



General Assembly

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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 4th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 23 June 2014, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Lasso Mendoza (Ecuador)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Special Committee decision of 17 June 2013 concerning Puerto Rico (A/AC.109/2014/L.6 and A/AC.109/2014/L.13)

2. **The Chair** informed the Committee that the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in its capacity as Chair of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, had indicated its wish to participate in the Committee's consideration of the item.

Draft resolution A/AC.109/2014/L.6: Special Committee decision of 17 June 2013 concerning Puerto Rico

3. **Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba), introducing draft resolution [A/AC.109/2014/L.6](#) on behalf of the sponsors, thanked the petitioners for attending the meeting to convey their nation's wish for an end to Puerto Rico's colonial status. For more than 500 years, the people of Puerto Rico had been subjected to outside domination and had never been able to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, a right recognized by the General Assembly in its resolution 1514 (XV). Despite 32 Special Committee resolutions and decisions calling on the Government of the United States of America to assume its responsibility to facilitate a process to permit the exercise of that right, little progress had been made. No further delay should be tolerated, in the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

4. The draft resolution reiterated that the Puerto Rican people constituted a Latin American and Caribbean nation that had its own unequivocal national identity, and noted that a majority of the people had rejected Puerto Rico's current status of political subordination on 6 November 2012. The text expressed concern about violent actions, including repression and intimidation, against Puerto Rican independence fighters and called for the release of individuals serving sentences in United States prisons for their involvement in Puerto Rico's struggle for independence.

Hearing of petitioners

5. The Chair drew attention to aide-memoire 03/14 and 03/14/Add.1 relating to the Special Committee decision of 17 June 2013 concerning Puerto Rico, which contained 47 requests for hearing. He took it that the Committee wished to accede to those requests.

6. *It was so decided.*

7. **The Chair** said that, in line with the Committee's usual practice, petitioners would be invited to take places at the petitioners' table and would withdraw after making their statements.

8. **Ms. Rivera Lassén** (Colegio de Abogados de Puerto Rico) said that resolving the colonial situation of Puerto Rico was a human rights issue; calls for decolonization should not lead to imprisonment and torture. She called for the abolition of the death penalty in Puerto Rico, which was imposed by United States courts despite its prohibition under the Puerto Rican Constitution, and for the release of Óscar López Rivera.

9. In their most recent referendum, a majority of Puerto Ricans had expressed opposition to the colonial situation. The President of the United States had announced plans for another poll of the Puerto Rican people that would not meet the requirements of decolonization and would not take General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) or applicable international law into account. The proposed process would not recognize the Puerto Rican people's right to self-determination, as it would be non-binding. The only way to put an end to the colonial situation of Puerto Rico was through a constitutional assembly that would offer non-colonial status options, not subject to the territorial clause of the United States Constitution, that recognized the sovereignty and self-determination of the people of Puerto Rico.

10. **Ms. Reverón Collazo** (Movimiento Independentista Nacional Hostosiano) said that despite 116 years of colonialism, her people's will would not be broken, as shown by the example of Óscar López Rivera, who had been imprisoned for 33 years and who must be freed, along with all other political prisoners.

11. As the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) had declared, Puerto Rico was a Latin American and Caribbean country and was therefore of concern to the whole region. Had its sovereignty not been illegally violated by the United

States, Puerto Rico would be fully participating in CELAC.

12. Puerto Rico had been mortgaged. In 1952, the United States had demanded the deletion, from Puerto Rico's Constitution, of the social and economic rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and had demanded the inclusion of a constitutional requirement concerning the payment of Wall Street bondholders. Investors had thus been given priority over State employees, who had lost jobs and rights gained through labour agreements. The economy was in ruins and Puerto Rico faced worsening social problems.

13. The President of the United States had proposed yet another plebiscite for Puerto Rico, but it would not be binding and the status options would be for the Department of Justice to decide. A constitutional assembly on status, as a sovereign body representing the people of Puerto Rico, should be established to negotiate with the United States and agree on alternatives for the future. The Committee should oversee the decolonization process, including efforts to educate the public about the decolonization options available under international law.

14. **Mr. Pierluisi** (New Progressive Party) said that there was no contradiction between love for Puerto Rico and loyalty to the United States, but that Puerto Rico's political status lay at the root of its serious economic problems and the exodus of its people, who refused to be second-class citizens of a nation to which they had contributed so much.

