

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records



FOURTH COMMITTEE, 311th

MEETING

Thursday, 18 December 1952, at 10.30 a.m.

Headquarters, New York

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Chairman: Mr. Rodolfo MUNOZ (Argentina).

Report of the Trusteeship Council (A/2150 and Add. 1) (*continued*)

[Item 27]*

HEARING OF PETITIONERS FROM THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION (A/C.4/L.265), (A/C.4/L.267) (*continued*)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Okala, representative of the Parti Socialiste Camerounais, and Mr. Um Nyobe, representative of the Union des Populations du Cameroun, took places at the Committee table.

1. Mr. PEON DEL VALLE (Mexico) asked whether any teaching concerning the United Nations, and in particular the Trusteeship System, was given in schools in the Cameroons under French administration.

2. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) said that he had had no opportunity of visiting the schools in the Territory and so was unable to reply to that question. The Mexican representative might ask the French delegation for information on the subject. According to the newspapers, United Nations Day was celebrated in the Territory, but he was unable to say what form the celebrations took.

3. Mr. PEON DEL VALLE (Mexico) asked both petitioners whether they would be willing to co-operate with the Administering Authority in disseminating knowledge of the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Trusteeship Agreement and of the work of the General Assembly and the Trusteeship Council in connexion with the Trust Territories.

4. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) said that he would be most willing to do so. Since his arrival in New York he had been trying to buy United Nations documents for the purpose of distributing them among the members of his party. If the United Nations and the Administering Authority would assist his party in the distribution of such information, it would do its utmost in order that it should not be

said that the willingness of the Cameroons to remain in the French Union was due to ignorance.

5. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) said that since September 1951 his party had made increased efforts to keep the population informed about the main provisions of the Atlantic Charter, the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as any decisions of the United Nations that specifically concerned Trust Territories. Those decisions were published in the newspapers of the party. The Administering Authority had published the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the *Journal officiel* on 1 November 1949, shortly before the arrival of the 1949 United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, but since few people read the *Journal officiel* the party had decided to publish it in a more widely read newspaper. An attempt was now being made to translate the Declaration into several indigenous languages. The party had published the news of the arrival of the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1952, and the correspondence between the Central Committee of the Union des Populations du Cameroun and the United Nations Secretariat regarding the Mission's itinerary, as well as notices advising the population how to present petitions to the Mission. It had also published a pamphlet describing the contribution of the United Nations to the colonial peoples' struggle for emancipation.

6. The Union des Populations du Cameroun was prepared to co-operate with the Administering Authority to the fullest extent in distributing information about the United Nations.

7. Mr. PEON DEL VALLE (Mexico) asked whether the petitioners thought it important that the United Nations flag should be flown side by side with the flag of the Administering Authority and any other territorial flag that might exist.

8. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) thought it imperative that the United Nations flag should be flown and suggested that it should be flown above the French flag. So far it had not been possible to agree on a national emblem.

* Indicates the item number on the agenda of the General Assembly.

9. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) thought the United Nations flag should be flown side by side with the French flag.

10. He emphasized that his suggestion that the United Nations and the Administering Authority might assist in the dissemination of information referred to moral support and encouragement rather than material assistance. On the other hand, the Administering Authority had given very little assistance as far as the Press was concerned. The Territorial Assembly had voted 3 million francs to set up a printing press and publish local papers, but that decision had never been put into effect. Now, however, there was a printing press in the Cameroons and the Administering Authority's moral support was needed.

11. Mr. PEON DEL VALLE (Mexico) said that at the two previous meetings Mr. Okala had spoken of the importance of the development of social welfare, public administration and the economy in the Cameroons under French administration. It would be useful to intensify the co-operation of the United Nations in the Cameroons through the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance. He was aware that France was already giving technical assistance to the Trust Territories with the help of the World Health Organization, and he had a great admiration for the French Government services both in France and in the overseas territories, but perhaps that assistance might be intensified in the Cameroons.

12. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) said that if the United Nations and the specialized agencies would agree with the Administering Authority to contribute to the development of the Territory, his party would have no objection. He could not give a formal answer because to do so would be to trespass upon the prerogatives of the Territorial Assembly, but he would convey the suggestion to that body.

13. His party would be grateful if the United Nations could take steps to ensure the more active participation of the indigenous inhabitants in the economic and social development of the Territory.

14. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) urged that the Administering Authority should be recommended to make the necessary requests to the United Nations and the specialized agencies in order to develop the road system and education and health services and to promote the industrialization of the country. International fellowships and scholarships would also be of great value.

15. Speaking as the representative of the liberation movement in the Cameroons under British administration, he thought that the United Kingdom Government should be asked to take similar action.

16. Mr. PEON DEL VALLE (Mexico) asked the petitioners whether they thought, if the question was merely referred to the Trusteeship Council for examination, that they or some other members of their parties ought to be present when the Trusteeship Council dealt with the matter.

17. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) explained that, although that might be desirable, there was the question of expense; he doubted whether it would be possible for a member of his party to visit

New York again within so short a time. His party had, however, entire confidence in the Fourth Committee and the Trusteeship Council. If the Administering Authority or the United Nations would pay his expenses, he would naturally be glad to attend the Trusteeship Council session.

18. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) wished the principle to be laid down that a representative of his organization should be authorized to attend all subsequent sessions of the Fourth Committee, the Trusteeship Council or any other United Nations organ dealing with the question of the Cameroons under French administration, in order to give any explanations that might be required.

19. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) observed that certain delegations appeared to think that he was upholding every action of the French Government. It was true that he had had a French education, for which he was grateful, but his first loyalty was naturally to the Cameroons, his own country. He believed that he was serving the Cameroons to the best of his ability; if the situation there changed in the future, he would then be ready to modify his views.

20. Mr. Um Nyobé had alleged that his party was persecuted, and that the Parti Socialiste Camerounais enjoyed the favour of the French authorities. Mr. Um Nyobé, however, had been allowed to leave his country on a number of occasions to take part in Communist rallies at Prague, Berlin and elsewhere; that could hardly be described as persecution.

21. Mr. Um Nyobé had further asserted that his party had no freedom of expression, but the number of publications of his party to which he had referred in his statement seemed a sufficient refutation of that allegation.

22. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) regretted that in his statement at the 309th meeting, Mr. Okala had thought it necessary to attack him and the Union des Populations du Cameroun in anti-Communist terms which were out of place in the Fourth Committee. There were a number of examples to show that Mr. Okala's attitude was identical with that of many French officials, not only in the Cameroons but also in Tunisia and Morocco. He was sure that the Committee would not be duped by such obvious manoeuvres, and his party would continue to press its claims until a satisfactory solution had been found.

23. His party's refutation of charges of Communism was contained in his remarks at the 309th meeting and in his memorandum (A/C.4/226/Add.1) as well as in his oral and written explanations to the Chairman of the Visiting Mission regarding the party's position *vis à vis* the various French political parties. The Union des Populations du Cameroun was a national liberation movement, with supporters among all classes of the population. It was not a class movement, nor was it based on political ideologies. It merely expressed the peoples' national aspirations. The Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, like other progressive groups, had at one time been affiliated with the Communist groups in the French parliament. The affiliation had ceased, however, in October 1950 and

it had never meant that the Rassemblement was subject to the dictates of the French Communist Party. There was admittedly some disagreement within the Rassemblement, but it had been caused, not, as some people alleged, by the decision to cease to be affiliated with the Communist Party, but rather by the activities of certain dissident elements which endorsed reactionary government policies. The Union des Populations du Cameroun was neither pro-Communist nor anti-Communist. It was an independent movement against colonialism, which naturally met with opposition both from the colonialists and from those of his compatriots who supported them.

