

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Chairman: Mr. Frederick H. BOLAND (Ireland).

## AGENDA ITEM 13

The future of the Trust Territories of the Cameroons under French administration and the Cameroons under United Kingdom administration: special report of the Trusteeship Council\* (A/4092, A/4093/Rev.1, A/4094, A/C.4/395, A/C.4/L.580, A/C.4/L.581, T/SR.953-963) (*continued*)

GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF  
DRAFT RESOLUTIONS (*continued*)

1. Mr. MUFTI (United Arab Republic) recalled that at the twenty-third session of the Trusteeship Council (958th meeting) his delegation had expressed the view that a thorough study of the reports of the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1958 (T/1426 and Add.1<sup>1/</sup>; T/1427 and T/1434<sup>2/</sup>) could best be made in the General Assembly and that no decision should be taken until the petitioners and political leaders whose arrival had been expected had been heard and the representatives of the African countries more directly concerned with the issue had been consulted or until fuller information about the Cameroons under British administration had been obtained. His delegation had therefore abstained from voting on Trusteeship Council resolution 1925 (XXIII) concerning the Cameroons under French administration, which had been based on the final conclusion in the Visiting Mission's report on that Territory (T/1427 and T/1434), whereas the preliminary conclusions had not at that time been fully discussed. On the other hand, it had voted for resolution 1926 (XXIII) concerning the Cameroons under British administration because that resolution did not prejudice any future decision that might be taken by the General Assembly.

2. The position which the delegation of the United Arab Republic was now able to adopt stemmed from

\*In accordance with General Assembly resolution 1281 (XIII).

1/ Transmitted to Members of the General Assembly by a note of the Secretary-General (A/4093/Rev.1).

2/ Transmitted to Members of the General Assembly by a note of the Secretary-General (A/4092).

the following principles: first, preservation of African solidarity, as voiced in the draft resolution in document A/C.4/L.581; secondly, scrupulous adherence to the Trusteeship Agreements, the Charter and the recommendations of the General Assembly; thirdly, continued United Nations supervision of the Trust Territories while the Trusteeship Agreements remained in force; and fourthly, institution of the necessary measures to ensure stability in the Trust Territories after independence had been attained.

3. The two reports of the Visiting Mission had been adopted unanimously by their authors, but the unanimity on such complex issues had been achieved only at the cost of unwarranted concessions by the authors of the reports to the views of the Administering Authorities.

4. With regard to the Cameroons under French administration, it should be emphasized that the Visiting Mission had left the Territory before the new Statute had come into force on 1 January 1959. It was therefore open to question whether the conclusion in the Mission's report concerning that Statute was well founded. The new Statute (T/1427, annex II, and T/1434) did not retain the provisions of article 2 of the previous Statute (T/1314), under which the existing system of government would continue in force in the Trust Territory until its inhabitants were invited to express an opinion on the definitive régime. Moreover, the amendment proposed by the Cameroonian Legislative Assembly, to the effect that French nationals resident in the Cameroons and Cameroonian nationals resident in France should not be entitled to participate in elections or in the work of political organizations, had been rejected. The provisions of article 2 of the new Statute left some doubt as to the extent of the rights and freedoms enjoyed by Cameroonians in the Cameroons itself. Lastly, the provision made in article 25 of the new Statute for an emergency procedure in the event of disturbances amounted to the transfer of responsibility for maintaining order to the High Commissioner. In accordance with that procedure, the initiative rested with the High Commissioner or the Prime Minister in Council, and, in the event of disagreement, the French Government assumed the role of arbitrator. Furthermore, intervention by armed forces would in itself lead to the proclamation of a state of exception (*état d'exception*). It was true, however, that those provisions were of a temporary nature.

5. The nine Conventions annexed to the new Statute, which had come into force simultaneously with the latter, laid down the conditions for Franco-Cameroonian co-operation in administrative, technical, economic, financial and cultural matters. The Statute and the nine Conventions should be regarded as an integral whole. They had been received with suspicion and had given rise to considerable criticism, which