15. The results of the November 2012 referendum on the status of Puerto Rico had demonstrated that 54 per cent of the voters did not wish to maintain the current status and that 61 per cent favoured full integration as a state of the United States. In response, the Government of the United States had taken unprecedented steps, allocating funds for a vote on realistic and constitutional proposals. Along with many in the United States Congress, he supported a simple vote on whether or not Puerto Rico should become a state of the United States. Just as the Committee had previously criticized the inaction of the United States Government, it should now call upon the Government of Puerto Rico, which talked endlessly of the status but did nothing about it, to hold a vote on Puerto Rico's admission as a state.

16. **Ms. Santiago Hernández** (Madres contra la Guerra) said that since the people of Puerto Rico had had United States citizenship imposed on them, many thousands had been recruited into the United States military. Despite resistance to the draft during the Viet Nam war and to the illegal war in Iraq, soldiers had been sent into combat and, apart from physical injuries, had suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder; there had been many suicides and mental health problems. Military recruiters must not take advantage of the high rate of youth unemployment in Puerto Rico, nor should they be allowed access to confidential information drawn from government databases.

17. **Mr. Villanueva Muñoz** (Comité pro Derechos Humanos de Puerto Rico) said that he believed that President Obama had not released Óscar López, despite the appeals made by Nobel laureates, politicians, organizations, the people of Puerto Rico and the international community, owing to poor advice; it should be noted that other Puerto Rican political prisoners had posed no risk to national security after their release. Óscar López had been a worthy defender of ideals that remained current in Puerto Rico and his imprisonment would only encourage those who believed in those ideals to continue their struggle.

18. The Committee's role must be more than symbolic and its decisions and resolutions must be heeded by those concerned. The Chair of the Committee could request a meeting with the United States Attorney General to provide him with the information received over the years from petitioners, to show President Obama that Óscar López had enormous support. United States international human rights policy was being undermined by pressure and political blackmail.

19. **Mr. Silva Cintrón** (Hermandad Taína) said that the struggle of the legitimate heirs to the legacy of the original inhabitants of Puerto Rico, conquered first by the forces of Spain and then the United States, had been carried on by a people constituting a fusion of the Taínos, African slaves and descendants of Spaniards, who carried with them ancient cultural and spiritual traditions. They had restored their ancient form of government, and the Committee should recognize the National Sovereign State of Borinken and its provisional government as the sole legitimate representative of the nation, with a seat in the General Assembly. In addition, Óscar López, who had fought

for the liberation of the Borinken fatherland, must be released by the Government of the United States.

20. **Ms. Villeneuve** (Boricuas por un Nuevo País) said that she spoke for a civil-society, non-partisan, non-sectarian movement that defended the right of the archipelago of Borinken to be a free and sovereign State, after its occupation first by Spain and then by the United States. The Committee's members were aware of the social, economic, psychological and spiritual damage caused by colonization, whose victims suffered harm that was equivalent to Stockholm syndrome and post-traumatic stress disorder.

21. In the light of the failure of politicians to afford her nation the legal respect it deserved, it had declared itself to be the National Sovereign State of Borinken, and would strive to restore its people's confidence in their ability to exist independently. It had developed an alternative government that had declared itself free of colonial domination, and requested the Committee's support for its efforts to obtain a seat in the General Assembly.

22. **Mr. Jordán García** (Coordinadora Nacional de las Actividades del Cerro de los Mártires) said that the people of Borinken had fought the occupying forces of Spain and the United States in wars and campaigns of resistance and disobedience that had taken such forms as opposition to the military presence in Culebra and Vieques, draft-card burning and protection of the environment and national heritage. The invaders had responded to such acts with broken promises and agreements, deceit, repression, persecution and the imprisonment and killing of patriots. The oppressive regime that ruled over his homeland had kept Óscar López in prison for more than 33 years; he must be released immediately. As the National Sovereign State of Borinken was his people's sole legitimate government, the General Assembly should be informed of its request for recognition as a State Member of the United Nations; he requested the Committee's assistance in that regard.

23. **Ms. Sanabria Dávila** (Comité de Puerto Rico en Naciones Unidas) said that despite the effects of colonialism and the unequal struggle in which they were engaged, the almost 8 million people of Puerto Rico, more than half of whom lived in the United States, had come together around the issues of peace for the island of Vieques, opposition to the death penalty, cultural and linguistic identity, sovereignty in

sport and a constitutional assembly on status. In the past, they had closed ranks to bring about the release of nationalist political prisoners, and currently they were supported internationally and in the United States in their call for freedom for Óscar López. It should go without saying that a process of free determination must be free; any future plebiscite on Puerto Rico's status must respect international law, as demanded by the Latin American and Caribbean community.