24. Mr. DOULA-MANGA-BELL (France) assured the Mexican representative that the Administering Authority would never refuse United Nations technical assistance. Indeed, a large-scale anti-malarial campaign was planned for 1953, with the help of the World Health Organization. With regard to the dissemination of information about the United Nations, the Visiting Mission had had an opportunity to see how United Nations posters were displayed on the walls of primary and secondary schools.

25. He was speaking not only as a member of the French delegation, but also on behalf of large sectors of the population of the Cameroons from whom he had received many cables and letters instructing him to speak for them. His competence to speak for the people of the Cameroons could not be questioned for, since 1945, he had four times been elected to represent the Cameroons in the French parliament.

26. He believed that Mr. Um Nyobé was a loyal and sincere man, but owing to excessive zeal or ideological convictions, his arguments were deliberately distorted. The liberalism of the French Government and delegation was amply demonstrated by the fact that nothing had been done to prevent Mr. Um Nyobé from appearing before the Committee. But some of his misrepresentations must be corrected.

27. The French Constitution, the United Nations Charter, the Trusteeship Agreement and the Cameroons legislation, for instance, on the Territorial Assembly and the municipalities, were so many guarantees that the Cameroons would ultimately attain full maturity and cease to be a Trust Territory. In time, the Territorial Assembly would undoubtedly assume greater importance and ultimately it would become a legislative body. He reiterated the assurance given by Mr. Pignon at an earlier meeting to the effect that the French Government would scrupulously abide by the spirit and the letter of the Charter, and particularly of Chapter XII.

28. Even Mr. Um Nyobé, who had made certain accusations against the French Union, must admit the enormous progress achieved in the Cameroons between 1945 and 1952. The French Government was far from claiming that everything about the complicated administration of a very large Territory with 3 million inhabitants was perfect. What great endeavour had even been entirely perfect? The only sure way to avoid mistakes was to do nothing at all. It was fortunate that the representatives of several Member States had had an opportunity to visit the Cameroons and see for themselves what had been accomplished and what remained to be done. The

outlines of the great future for which the Cameroons was destined were already apparent. No one who knew the Territory could attach any importance to Mr. Um Nyobé's tendentious statements.

29. With all due respect to his compatriot, Mr. Okala, Mr. Douala-Manga-Bell felt that the information obtained by the Visiting Mission was sufficient and that there had been no need for Mr. Okala to come to New York. The General Assembly's rules of procedure were silent on the hearing of petitioners. The French delegation, however, had nothing to fear from such hearings. What was important was that the Committee should hear only those petitioners, like Mr. Okala, who, regardless of their political opinions or origin, were inspired solely by the best interests of the Territories.

30. Replying to Mr. Okala's statements, he stressed that the Cameroons under French administration would have the final word with regard to its future destiny. Its inalienable rights were guaranteed by the French Constitution, the Trusteeship Agreement and the legal texts governing the status of the Territorial Assembly. He was convinced that at some time in the future—a time which could not yet be set—the Cameroons would pass from the status of an associated territory in the French Union to that of an associated state in the Union or, if it so desired, an independent State. Public opinion was already beginning to take form in the Territory and it would be moulded not by the outdated principles of a restrictive nationalism, but by the modern tendency of countries to form groups and associations. His country's future would best be served by remaining within the French Union and not by an isolated, illusory and dangerous independence.

31. Those who shared his views rejected such artificial obstacles to development within the French Union as the question of the unification of the Cameroons. That question did not, at present, arise. It would certainly be solved in due time, and to discuss it at the present juncture would be most inadvisable. For the time being, the Cameroons under French administration had sufficient problems within its own territory. Progress was necessary in every field and the French Government would do everything within its power to promote that progress. More dispensaries, hospitals and schools of all kinds were needed immediately. Later, a university should be set up and provision made for adult education.

32. Calm and order must be maintained in the interests of economic and social development and the people of the Cameroons must be prepared voluntarily to accept a certain discipline. The Cameroonians also wished to advance in science, art and literature. The day would come when the young people of his country would be able to read the classics of Russian or English literature in the original, as some of them, at French universities, could already read the French classics.

