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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

Twelfth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 17 May 1961, at 10.50 a.m.

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PRESENT:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. SCHURMANN	(Netherlands)
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Miss KAMAL	Iraq
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. ROS	Argentina
	Mr. HOOD	Australia
	Mr. WIJEGOONAWARDENA	Ceylon
	Mr. HERRERA-CABRAL	Dominican Republic
	Mr. DOISE	France
	Mr. YOMEKPE)	Ghana
	Mr. AKUDE)	
	Mr. RASGOTRA	India
	Miss BROOKS	Liberia
	Mr. MERCADO	Mexico
	Mr. GOEDHART)	Netherlands
	Mr. de BRUYN)	
	Mr. EDMONDS	New Zealand
	Mr. PEREZ-RUIZ	Spain
	Mr. THOM	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mr. POOL	United States of America

Representatives of specialized agencies:

	Mr. REYMOND	International Labour Organisation
	Miss PROCTOR	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
	Mr. ACHARYA	Food and Agriculture Organization
	Dr. SACKS	World Health Organization
<u>Secretariat:</u>	Mr. PROTITCH	Under-Secretary for Trusteeship and Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories
	Mr. KUNST	Secretary of the Committee

QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE SUMMARIES AND ANALYSES ADDITIONAL TO THOSE TREATED UNDER PREVIOUS ITEMS (ST/TRI/B.1960/1 to 6; A/4760; A/AC.35/L.341) (continued)

Mr. RASGOTRA (India) said that it was clear from document A/AC.35/L.341 that, in the great majority of cases, the Administering Members had failed to transmit the information on their Non-Self-Governing Territories within the prescribed time-limits - despite the fact that they had had six months in which to do so. The delays in the transmission of information provided a striking example of the inefficiency of the colonial authorities which augured ill for the administration of the Territories themselves. Furthermore, the information transmitted to the Secretariat was often incoherent.

The dilatoriness of the Administering Members did not, however, fully account for the fact that several summaries of information - which covered more than half the total number of the Non-Self-Governing Territories - had reached the Committee only within the past few days. Those Territories included American Samoa, which might have served as a model for the assessment of the conditions prevailing in other Territories; West Irian - the so-called Netherlands New Guinea - and Papua, two Territories whose advancement the Committee might have wished to compare; Malta and British Guiana, where the pace of political development was quickening; and the Caribbean Territories. Consequently, the Committee's report was bound to be unrealistic and full of generalities, and the usefulness of the Committee's work was to that extent impaired. The information to which the Committee had not had access until just recently had been in the Secretariat's possession for several months - six months in some instances - and he failed to see why it could not have been processed much earlier, particularly since the Division of Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories had not been greatly affected by the resumed fifteenth session of the General Assembly. The Division, with its proliferation of sections and staff, should have been able to place the information before the Committee in good time. Alternatively, the Committee's session could have been postponed until July or August. The Committee should reconvene in August in order to complete the examination of all the information and be in a position to inform the General Assembly that it had performed the tasks entrusted to it.

In general, if its sessions were held in July or August rather than in April, the Committee would be able to examine information relating to the previous

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(Mr. Rasgotra, India)

calendar year (which should be in the Secretariat's possession by the end of June) rather than two- or three-year old information, as under the present system. The position now was that criticism voiced in the Committee was often answered by the retort that it was based on out-of-date information; yet the Committee had no official current information to go by.

He thanked the Secretariat for the preparation of summaries in which information on Non-Self-Governing Territories was grouped according to their geographical location, thereby enabling the Committee to obtain a regional picture.

He was in duty bound to draw the Committee's attention to the United Kingdom Government's continued refusal to submit information on political developments. If the United Kingdom persevered in that attitude, he would suggest that the matter should be brought to the General Assembly's attention at its next session so that the Assembly could devise ways and means of collecting the information it required. The Committee might be able to cull information from newspapers or from political parties; such information might, however, be biased and might not do credit to the United Kingdom; the latter's interests would be better served if it co-operated with the Committee. In British Guiana, for instance, there had been reports of the rearrangement of constituencies for political purposes. In other Territories, such as Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Kenya and Uganda, there had been developments of which the Committee was aware only through reports in the Press. It would be unfair to the United Kingdom if the Committee - in carrying out its tasks in conformity with General Assembly resolutions - were to base its conclusions on such reports.

He welcomed the fact that the Spanish representative was attending the Committee's session, and looked forward to hearing his statement. It was to be regretted that Portugal had not followed Spain's example. The General Assembly had decided that Portugal was an Administering Member and had enumerated the Portuguese Non-Self-Governing Territories. Unless the Portuguese Government had a change of heart it would be unable to avail itself of the procedures for the peaceful settlement of international disputes in situations such as had arisen

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in Angola and might arise in other Territories. The alternative was a solution by violence, and that was a course which his delegation deplored. Since, despite the General Assembly's decision, Portugal refused to transmit any information, the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that, as an exceptional measure, it should be authorized to hear petitioners from the Portuguese Territories in Africa and elsewhere so as to be able to report on the situation to the General Assembly.