24. **Mr. Dalmau Ramírez** (Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño) said that the cause of Puerto Rico enjoyed the support of the Socialist International and of its President, George Papandreou. Although the people of Puerto Rico were primarily responsible for achieving their decolonization and the full exercise of the inalienable right to self-determination and independence, the international community must also play a fundamental role in the process, in order to uphold the noble principle that relations among nations should be governed by international law.

25. When the General Assembly received the annual reports of the Committee containing the resolutions on Puerto Rico, it endorsed them. However, in addition to that technical legal detail, the Assembly must bring political pressure to bear on the United States to induce its Government to meet its obligation to collaborate with the people of Puerto Rico in the design of a decolonization process that would enable it to emerge from political and economic insolvency. That would require consideration of the colonial question of Puerto Rico by the General Assembly, whose resolution 748 (VIII), obtained by the United States through fraud and deceit, had lost all validity.

26. The language contained in the draft resolution currently before the Committee ([A/AC.109/2014/L.6](#)), taken from the text adopted by CELAC in January 2014, was not simply declaratory but amounted to a call for action on a set of political initiatives aimed at ending colonialism in the Americas.

27. **Mr. Toledo García** (American Association of Jurists) summarized the history of the General Assembly's consideration of the question of Puerto Rico, including the incorrect assumption, in resolution 748 (VIII), that Puerto Rico had achieved self-government. He outlined some of the rights violations perpetrated by the United States against Puerto Rico, such as the use of its territory for toxic waste disposal and military exercises, shipping laws that limited its

ability to engage in international trade, imposition of the death penalty, and continued imprisonment of the pro-independence activist Óscar López. He asked the Committee to review the case of Puerto Rico in all its aspects. In addition, the General Assembly should review its resolution 748 (VIII) and state that Puerto Rico had never obtained a “full measure of self-government”. An authentic process of decolonization must begin immediately.

28. **Ms. Castro** (Alianza Comunitaria de Boriken) said that the illegal occupation of Borinken constituted cultural genocide because it had caused widespread poverty which had forced many Boricuas to emigrate to the United States, where they had lost their language and culture. While most of those remaining in Puerto Rico lived on hand-outs from the imperial Government, transnational companies were bleeding the economy dry. A quarter of the population suffered from psychological, mental and emotional problems, hundreds of thousands were addicted to drugs and alcohol and the crime rate was one of the highest in the world as a result of a century of United States colonialism enforced through such repressive agencies as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the United States District Court and the army.

29. The only way for the Committee and the United Nations to uphold General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and the Charter of the United Nations would be for the General Assembly to recognize the National Sovereign State of Borinken as the sole legitimate government of the Boricua people.

30. **Mr. Boyle** (International Human Rights Association of American Minorities) said that the European doctrine of discovery had not justified the genocidal occupation of Puerto Rico by Spain, since the island had not been *terra nullius* (a territory belonging to no one) but rather the kingdom of the indigenous Taíno people. The destruction of the indigenous kingdoms in Latin America had violated the doctrine of just war and had been described by contemporary authorities as a violation of natural and divine law, as a result of which indigenous peoples were entitled to the restitution of their lands and political authorities. The establishment of the National Sovereign State of Borinken had restored that sovereignty pursuant to the remedy of *restitutio in integrum* and the right of self-determination.

31. In 1897, Spain had devolved enough powers of self-government to Puerto Rico to make it a de facto independent State. Only a year later, the United States had conquered it and enforced a genocidal military occupation. Spain, however, had had no sovereign right over Puerto Rico in 1898 and thus no right to surrender it to the United States through the Treaty of Paris. Sovereignty had always remained in the hands of the displaced sovereign of 1897 and the Puerto Ricans themselves. The United States should withdraw so that the National Sovereign State of Borinken could allow Puerto Ricans to exercise their right of self-determination. The United States should also release the freedom fighter and prisoner of war Óscar López Rivera.

32. **Mr. Cintrón Príncipe** (Consejo Nacional para la Descolonización) said that the Spanish had illegitimately appropriated Borinken by falsely portraying the hospitality of the Taíno people as an acknowledgement that they had relinquished their nationality. For four centuries Spain had grown rich on the forced labour of the Taíno, before handing the territory over to the United States. Through the 1952 Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the world had been tricked into believing that the island was no longer a colony, even though that Constitution had been subject to the approval of the United States Congress and gave foreign bondholders a prior claim on public revenues. Puerto Rico remained a colony, although Borinken was free and sovereign.