33. Mr. N. RIFAI (Syria) said that the opinion seemed to be held in some quarters that the Fourth Committee had acted too hastily in granting oral hearings to petitioners. The Syrian delegation did not agree with that opinion and therefore considered that the joint draft resolution on the hearing of petitioners from the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration (A/C.4/L.265), which tacitly

said that the hearing had been a waste of time and implied that the petitions in question should have been made to the Trusteeship Council, was not satisfactory. The Syrian delegation considered that the hearing had brought the Committee much useful information about one of the most important of the Trust Territories and had given it an opportunity of looking at the problems affecting the Territory through the eyes of the indigenous inhabitants rather than of the Administering Authority. It felt, therefore, that the draft resolution to be adopted by the Committee should recognize the usefulness of the hearing.

34. A more serious point was that one of the main premises of the draft resolution, the contention in the third paragraph of the preamble, was incorrect, though perhaps not intentionally so. The report of the Trusteeship Council covering its tenth and eleventh sessions (A/2150 and Add.1) contained observations on many of the most important matters raised by the petitioners, those major issues on which both parties had shown a measure of fundamental agreement. In connexion with political development in the Cameroons under French administration, for example, both petitioners had objected to the existence of two electoral colleges. That had been one of the first weaknesses in the political system brought to the notice of the Trusteeship Council and was considered at length by the Council on pages 166 to 168 of the report covering its tenth and eleventh sessions. The Council had also considered the questions of universal suffrage and the possible extension of the powers of the Territorial Assembly, both of which had been referred to by the petitioners. The same was true of participation by the indigenous inhabitants in the administration of the Territory, a question to which the Trusteeship Council had always paid particular attention.

35. The questions of the relationship of the Cameroons under French administration to the French Union and the unification of the two Trust Territories of the Cameroons were not new points either, and references to them could also be found in the report of the Trusteeship Council. In the economic field, both petitioners had expressed concern at the lack of opportunity for the indigenous inhabitants of the Cameroons to play a full part in the economic life of their Territory. The Trusteeship Council had maintained a consistent position on that question and there was in addition a resolution of the General Assembly (322 (IV)) advocating greater participation of indigenous inhabitants in the economic life of the Trust Territories. Similarly, General Assembly resolution 439 (V), on technical assistance for Trust Territories, recommended that the Administering Authorities should make full use of sources of technical assistance and make appropriate applications to the agencies involved on behalf of the Trust Territories, a point that had been raised by Mr. Okala. Other matters brought up by the petitioners, such as racial discrimination and educational facilities, were not new to the Trusteeship Council or to the General Assembly. It was therefore not true that, as the draft resolution implied, the subjects of the petitioners' statements had not been dealt with by the Trusteeship Council. In many cases, recommendations had been made on them, although the recommendations had not always been fully implemented by the Administering Authority.

36. The Syrian delegation considered, therefore, that the draft resolution to be adopted should draw attention to the fact that the matters raised by the petitioners had been discussed on other occasions, and should call upon the Administering Authorities to implement any recommendations that had been made. It therefore wished to submit the amendments to the joint draft resolution contained in document A/C.4/L.267.

37. Mr. DE MARCHENA (Dominican Republic) wished to propose certain oral amendments to the joint draft resolution (A/C.4/L.265), taking the Spanish text as a basis. The purpose of his amendments was to ensure that the terminology of the resolution was in keeping with other decisions and practices of the United Nations. The result of his proposed changes in the third paragraph of the preamble would be that the paragraph as a whole would read:

"Considering that the matters raised in the Fourth Committee have not yet been studied by the Trusteeship Council and that questions have been raised on which it has not been possible to receive the views of the Administering Authority concerned."