was justified in view of the contradictory statements made regarding those Conventions, the haste with which they had been concluded and the importance of the problems they were supposed to settle. They contained no indication of how long they would remain in force—a disquieting fact since they seemed to pave the way for the Territory's future association with the French Community. He went on to quote from the two resolutions adopted by the Cameroonian Legislative Assembly on 12 June and 24 October 1958, which expressed the wish that an independent and sovereign Cameroons should enter into a free and amicable association with France in the interests of both countries. Paragraph 29 of the Visiting Mission's report stated that France and the Cameroons could, after 1 January 1960, abrogate or extend, by joint agreement, the Conventions which had been concluded in conjunction with the Statute. However, the representatives of the Administering Authority and of the Cameroonian Government had now affirmed that the Conventions would automatically become void when the Cameroons attained independence. A study of the Statute in the light of the provisions of the new French Constitution showed that citizenship in the Community, as envisaged in article 77 of that Constitution, was safeguarded by the terms of the Statute. Moreover, the matters governed by the nine Conventions coincided exactly with the sphere of competence of the Community, as laid down in article 78 of the French Constitution. Lastly, it should be remembered that those Conventions had not been discussed at a plenary session of the Cameroonian Legislative Assembly—a fact which tended to justify the apprehensions they had aroused.

6. The amnesty law passed by the Legislative Assembly on 14 February 1959<sup>3/</sup> was in accordance with the general desire for reconciliation. Unfortunately, that law had certain defects. One was that the decree dissolving the Union des populations du Cameroun (UPC) and certain other organizations had not been rescinded. Also, the law seemed to be of limited scope, as arrests had been made even since 1 January 1959 in connexion with the events of May 1955 and December 1956. Moreover, the provision empowering the judicial authorities to decide whether acts committed prior to 1 January 1959 were of a political nature was open to criticism in view of the judicial structure of the Territory. The committee responsible for commuting sentences in individual cases had not yet been established. Despite the assurances of the Cameroonian Government, there were doubts as to the future security of Cameroonians now abroad in the event of their return home. It was also to be regretted that persons sentenced to terms of more than twenty years' imprisonment were not to benefit by the amnesty.

7. There was a contradiction in the Visiting Mission's report regarding the dissolved political organizations. While acknowledging, in paragraph 48 of its report, that a certain organized movement had given expression to nationalist feeling, the Mission stated in paragraph 102 that that movement, the UPC, had virtually ceased to exist. The Mission's report also tended to place responsibility for the bloodshed of 1955 and subsequent years entirely on the dissolved political organizations, yet it seemed that there should be greater understanding with regard to organizations

that had been placed in a difficult situation. It was the stronger side, namely the Administering Authority, that should have been expected to act with the greatest calm and patience. Furthermore, the demands of the dissolved organizations had, on the whole, been reasonable and had related essentially to internal reform and to the date for the Territory's independence.

8. Although his delegation would not question the representative nature of the Cameroonian Legislative Assembly, it wished to recall that that Assembly had had very limited powers at the time of its election in 1956. It had been elected as a Territorial Assembly, without United Nations supervision, and its purpose had been to give advice on the Statute granted to the Cameroons in 1957. It had not been able to take a decision on the changes which that Statute had undergone since its entry into force.

9. The General Assembly could not, at the present session, make a thorough study of the Territory's economic and financial problems, but it should be borne in mind that the Territory was at present living beyond its means and that the financial assistance it had hitherto received placed a heavy burden on its budget. The Assembly should subsequently consider the question of granting assistance to the Cameroons after it had attained its independence.

10. He went on to outline the measures his delegation felt should be adopted to remedy the present political situation in the Territory. In the first place, general elections based on universal suffrage should be held before 1 January 1960 under United Nations supervision. Those elections would enable Cameroonians who had hitherto been kept out of political life to assume their responsibilities; they would clear the political air and ensure the stability of future institutions by giving the Cameroons an assembly which would possess the necessary popular support and the authority to cope with the great tasks before it: the drafting of a constitution, negotiations with a view to reunification, the preparation of economic development plans, budget reform and the training of the necessary key personnel. General elections could not be replaced by by-elections, for the Sanaga-Maritime was not the only area where there had been an insufficient percentage of voters, and the by-elections planned for 12 April 1959 would not be accompanied by as many safeguards as would be desirable, since the amnesty law was not yet actually in force. Moreover, there could be no question of the seven Frenchmen who were at present members of the Legislative Assembly being allowed to help in setting up the Territory's new political institutions. The second step would be to implement, as soon as possible, the amnesty law of 14 February 1959. The third step would be to repeal the decree by which the UPC and certain other organizations had been dissolved and at the same time to guarantee to the members of those organizations the exercise of their political rights and liberties. The fourth step would be to recommend the Territory's admission to membership in the United Nations in conformity with Article 4 of the Charter.