The Committee should therefore adopt a resolution - which his delegation was ready to co-sponsor - in which it would take note of General Assembly resolution 1542 (XV) and of the Assembly's decision that an obligation existed on the part of the Government of Portugal to transmit information under Chapter XI of the Charter; note that the Portuguese Government had failed to discharge its obligation, had given no indication that it would act differently in the future, and had not deemed it necessary to take part in the Committee's work; and request the Secretary-General to prepare background material which would enable the Committee, at its thirteenth session, to evaluate the situation prevailing in the Portuguese Territories. Such a report should be based on the most reliable official publications that might be available and on works by scholars of unimpeachable integrity; he did not suggest that any use should be made of unofficial data or of information obtained from petitioners or other inhabitants of the Territories. The report should be prepared in time for the General Assembly's sixteenth session.

He was in sympathy with the view which the Mexican representative had expressed at the 237th meeting. The General Assembly in its resolution 1541 (XV) had enunciated the principles which should guide Members in determining whether or not an obligation existed to transmit the information called for under Article 73 e of the Charter. At the appropriate time the Indian delegation would be glad to co-operate with the Mexican delegation.

Mr. PROTITCH (Under-Secretary for Trusteeship and Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories) said that while he would not attempt to justify the delays that had occurred in the distribution of summaries of information, the Secretariat owed the Committee an explanation.

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(Mr. Protitch, Under-Secretary for
Trusteeship and Information from
Non-Self-Governing Territories)

As shown in document A/AC.35/L.341, some delays had occurred in the transmission of information by the Administering Members; but other reasons had equally contributed. The Secretariat published its summaries in separate fascicles according to the regions in which the Territories were situated and if information on one or more of the Territories in one region was missing the processing of the whole series was delayed. That had happened in several cases; for example, the publication of the summaries of information on the Caribbean Territories had been delayed because the necessary information on one particular Territory had not been received. Apart from the inconvenience of issuing addenda to particular sets, such addenda were costly and were contrary to the General Assembly's recommendations concerning the control and limitation of documentation.

A major reason for the delay, however, had been the unduly heavy workload on the documents services caused by the resumed session of the General Assembly as well as by the extra documentation required in connexion with the Congo situation. As a result the documents services had not had enough time to complete the work on the documents for the various bodies meeting immediately after the close of the fifteenth session of the General Assembly.

The representative of India had referred to the number of sections in the Division of Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories. The actual situation, however, was not exactly as he had described it. The responsibilities of the Department of Trusteeship and Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories had made it necessary to send some officers and secretaries on missions to various parts of the world during the period when summaries were being prepared. This had also been a contributing factor in some, though not many, delays in sending the summaries for processing.

With reference to the scheduling of meetings, while the Secretariat was of course called upon to make suggestions, the decision on the subject was taken by the majority in the Committee. In connexion with the Indian delegation's suggestion that the Committee should hold a renewed session in July or August, he pointed out that account must be taken of other United Nations activities and in particular of the fact that the summer session of the Trusteeship Council would begin shortly.

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Trusteeship and Information from
Non-Self-Governing Territories)

Through its substantive and documents services the Secretariat was trying to accommodate the Committee to the best of its ability and, with the co-operation of those Administering Members which transmitted information, would hope in the future to submit documentation in good time.

The Secretariat had taken due note of the remarks by the representative of the Dominican Republic a few days earlier to the effect that the Spanish-speaking delegations had been hampered in their work by not having at their disposal Spanish texts of the studies. The workload in the translation sections was very heavy and had caused delays which had been beyond the control of the Secretariat. All the summaries of information have now been issued, and most of the documents in Spanish translation have been distributed also.

Mr. RASGOTRA (India) thanked the Under-Secretary for his explanations. However, if his delegation had known what the situation was it would have opposed the convening of the session at the present time, but it had assumed that the basic documents would be ready. That was a matter for the Secretariat and not for delegations.

With reference to the question of the cost of producing addenda, his point was that to print the fascicles so late that they could not be circulated until after the Committee's report had been drafted served no useful purpose whatsoever, whereas if the summaries were printed as the information was received, and addenda issued later if necessary, any additional expenditure incurred would be more than counterbalanced by the increased efficiency of the Committee's work.

QUESTION OF THE RENEWAL OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

Mr. RASGOTRA (India) observed that while essentially the matter was within the purview of the General Assembly, it had been the practice in previous years for the Committee periodically to approve a draft resolution for the consideration of the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly concerning its own renewal and terms of reference. However, no doubt owing to the pressure of work, no such draft resolution had been submitted at the current session and the matter could presumably be left to the General Assembly at its sixteenth session. Nevertheless he wished to make a few comments on the subject.

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First, the Committee had so far always been renewed on a three-year basis; in his delegation's view it should now be renewed on a more or less permanent basis. If any resolution were submitted he hoped it would take that view into account.

Another drawback to the Committee's terms of reference was that it was debarred from making any observations or recommendations with respect to individual Territories. That provision greatly hampered the Committee in carrying out its task. His delegation would like the Committee to be given fresh terms of reference which would enable it to make observations and substantive recommendations with regard to individual Territories in the same way as it was at present empowered to formulate recommendations regarding groups of Territories in particular regions. In his delegation's view, the time had come when the Committee's examination of the information transmitted regarding the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories should be more intensive. Moreover, if the Committee's terms of reference were extended as he had suggested, some account should be taken of the numerous resolutions adopted by the General Assembly concerning the transmission of political information. Provision should be made for the Committee to study political information submitted to it and, even more important, to study economic, social and educational data in the light of political information.

Furthermore, his delegation considered that henceforward the Committee should abandon the three-year cycle it had hitherto followed and should study economic, social and educational conditions simultaneously every year, so that its studies would be kept up to date.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.