38. He suggested further that the phrase "which may give a fuller account of the matter" should be deleted from the fourth paragraph of the preamble. In paragraph 1 of the operative part, he proposed that the word "observations" should be replaced by "statements" and in paragraph 2 of the operative part the word "representations" replaced by "statements". Also in paragraph 2 of the operative part he proposed that the words "these matters" should be replaced by "the matters with which they are concerned".

39. Mr. MENDOZA (Guatemala) suggested to the sponsors of the draft resolution and the Dominican representative that the third paragraph of the preamble should be deleted altogether. It was untrue, as the paragraph implied, that the Administering Authority had not had an opportunity of expressing its views. It had perhaps not done so exhaustively, but some of its views had been put forward at the present meeting. Moreover, the first part of that paragraph added nothing essential to the draft resolution and merely made a very debatable assertion, as the Syrian representative had pointed out. It might perhaps be possible to replace the third paragraph of the preamble by the additional paragraph proposed by the Syrian delegation (A/C.4/L.267, para. 2). In connexion with paragraph 2 of the operative part of the draft resolution, he pointed out that the statements of the petitioners were not given in full in the summary records, and suggested therefore that the words "the record of" should be deleted, and the statements transmitted in full to the Trusteeship Council.

40. Mr. EGUIZABAL (El Salvador) said that the sponsors of the draft resolution had reconsidered the text and felt after careful study that the first two paragraphs of the preamble could be combined to read *"Having granted oral hearings to representatives of organizations in the Cameroons under French administration"*. The sponsors felt, however, that, since the Trusteeship Council had not made known any opinion on the statements of the petitioners at the current session, the third paragraph of the preamble could not be deleted. The Dominican representative's

suggestions would improve the text considerably, and the sponsors would be glad to accept them.

41. As the Spanish text of the Syrian amendments was not yet available, he was unable to comment on it.

42. The CHAIRMAN hoped that, since the amendments that had been suggested to the draft resolution affected only the preamble, it might be possible for the sponsors, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Syria to agree on a single version of the draft resolution in time for the Committee's following meeting.

43. Mr. S. S. LIU (China) said that the reasons why China had joined in sponsoring the draft resolution had already been cogently stated by the representative of El Salvador. The Chinese delegation had always defended the right of petition and had been in favour of oral hearings of petitioners by the Fourth Committee. The principle of the right of petition both to the Trusteeship Council and to the General Assembly was clearly set forth in the Charter. The question of procedure, however, was different. Excessive zeal on the part of the Fourth Committee and a possible fear of criticism that it did not give the views of the inhabitants of the Trust Territories sufficient importance had led the Committee to ignore practical questions. The Committee must realize now that it had neither the time nor the machinery to deal adequately with general petitions of the kind submitted in connexion with the Cameroons under French administration. It had become clear that the best method would be to leave such matters to the Trusteeship Council.

44. In that connexion, the Chinese delegation deplored the increasing tendency in some quarters to belittle the work of the Trusteeship Council and allow it to be bypassed. If the Trusteeship System was to work smoothly, the Fourth Committee must have faith in the Trusteeship Council and the two organs must co-operate. The Chinese delegation also wished to refer to the treatment meted out to the 1952 Visiting Mission to West Africa. It deeply regretted the complaints that some delegations had made of the Mission's work. Such ill-considered censure of important organs of the United Nations could not be good for the prestige of the Organization as a whole.

45. In connexion with the amendments that had been proposed, he said that as long as the main point remained and the matter was referred to the Trusteeship Council, he would not disagree with the points made by the Syrian representative and would accept his proposed additions (A/C.4/L.267). He would agree to delete the words "the record of" in paragraph 2 of the operative part of the draft resolution, as suggested by the representative of Guatemala, but not to delete the third paragraph of the preamble. The Guatemalan representative's chief concern was covered by the Syrian amendment, and the Chinese delegation felt that it was essential that the need to hear the views of the Administering Authority should be mentioned and provision made for it. The Chinese delegation would be glad to accept all the changes suggested by the Dominican representative.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.