11. Since the Territory's request for independence had been approved by a large majority of the Legislative Assembly and was likewise supported by the people, there was no need to consult the Cameroonian people on that point, nor did there seem to be any

<sup>3/</sup> See A/C.4/395.

need to consult them concerning the question of unification.

12. He would have no objection if the General Assembly immediately adopted a resolution providing for the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement on 1 January 1960, but the Assembly could adopt such a resolution at its next session without thereby affecting the date of the Territory's independence. Moreover, the General Assembly should remain in a position to exercise some control over conditions in the Territory during the period which would elapse between the end of the present session and the termination of the trusteeship on 1 January 1960. It should therefore request the Administering Authority to submit a supplementary report covering that period, for in that way it could satisfy itself that the measures which it recommended had been carried out.

13. With respect to economic and financial conditions in the Territory, it did not appear that the General Assembly could formulate any concrete proposals at the present session. Nevertheless, the Administering Authority might now be invited to consider relieving the Territory of the financial obligations imposed on the Cameroonian budget by the loans and advances made by the French Government. For its part, the General Assembly might consider taking measures, as it had done in the case of Togoland and Somalia<sup>4/</sup>, with a view to providing the new independent State with the financial and technical assistance which it would need for its economic development.

14. Turning to the Cameroons under British administration, he pointed out that the Northern Region of that Territory, which was administered as an integral part of the Northern Region of the Federation of Nigeria, did not enjoy any degree of self-government and did not possess any representative bodies of its own. Furthermore, the number of representatives which it had in the various organs of the Federation of Nigeria was extremely small. In the face of the criticism aroused by that situation, the Administering Authority had invoked the provisions of article 5 of the Trusteeship Agreement, but it seemed to have lost sight of the fact that that article admitted of some limitations as dictated by the provisions of the Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement and that according to article 6 of the same Agreement the Administering Authority was to promote the development of free political institutions suited to the Territory. As was shown, moreover, by precedents in the Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs,<sup>5/</sup> the words "as an integral part" were only meant to facilitate the work of administration and should not in any way prejudice the political individuality of the Trust Territories.

15. As to the conclusion reached by the Visiting Mission that there was no difference of opinion on the principal question of the future of the Northern Cameroons which would justify the holding of a consultation, his delegation was unable to subscribe to that conclusion for the following reasons. The Mission had been unable to visit all parts of the Northern Cameroons and thus learn the wishes of the entire population; therefore it could not be certain that the majority

of the people favoured integration with the Federation of Nigeria. Since the Northern Cameroons did not possess any representative bodies of its own, the normal and logical course seemed to be to follow the same procedure with respect to that area as had been followed in Togoland under British administration. Furthermore, simply to attach the Northern Cameroons to the Federation of Nigeria would be the same as to partition the Cameroons under British administration without consulting the people.

16. Consequently, his delegation thought that a consultation of the people of the Northern Cameroons should be carried out under United Nations supervision on such date and in accordance with such procedure as would be determined by the General Assembly. It also thought that the General Assembly should recommend measures for preserving the status quo, and thus preventing any further integration of the Northern Cameroons with the Federation of Nigeria, and, in particular, should recommend the discontinuance of the registering of the inhabitants of the Northern Cameroons in the lists of voters for the Nigerian federal elections.

17. The Southern Cameroons was characterized by a greater degree of self-government. The ministerial system which had been introduced there seemed to assure it of a certain measure of freedom in the conduct of its affairs. The recent elections to the House of Assembly had brought into power the party which advocated separation from Nigeria. Motions had already been made in that House for such a separation, and that body had called for an end to the registration of voters in the electoral lists for the Nigerian federal elections. Those facts showed, first, that the majority of the population was in favour of separation from the Federation of Nigeria and, secondly, that the Government was favourably disposed to measures of the kind to which he had already referred in connexion with the Northern Cameroons for preserving the status quo.

18. It seemed therefore that a plebiscite would be the suitable method of determining the wishes of the people of the Southern Cameroons with respect to their future. His delegation thought that at its next regular session the General Assembly should determine the date and the procedure for such a consultation and should recommend measures for preserving the status quo and so maintain the general trend which had so far been manifested in favour of the separation of the Southern Cameroons from the Federation of Nigeria.