33. The island's economy served only United States interests and economic development had never existed. Many campesinos had been forced to emigrate to lives of drudgery in the United States when agriculture on the island had been abandoned to eliminate competition with that country. The textile and household appliance industries had subsequently moved in, only to leave again when the United States had found cheaper labour in the Far East. All that remained were pharmaceutical companies, which caused pollution and would in any case leave the island soon. The people had become compulsive consumers of United States goods, and the replacement of food grown on the island with United States junk food had resulted in massive health problems. Unlike other countries, the island could not stop importing such food to reduce the relatively high frequency of diet-related conditions, which made people dependent on United States pharmaceuticals. In addition, they were

powerless to prevent United States television and cinema from exposing their children to images of addiction, suicide, murder and other social ills. Doctors could not practise unless they obtained United States accreditation, which was further evidence of the island's colonial status. He therefore urged the General Assembly to recognize the National Sovereign State of Borinken and to grant it a permanent seat in the Assembly.

34. **Mr. Rivera** (Puertorriqueños Unidos en Acción) said that Puerto Rico's colonial institutions were in rapid decline because the Government had too little political power to resolve the island's problems. Emigration to the United States, where the diaspora now numbered 4.5 million people, had reached new heights since 2006, when the Puerto Rican economy had entered recession. Emigration affected economic development and reduced people's well-being, particularly when they had no say in the nation's future. Members of the diaspora must therefore participate actively in self-determination and decolonization efforts.

35. International law provided that all nationals of a territory should participate in decolonization; that the exercise of human rights could be regulated on the basis of residence; and that the authority of government was based on the will of the people expressed through genuine elections. In order for the Puerto Rican people to exercise their right to self-determination, sovereign authority must be transferred to them through a constitutional assembly on status.

36. Two members of the Puerto Rican diaspora remained in prison in the United States because of their struggle for decolonization. The United States Army had caused contamination on the islands of Vieques and Culebra, which the United States Government should now return to the inhabitants to enable the full exercise of democracy. The plenary General Assembly should consider the case of Puerto Rico with a view to ending its colonial status.

37. **Ms. Pizarro Claudio** (Colegio de Trabajadores Sociales de Puerto Rico) said that Puerto Rico's social workers had in the past helped to implant colonialism by facilitating United States capital investment and appropriation of Puerto Rico's assets. They had helped to maintain the status quo by providing social assistance to the population and acting as a mediator between the State and citizens. Their situation had thus

been contradictory, because while the colonial system hindered economic and social progress and spiritual growth, social work as a profession promoted ethical principles, rights and quality of life. Her organization therefore rejected the dependency and lack of opportunities which resulted from the absence of sovereignty and self-determination. It sought to end colonial oppression, as reflected in labour exploitation, cultural hegemony, institutionalized and internalized violence, poverty, exclusion and the absence of the policies necessary for a decent life. The International Federation of Social Workers, with which her organization was affiliated, had issued a resolution recognizing the right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and sovereignty.

38. The United States should facilitate fair, democratic and participatory decolonization for the Puerto Rican people as soon as possible; a constitutional assembly on status would be the best way for the Puerto Rican people to achieve self-determination and sovereignty. The United States was morally obliged to transfer power to the Puerto Rican people, who would then be able to consider non-colonial and non-territorial options and would no longer be subject to the territorial clause of the United States Constitution. The island's state of dependency should be ended and its potential rebuilt on the basis of its recognition as a nation.

39. **Mr. Ramos Rosado** (The ProLibertad Freedom Campaign) said that since the United States had invaded Puerto Rico in 1898 it had imposed forced sterilization on Puerto Rican women, bombed and contaminated Vieques Island, conducted assassinations and massacres, used its counter-intelligence programme against the independence movement and imprisoned members of revolutionary organizations. Puerto Ricans were second-class citizens at the mercy of United States policies, unable to vote in presidential elections and unrepresented in Congress. United States citizenship had been imposed on them but they were denied basic rights, had been relocated from their land and were victims of racism and exploitation. When they had revolted against those injustices they had been labelled terrorists and murdered or imprisoned.

40. Since his arrest in 1981, Óscar López Rivera had been subjected to torture in the worst prisons in the United States. He had refused the United States Government's 1999 offer of leniency because it had not been extended to two of his fellow defendants. His

application for parole had been refused in May 2011 even though he had met all the criteria. Although many respected activists and politicians supported his cause, he had now been in prison longer than any other Puerto Rican political prisoner.

