his opinion with regard to that question. In fact, by accepting the resolution of the General Assembly, Spain had plainly committed itself. As a member of the Committee, Yugoslavia would endeavour to see to it that the Spanish Government fulfilled that commitment in accordance with the clearly expressed wish of the people of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. CASTALDO (Italy), referring to the question asked by the Iranian representative, asked whether it was true that the people had not been prepared for the radical change from a corporate system to a representative system, whether the political parties had had an opportunity to explain their position on the different problems connected with that change, and whether efforts had been made, by means of the Press or through direct contact, to ensure that those complex preparations would take place under the most favourable conditions in a territory which was virtually on the threshold of independence.

Mr. EIKCKA said that the resources of Equatorial Guinea did not allow it to develop under conditions of complete independence. It would help in that regard to explain what the political parties were and what the Administering Authority meant by "groups of opinion". The fact was that true political parties did not exist in Equatorial Guinea any more than in Spain. It was therefore difficult to set up organizations which could explain to the people what was really happening. Although the territory was on the threshold of the independence which everyone earnestly desired, it was impossible for the "parties" to explain to the people how that independence could be made effective.

Mr. CASTALDO (Italy) said he was rather concerned about that situation in view of the need for the territory to accede to independence in an orderly and peaceful manner. Consequently, he invited the petitioners to draw Spain's attention to the importance of that question, so that it might make every effort, through the Press and through its official channels, to prepare public opinion in the appropriate manner.

Mr. DIARRA (Ivory Coast) asked why the Constitutional Conference had been postponed sine die and what results had been achieved during the initial stage.

Mr. IBONGO IYANGA said that the Constitutional Conference had been postponed because some questions, in particular that of the date for independence, which had been raised by the Foreign Minister on 30 October 1968 had remained unanswered. The delegations from Equatorial Guinea had thus been extremely disappointed, since they had been given no precise information concerning the future status of the territory. The initial stage of the Constitutional Conference had had only one result: the adoption of a legislative decree which offered no solution to the problems at issue.

Mr. EIKOKA said that the Constitutional Conference had been unable to achieve any results because Spain had no intention of granting independence. To illustrate what he meant, he quoted an article from a Spanish newspaper concerning Spain's attitude towards Portuguese colonial policy. The article clearly revealed the position of Spain with regard to the independence of colonial territories.

Mr. OBIANG added that in fact there had been no Constitutional Conference in the generally accepted sense of the term.

Mr. NAVA CARRILLO (Venezuela) asked whether any satisfaction had been granted to the groups of opinion which, he had heard, had been named by the administering Power, which had asked at the Constitutional Conference for recognition as the official representatives of the Guinean people.

Mr. IBONGO IYANGA said that the petitioners considered that they represented political groups or parties rather than groups of opinion, but that the current situation precluded the use of that term. The legal status of the Guineans who had attended the Constitutional Conference had not been defined by Spain.

Mr. EVITA recalled that during a debate on Equatorial Guinea in November 1965 he had said that political parties were not recognized in Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. LOERI-COMBA referred to an article which had appeared in Life magazine a year before and in which it had been said that it was impossible to know what the members of the Spanish Government were thinking. In his opinion, it was even more difficult to interpret their statements. Since no political parties existed in Spain, the Spanish Government did not recognize any political parties in Equatorial Guinea either.

Mr. NAVA CARRILLO (Venezuela) said he had understood from one of the petitioners' replies that pressure had been applied to impose a certain political status on Equatorial Guinea. He requested a few details with regard to that point.

Mr. IBONGO IYANGA repeated that the Spanish Government had not taken a firm decision to grant complete independence to Equatorial Guinea. According to the legislative decree which had just been adopted, Equatorial Guinea was to accede to independence but no explanations had been given concerning the nature of the independence. Perhaps the representative of Venezuela could use his good offices to obtain some clarification in that respect from the administering Power.