19. In view of the historical and political factors described by the Visiting Mission in its report and in view of the special situation of each of the two parts of the Cameroons under British administration, the results of the consultation held in each of the two parts of that Territory should be judged separately even though the consultation in both parts should take place at the same time. It seemed, moreover, that the Government of the Southern Cameroons contemplated a number of economic and financial projects which the Administering Authority, in agreement with the United Nations, ought to help in carrying out. It likewise appeared that the Administering Authority had taken action against the members of certain parties, particularly the One Kamerun party, which was not in conformity with the liberal traditions of the United Kingdom. Such measures should be avoided if there

<sup>4/</sup> See General Assembly resolutions 1254 (XIII) and 1278 (XIII), respectively.

<sup>5/</sup> Vol. IV (United Nations publication, Sales No.: 1955.V.2 (Vol. IV)), pp. 216-219.

was a desire to create a healthy political climate in the Territory.

20. Mr. NIELSEN (Norway) said that if the General Assembly reached the conclusion that the objectives laid down in Article 76 of the Charter had been attained with respect to the Cameroons under French administration, that Territory would be the first Trust Territory to become an independent State. At a time when the entire African continent was awakening to political maturity and when an increasing number of Non-Self-Governing Territories were becoming independent, it would be unthinkable for the General Assembly to make it more difficult for Trust Territories than it was for Non-Self-Governing Territories to become independent.

21. After studying the report of the Visiting Mission and hearing the representatives of the Administering Authority, the Prime Minister of the Territory, Mr. Ahidjo, the spokesmen for the opposition and other petitioners, his delegation had come to the conclusion that the Cameroons under French administration was now ready for independence and that its people had not only the desire but also the capacity to assume the responsibilities of an independent nation. His delegation had been favourably impressed by the adoption of the amnesty law and the statement by Mr. Ahidjo that all Cameroonians who had left the Territory were free to return without being subject to punishment for any past political acts. His delegation agreed, moreover, with the Visiting Mission that the present Legislative Assembly was representative in character, since it had been elected on the basis of universal suffrage after an electoral campaign which had been concerned with the Territory's future. In addition, the Legislative Assembly, together with the present Government, had taken the initiative in demanding and obtaining from France the commitment to grant complete independence on 1 January 1960.

22. Political democracy had not, to be sure, attained perfection in the Cameroons under French administration, but to require such perfection would be to apply a stricter yardstick to that Territory than many States now applied to themselves and would mean that the Territory would be kept under trusteeship for many years to come. The efforts made by the Cameroons to become a democratic nation should be recognized and its task should not be made unduly difficult by asking it to hold new elections at a time when it should be preparing to take over the responsibilities of independence. He was pleased to hear Mr. Ahidjo say that elections would be held soon after independence had been attained.

23. His delegation would vote for the draft resolution submitted by Haiti, Italy, New Zealand, Paraguay and the United States of America (A/C.4/L.580) and would be glad to welcome the new independent State to the United Nations.

24. With respect to the Cameroons under British administration, his delegation thought that the people of the two parts of that Territory should be consulted separately, and it had no objection to the holding of a plebiscite under United Nations auspices in each of the two parts of the Territory.

25. Mr. Ali SASTROAMIDJOJO (Indonesia) said that in considering the problem of dependent peoples his delegation was guided by the ideals which had inspired

Indonesia's own struggle for independence. At the Asian-African Conference held at Bandung in April 1955 President Sukarno had drawn attention to the responsibilities of independence and to the need for national unity. It was in the light of those two principles that his delegation would approach the problem of the forthcoming independence of the Cameroons under French administration and the attainment of the objectives of the Trusteeship System in the Cameroons under British administration.

26. With regard to the Cameroons under French administration, his delegation was gratified that the Territory was on the threshold of its independence, but it considered that the General Assembly should proceed with the utmost care in formulating its findings and recommendations so that the Territory could achieve its independence in the most orderly manner and under the most favourable conditions. The Committee had listened to representatives of the Government of the Cameroons and to various petitioners, some of whom were representatives of opposition parties and had differing views as to the way in which the Territory should proceed towards independence. He believed that the Committee must give equal weight to the views of both factions in order to arrive at the most objective conclusions. The orderly attainment of independence would depend on the sound working of the Territory's political organs and on the conditions existing in the Territory as it approached independence.

27. One of the issues that had to be considered was the application of the amnesty law. As the Visiting Mission had stated in paragraph 156 of its report on the Cameroons under French administration, a broad amnesty would serve, for the Cameroons as a whole, as a gesture symbolizing an opportunity for reconciliation among the people and for unity. Without casting any doubt on the judicial powers of the present Cameroonian Government, his delegation could have wished that that Government would call for the repeal of the Decree of 13 July 1955 prohibiting certain organizations, so that every political movement in the Territory could participate in the country's political life and thus contribute towards national unity.