41. Norberto González Claudio had since his 2011 arrest been subjected to procedural irregularities such as unjustified solitary confinement, and had been denied visits, confidential legal counsel and proper treatment for his skin cancer. Although he now had better medical treatment as a result of pressure from activists, his health remained precarious and he was denied the right to correspondence and communication.

42. Before their imprisonment, López Rivera and González Claudio had fought for civil rights and had confronted the United States, as was their right under General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Since their incarceration, they had been model prisoners and had not endangered other inmates or caused disturbances. Far from being terrorists, they were freedom fighters. The United Nations should take action to end the colonial occupation of Puerto Rico and secure the unconditional release of Puerto Rican political prisoners.

43. **Ms. Román Montalvo** (Coalición Puertorriqueña contra la Pena de Muerte) said she hoped that the Committee would include the issue of the death penalty in the draft resolution, as that issue was vital to the question of self-determination. Puerto Rico had abolished the death penalty in 1929 and had confirmed that abolition in its 1952 Constitution; nevertheless, the island remained subject to United States legislation, which imposed the practice under federal law. In the preceding decade, seven capital cases had been tried in the United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico, but the juries had refused to apply the death penalty, thereby sending a clear message that Puerto Ricans were opposed to it. Puerto Rico was one of the five jurisdictions with the highest rates of capital prosecution, in proportion to population, by the federal Department of Justice over the last 15 years.

44. Death penalty trials were conducted entirely in English, a language in which only 10 per cent of Puerto Ricans could communicate, and people who declared themselves unwilling to apply that penalty were excluded from sitting on juries. The Government of Puerto Rico did not have the power to refuse the

extradition to the United States of Puerto Ricans accused of offences subject to the death penalty.

45. Accordingly, she requested the Committee to refer in its resolution to the fact that Puerto Rico was the only jurisdiction in the world in which the death penalty had been abolished by the people but continued to be imposed by United States legislation. The text should also include the demand that the United States Government should declare a total and immediate moratorium on the death penalty in Puerto Rico and should prohibit its imposition in the cases already under way in the United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico. Lastly, she asked the Committee to refer the question of Puerto Rico to the plenary General Assembly for consideration.

46. **Ms. Cabán** (Unión Nacional de Estudiantes) said that the transition from school to university was a great challenge for Puerto Rican students, many of whom abandoned their university studies because of economic factors and high unemployment. Large numbers of those who graduated joined the 30,000 people who emigrated annually. The university system should encourage young people to stay on the island to stem the exodus.

47. Given the colonial Government's failure to incentivize affordable, high-quality public university education, students should be able to exercise their right to participate in decisions on university matters, and their right to education should not be subject to market forces. An economic model which benefited Boricuas was impossible while Puerto Rico remained a colony, particularly as the downgrading of its credit rating had left it at the mercy of Wall Street. The re-establishment of sovereignty would allow the university system to interact with student and social movements within and beyond the island. Under the Constitution of the Commonwealth, however, debt service had a higher priority than education, and the university system was suffering as a result.

48. **Ms. Cruz Soto** (New York Solidarity with Vieques) said that the United States Navy had expropriated three quarters of Vieques Island in the 1940s to make way for an ammunition depot and live target range, relocating the population to a central strip of land and encouraging them to emigrate. Although the Navy had insisted that the island was essential to the readiness of its personnel because nowhere else was better suited to amphibious exercises, what had

made Vieques ideal had in fact been the colonial status of Puerto Rico and the inhabitants' vulnerability. The Puerto Rican Government had had limited powers of negotiation, as illustrated by the struggle between the Puerto Rico Agricultural Corporation and the Navy, which had proved that the Navy could prevail even to the islanders' detriment.

49. The militarized colonialism imposed on the people of Vieques had denied them a home and a viable future and had resulted in poverty, illness and marginalization. Her group had sponsored a petition before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, asking the Navy to take responsibility for the contamination it had caused on the island. The petition was the last legal recourse available to the people of Vieques because the United States Government had consistently prevented the case from coming to court by claiming sovereign immunity.