Mr. NAVA CARRILLO (Venezuela) emphasized that the legislative decree had alluded to independence but had not expressly mentioned it. He thanked the petitioners for their replies and assured them that they could rely on the co-operation of the Venezuelan delegation.

Mr. LOPEZ VILLAMIL (Honduras) said that a referendum on the subject of independence was out of the question because the right of the people to accede to independence had already been mentioned in a General Assembly resolution. Secondly, as was apparent from General Assembly resolution 2355 (XXII), accession to independence and sovereignty was not negotiable. Thirdly, the date for independence must be fixed at July 1968 at the latest, as, moreover, the administering Power had already agreed.

With regard to technical assistance, it should be borne in mind that assistance from the United Nations could only be given according to the procedures already followed in similar cases, and then only after the Territory had become independent. The United Nations could not give political assistance to political parties, since that would constitute interference and hence would be contrary to the provisions of the Charter.

In his opinion, the United Nations, and more especially the Committee of Twenty-Four, should make clear that Equatorial Guinea was at present undergoing a period of transition prior to independence. The questions put to the petitioners and their replies had given rise to some speculation about the future status of the Territory. The Committee's basic concern must be the decolonization of Equatorial Guinea. The representatives of the various groups or political parties would have an opportunity to exercise their rights when independence had been achieved. Finally, by virtue of resolution 2355 (XXII), a United Nations presence in the Territory should be ensured for supervising the preparation for and the holding of elections.

He asked the petitioners whether they considered that the administering Power had not conformed to the terms of General Assembly resolution 2355 (XXII).

Mr. IBONGO IYANGA recalled that Spain had not stated that Equatorial Guinea would become independent in July 1968 as requested in paragraph 4 of the resolution. Paragraph 5 had not been applied, as no electoral system had been adopted, freedom of expression was limited, only those political parties which

(Mr. Ibongo Iyanga)

supported the policies in which Spain was interested had access to information media, and no provisional government had been set up. The provisions of paragraph 6 had also remained unfulfilled, since the Constitutional Conference had not been reconvened in order to work out the modalities of the transfer of power, including the drawing-up of an electoral law and of an independence constitution.

Mr. LOPEZ VILLAMIL (Honduras) asked whether the various political parties or groups had, during the initial stage of the Constitutional Conference, presented detailed programmes which might serve as a point of departure for the drawing-up of a constitution.

Mr. IBONGO IYANGA said that the representatives of Equatorial Guinea at the Constitutional Conference had decided not to submit a programme to the Spanish Government until the date and the nature of independence had been specified.

Mr. LOPEZ VILLAMIL (Honduras) asked whether the political groups intended to make any proposals relating to the constitution during the second stage of the Constitutional Conference.

Mr. IBONGO IYANGA said that in February 1967 the members of MONALIGE had prepared a draft constitution which had been sent to the secretariat of the Constitutional Conference.

Furthermore, MUNGE had also drawn up a draft constitution which had been publicized in the Territory. The IPGE had also prepared a draft constitution which had been sent to him by the President of that organization. The President of the Council had indicated in the Guinean Press what his ideas were on the future constitution.

Mr. LOPEZ VILLAMIL (Honduras) asked whether the petitioners had taken part in the deliberations during the initial stage of the Conference and whether they had been recognized as representatives of political parties.

Mr. IBONGO IYANGA said that he had been unable to leave New York because of his commitments as a student. Mr. Salomé Jones had, however, been at the Conference. A group of Guineans had been invited by Spain. Many of them had been affiliated with groups of opinion, political parties or social clubs which met at Santa Isabel to discuss politics. The Commissioner had decided that those persons deserved to go to Madrid, but there had been nothing official. Spain had never

(Mr. Ibonge Iyanga)

said that there were political parties in Guinea, or that, for example, it officially recognized Mr. Salomé Jones as a leader of MUNGE - although it recognized him unofficially as a member of a group called MUNGE.