28. The problem of national reconciliation was of particular importance in view of the forthcoming by-elections to fill the four seats in the Legislative Assembly allocated to the Sanaga-Maritime Region. It was not clear how the Cameroonian Government intended to organize the elections since the present Legislative Assembly had not resulted directly from general elections. The mandate given by the people of the Cameroons to the Territorial Assembly of 1956, which had later become the Legislative Assembly, related only to the creation of a Trust State; the question of independence had not arisen until January 1957. Although it might be contended that independence had been an issue in the 1956 election campaign, it could be argued that the Territorial Assembly should have been dissolved before its transformation into the present Legislative Assembly. Of the Legislative Assembly's seventy seats, only four, those at present vacant, would be filled as the result of elections fought on the issue of independence.

29. For all those reasons his delegation believed that new general elections should be held in the Territory under United Nations supervision. The elections would



give the people of the Cameroons an opportunity to fill all the seats in the Legislative Assembly, and the United Nations would be acting in conformity with the provisions of Article 76 of the Charter under which it had the duty to ascertain the wishes of the people by all the democratic means at its disposal. It seemed clear, moreover, that the people of the Territory desired such elections and were anxious to exercise their right to express their wishes freely. The holding of elections before independence might also provide a basis for the reconciliation of the views of the two opposing camps into which the population was at present divided.

30. The Administering Authority and the General Assembly were equally responsible for the implementation of the objectives of the Trusteeship System, which involved the creation of appropriate, democratically elected political organs in conformity with the wishes of the people of the Trust Territory. The United Nations should not lose sight of those obligations, for they constituted the framework within which the problem of the Cameroons under French administration had to be considered.

31. With regard to the problem of the reunification of the Cameroons under French administration and the Cameroons under British administration, his delegation took note of Mr. Ahidjo's statement to the Committee at its 849th meeting, in which he had said that the people of the Cameroons under French administration were unanimous in their desire for unification and that the real problem was the practical one of ascertaining the best means of achieving reunification. His delegation considered that the problem of reunification should be considered in the wider context of the independence of the Cameroons under French administration and the orderly achievement of that independence. It hoped that the problem could be settled before the attainment of independence by the French Trust Territory and before the elections which were to be held in the Federation of Nigeria at the end of 1959, since reunification would, as Mr. Ahidjo had said, make it necessary to reorganize the electoral districts and institutional structure of the Cameroons under French administration.

32. With regard to the Cameroons under British administration, he would first consider the northern part of the Territory since the situation there would decisively affect the future of the Territory as a whole. In the light of the Visiting Mission's findings in its report on that Territory (T/1426 and Add.1), his delegation wished to make the following observations: first, although some persons held that a plebiscite would merely confirm the people's desire that the Northern Cameroons should remain an integral part of Nigeria, another body of opinion, although not in favour of a plebiscite, appeared not to be strongly opposed to it; secondly, Mr. Foncha, the Premier of the Southern Cameroons had said to the Committee at its 846th meeting that the Southern Cameroons would watch political progress in the Northern Cameroons and if, in the meantime, the Northern Cameroons was separated from Nigeria, the Southern Cameroons would welcome reunion with the Northern Cameroons. In view of those considerations, his delegation thought that a plebiscite to ascertain the wishes of the people of the Northern Cameroons should be held before the Nigerian elections scheduled for the end of 1959. The questions

to be asked in the plebiscite might be determined at a later stage in the debate.

33. The situation in the Southern Cameroons was considerably less complicated than that in the northern part of the Territory. His delegation had noted the two motions now before the House of Assembly of the Southern Cameroons. The first called for the secession of the Southern Cameroons from the Federation of Nigeria before the latter became independent in 1960 and the maintenance of the Trusteeship Agreement in a modified form for a further period during which the possibilities of reunification with any part of the British and French sectors could be explored. The second motion considered that a plebiscite would be necessary to determine whether or not the Southern Cameroons should secede from the Federation of Nigeria. As that view seemed to coincide with the findings of the Visiting Mission concerning the Southern Cameroons, his delegation saw no reason why the General Assembly should not act in accordance with what seemed to be the wishes of the people of the Territory.

34. The Indonesian delegation would consider the two draft resolutions before the Committee in the light of the observations he had just made. It reserved the right to speak on those drafts later.