50. **Mr. Nieves** (Oficina de Asuntos Comunitarios e Indígenas) said that, because the nation of Borinken had been stolen from the Taíno people by Spain and subsequently given to the United States as the spoils of war, it was not legally United States territory and belonged to the indigenous Boricuas, who had always fought for their freedom against imperialism. They had never surrendered and had also fought to liberate other Latin American countries, but now needed the Committee's help to become free themselves. He called on all nations to support the draft law on the nation of Borinken because the liberation of colonies was a universal duty.

51. The people of Borinken should be able to exercise their inalienable right to independence in the same way as the United States, which had not asked for independence from the United Kingdom but had simply declared it. The United States had tried to destroy Borinken by imposing its own citizenship on the Boricuas, but their national identity was indestructible; even their descendants born in the United States considered themselves Boricuas.

52. Liberty and sovereignty were the birthright of indigenous peoples. The patriots who had fought in Boston for the independence of the United States had disguised themselves as Native Americans because their conscience had told them that they were asserting rights which in reality belonged to the indigenous people. The people of Borinken, however, needed no disguise, being indigenous to the marrow of their

bones. He asked the Committee to help dissolve the illegal colonial Commonwealth and urged all nations to recognize the National Sovereign State of Borinken as a State Member of the United Nations.

53. **Mr. Ortiz Avilés** (Juventud Boricua) said that unemployment in Puerto Rico was forcing many young people to emigrate to the United States, an exodus incentivized by the colonial Government as necessary to its own existence. Far from ending the colonial system, the Commonwealth had merely legitimized Spanish and United States institutional apartheid. Unemployment had also forced many young people into the criminal traffic in controlled substances, many of which entered Puerto Rico on their way to the United States. Young Boricuas were thus pawns in the transatlantic trade in illegal drugs, whose entry to the island was encouraged by the United States Government. Some young Boricuas, desperate for work, had been forced to join the United States military, even though the United States had violated their fellow citizens' human rights. The award of the Congressional Gold Medal to the 65th Infantry Regiment for fighting on behalf of the colonial Power was a crass insult to Boricuas and yet another example of United States imperialism, which sought to reduce nations to the status of colonized racial minorities.

54. The Boricuas could be said to be suffering from Stockholm syndrome, unquestioningly accepting the will of their abuser. His organization aimed to counter that demoralization by helping communities to take control of their own political and economic processes. He called on CELAC to continue its efforts to end colonialism in the region.

55. **Ms. Susler** (National Lawyers Guild International Committee) said that Óscar López Rivera, who had never been found guilty of bloodshed but was the longest-serving political prisoner in the history of Puerto Rico's independence movement, had become a unifying force for the people of Puerto Rico. Protesters, the media and the Senate of Puerto Rico had described his imprisonment as an affront to decency, a symbol of injustice and a betrayal of democracy. Support for his release was also growing in the United States among trade unions and the population in general, as evidenced by popular protests in New York and other cities. Expressions of solidarity had been received from Cuba and the Presidents of Uruguay and Venezuela. She called on the Committee to urge the

President of the United States to release Óscar López Rivera.

56. **Mr. Ross Serrano Sanabria** (College Republican Federation of Puerto Rico) said that after acquiring Puerto Rico from Spain in 1898, the United States had put a civil government in place in 1900 and granted Puerto Ricans American citizenship in 1917. The island had been removed from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories in 1952, when its United States citizens had ratified a Constitution establishing a republican form of government identical to that of the 50 states. The Constitution's impact, however, had been limited because a judicial branch had already been in place and the inhabitants had already been able to elect their Governor and State Assembly. The Constitution had also left the island's residents unrepresented nationally.

57. Puerto Rico was not a country but a United States territory with its own culture and traditions. As elsewhere in the United States, the Head of State was the President and the local head of government was the state Governor. In November 2012, Puerto Ricans had voted against territorial status and in favour of statehood. He therefore asked the Committee to add Puerto Rico to the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories in accordance with resolution 1541 (XV) and to encourage the United States Congress to admit Puerto Rico as the fifty-first state. Consideration of the options of independence and free association would simply delay decolonization, since the establishment of a new country comprising over 3 million United States citizens was out of the question. The American Civil War had been fought to prevent the secession of the Confederacy, and in that spirit he encouraged the Committee to call for the incorporation of Puerto Rico.

58. On behalf of Generación 51, High School Republicans of Puerto Rico, Igualdad, the League of United Latin American Citizens, Movimiento Ciudadano por la Estadidad and Renacer Ideológico Estadista, he proposed an oral amendment to the draft resolution, urging the state and federal governments of Puerto Rico and the United States to comply with the democratic will of the Puerto Rican people by granting the island statehood.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.