He did not wish to criticize the Spanish régime, because that was an internal affair which concerned Spain. In order to break the vicious circle, Equatorial Guinea wanted independence so that it could set up its own organs. When Guinea became independent, Spain would discuss matters with the Guinean Foreign Minister or Head of Government. As things stood, there were only groups which travelled around the country for personal reasons or to exert personal influence or in connexion with relations among the various ethnic groups, but officially, they had no representation in government.

Mr. FCUM (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the representative of the administering Power should now be asked how it intended to implement the General Assembly resolution relating to Equatorial Guinea. It would be advisable for the petitioners to follow the debates so that if necessary they could return to answer any questions that might arise later. Whenever the Committee discussed the question of Equatorial Guinea, many very interesting questions came up concerning the notorious famous "Red Book".

The petitioners withdrew.

The CHAIRMAN recalled that at the previous meeting the Spanish representative had asked to be allowed to reply to some of the points raised by the petitioners. He therefore called upon the Spanish representative.

Mr. de PINIES (Spain) said that his remarks represented the official position of his Government. While his Government's views could be discussed, they could not be disregarded and credence given to the statements made by certain persons or in the Press.

No Portuguese or South African aircraft, military or civil, had used the Santa Isabel or Bata airports; not during the current year, not the previous year or the year before.

(Mr. de Pinies, Spain)

It had been further suggested that Fernando Poo might become another Rhodesia, and he wished to point out in that connexion that Spanish immigration into Equatorial Guinea was not increasing; on the contrary, the colony of Spanish residents was dwindling. At the present time the Spanish population of Equatorial Guinea was 8,000 persons, compared with an indigenous population of 250,000.

There was no military base in the Territory, nor any plans on the part of the Spanish Government to build one. The Committee members who went to Guinea in 1966 had been able to verify the very small number of troops there and the absence of military installations. The Spanish armed forces in the Territory consisted of three companies of the Civil Guard, totalling about 450 men.

It was not true that the Spanish Government had granted special privileges to the leaders of the Bubi group. All the participants at the Constitutional Conference - and he could assure the Committee that his Government had not merely convened groups, but had openly accepted representatives of the political parties whose names appeared as such in the records of the Conference - had been invited to attend on a basis of equality, and they had all received the help they needed to do so. One of the persons invited was Mr. Pastor Torao. The speaker had personally invited Mr. Ibongo to attend the Conference. That invitation was not a gesture of paternalism; it had been extended to a person who, in the Spanish Government's view, could collaborate in the constitution of the new State; indeed, all the participants had collaborated in that way, as the records showed. However, Mr. Ibongo had preferred not to attend the Conference.

It had not been a manoeuvre on the part of his Government to have referred in the last few days to the problem of the Bubis, which had been discussed at the Constitutional Conference. He had referred to it because paragraph 22 of the Secretary-General's report alluded to it. His delegation thought it useful to enlighten the Committee concerning the statements which Mr. Salome Jones circulated to the press agencies in Madrid on 12 February last. Mr. Jones had expressed his personal satisfaction and that of the Guinean people concerning the decision taken by the Spanish Government to suspend the electoral process; he had also said on that occasion that Spain was setting a fine example to the whole world of how to solve the problems of decolonization, and that the latest gesture on the part of the

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(Mr. de Pinies, Spain)

Spanish Government served only to increase the respect of the Guinean people for the Spanish people and for the Head of the Spanish State. Mr. Jones' statement, which won the support of the overwhelming majority of the Guinean people, apparently did not meet with the approval of Mr. Ibongo, who thought that relations between Equatorial Guinea and Spain should not be any closer than those existing between any two countries.

The atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion in which the petitioners had wished to shroud the Committee was wholly unjustified. His Government's position was quite clear. When, in June 1966, it had invited a Sub-Committee of the Special Committee to come to Equatorial Guinea, there had also been misgivings. Doubts had been expressed that his Government would allow a sub-committee to travel about freely and that the people would be able to express their views freely before it. Yet, the report subsequently drafted by the Sub-Committee, whose Rapporteur was present, had expressed full satisfaction and appreciation to the Spanish Government for the facilities it had provided which were unprecedented in the annals of the Special Committee. The Spanish Government's objectives should thus be quite clear to everyone. The first phase of the Constitutional Conference had ended not for any mysterious reason, as had been suggested by one of the petitioners, but because the Guinean representatives had felt that once they had expressed their views and demanded independence, it was impossible to continue working until the Spanish Government had examined their demand and given an answer on that fundamental political problem. The Spanish Government had since replied that it had taken that view into account and that the Conference should therefore be resumed and the autonomous régime suspended. To that end, it had adopted the Decree-Law with which the Committee was familiar.

The Spanish Government's concern was to maintain the unity of the Territory. However, it could not but recognize the existence of divergent opinions, and they had been described in the Secretary-General's report on Equatorial Guinea. The Spanish Government had originally intended to convene the Constitutional Conference on 1 April 1968, but had thought it better to change that date to 17 April, so that work would not be interrupted by the holiday which was traditionally celebrated in Spain at that time.

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(Mr. de Pinies, Spain)

During that second phase of the Conference, the electoral procedures would be decided with due regard to the principle that all indigencus persons over twenty-one years would take part in the elections. It was impossible to tell exactly how long the Conference would last, although his Government hoped that it would not last more than two weeks. Only the Conference could decide when it should end. However, if it did not last more than fifteen days, there would be no reason for not proceeding to the vote early in May. In that case, the independence of the Territory could become a reality even earlier than was envisaged in General Assembly resolution 2355 (XXII). His Government was fully prepared to agree to either 1 June, 15 July or any other date. In spite of what some people had said, Equatorial Guinea would not have to fight for independence. His delegation expressed the hope that the new State would be admitted to membership of the United Nations at the twenty-third session of the General Assembly.

The CHAIRMAN said that he had received a letter dated 23 February 1968 from the Secretary-General stating that he had received a reply from the Government of Spain to his request that it give its views on operative paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 2355 (XXII). The Secretary-General added that the exchange of correspondence had been published in document A/AC.109/284 and that he was awaiting the views of the members of the Special Committee.

He therefore suggested that the Committee should inform the Secretary-General of the views expressed by members.

Mr. FCUM (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation would make a statement at the next meeting on the whole question of Equatorial Guinea. His delegation wished to consult with other members of the Committee before expressing an opinion with regard to the letter from the Secretary-General.

He hoped that the members of the Committee would come forward with their views on the subject either in open debate or in private consultations with the Chairman.

Mr. KCUAME (Ivory Coast) said that, from the statements made by the representative of Spain and the petitioners, it appeared that the date for the resumption of the Constitutional Conference was still in doubt. The petitioners had repeatedly said that they wanted the Conference to be reconvened as soon as

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(Mr. Kouame, Ivory Coast)

possible, and had suggested 15 March. The representative of Spain had just suggested 17 April. While his delegation did not seek to impose a date on the Government of Spain, he asked whether the date of 15 March would be acceptable to that Government.

Mr. de PINIES (Spain) expressed the opinion that the various statements which he had made had provided the Committee with enough information to form an opinion. The petitioners themselves had recently said that it was the prerogative of the administering Power to decide the date for the resumption of the Conference; that date had been fixed at 17 April that very day at a meeting of the Spanish Council of Ministers, for reasons which he had already explained.

Mr. de Pinies, representative of Spain, withdrew.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN stated on behalf of the Working Group that the Territory of Mauritius would become independent on 12 March. The Working Group suggested that representatives might hold consultations on the need to discuss the situation with regard to that Territory before that date. The Chairman suggested that the Committee should take up the question at the following meeting.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.