35. Mr. BENABUD (Morocco) said that the free African States recognized their special responsibility towards countries which were still under foreign domination. The All-African People's Conference held at Accra, the Conference for the Unity of the Arab Maghreb held at Tangier and the Congress of the Union générale des travailleurs de l'Afrique noire held at Conakry afforded proof of the awakening of all the African peoples, and of their sincere desire to unite and to work for the liberation of the continent and for its economic, social and cultural development. As an African country, Morocco had a great interest in the African movement for freedom. The Moroccan Government had taken note with satisfaction of the fact that the Administering Authority had declared itself ready to grant independence to the people of the Cameroons under French administration on 1 January 1960. The Moroccan people were gratified to know that another brother country would soon become free and join the concert of sovereign nations.

36. A superficial examination of the situation seemed to indicate that the political development of the Cameroons under French administration was at present proceeding smoothly: the country would gain its independence on 1 January 1960, an amnesty had been granted to political prisoners and exiles, the Cameroonians appeared capable of operating a democratic government, and the Administering Authority, the President of the Cameroonian Legislative Assembly and the Visiting Mission all agreed that there was no need for new elections in the country. Important groups of Cameroonians, however, and the delegations of several disinterested nations thought that the situation was not as satisfactory as it seemed; representatives of important political parties and organizations, some of them members of the Cameroonian Legislative Assembly, who had addressed the Committee had convinced the Moroccan delegation of the existence of serious differences of opinion in the Territory and of the need for free elections, under the supervision of the United Nations, before 1 January 1960.

37. Although it might perhaps be argued that those misgivings were unjustified and that the composition of the new Assembly would be essentially the same as that of the existing Legislative Assembly, new elections would at least dispel the lingering doubts on the question whether the present Legislative Assembly truly represented the majority opinion of the Cameroonian people. The reluctance of the Administering Authority and of the Legislative Assembly to hold new elections only intensified those doubts, and since the Government's popularity was being contested, the Government itself should insist on new elections being held under the auspices of a neutral body so that its popularity, authority and prestige might be clearly demonstrated. In his delegation's opinion, justice and democracy would be dealt a serious blow if the United Nations were to neglect its responsibility and should create an independent nation without first ensuring that the government of that nation was in the hands of representatives freely elected by the people. Member States should bear in mind the example of Togoland, where elections held after the granting of self-government had yielded entirely different results from those of the elections which had taken place a few months earlier when the French authorities had still been in sole control.

38. The Visiting Mission had implied that to question the representative character of the Legislative Assembly, which had reached agreement with the Administering Authority on independence for the Cameroons, would be equivalent to questioning the Cameroonian people's desire for independence. That implication, however, was illogical, for the groups which were questioning the representative character of the existing Assembly also desired independence. The desire for independence was unanimous throughout the Territory.

39. Many petitioners and several delegations had already stated the reasons why new elections should be held in the Cameroons before January 1960. His delegation had been particularly impressed by two of the considerations which had been stressed. In the first place, the functions exercised by the existing Assembly were far greater than those that had been envisaged when it had been elected. The elections had reflected a choice between local personalities rather than between political movements with clearly defined programmes. That had resulted in an unhealthy situation, for the Assembly was being controlled by certain individuals rather than by true political parties. Most of the existing political parties had not, in fact, been formed until after the elections. On 9 May 1957, the elected Assembly, which had been only a Territorial Assembly, had been transformed into a Legislative Assembly. Thus, without any mandate from the people, it had become the organ which determined the destiny of the country and could further transform itself into a constituent assembly. In the second place, the Assembly had been elected at a time when the spokesmen of the opposition had been imprisoned or in exile.

40. New elections were therefore imperative, but they should not be held until a total and unconditional amnesty had been granted to former political prisoners and exiles, who should also be given sufficient time to resume their participation in the country's political life. That amnesty should include the abrogation of the Decree of 13 July 1955, which had resulted in the dissolution of certain of the Territory's political parties and organizations that had been among the first to ask for independence. It was unreasonable to continue to outlaw those parties at the very moment when independence was about to be proclaimed. All those who had fought for independence should be set free so that they might participate with their fellow citizens in the management of their country's affairs.

41. Some petitioners had drawn the Committee's attention to the disorders which might take place in the Cameroons if new elections were not held. It was impossible to disregard the difficulties which the Cameroons would encounter if it attained independence without possessing truly representative bodies chosen by the entire population. Accession to independence was only the first step in a country's reconstruction, and the process of reconstruction would be very difficult if the first government of the independent country entered upon its task amidst doubt and suspicion.

42. His delegation sincerely hoped that the opposition groups and the Cameroonian Government would seize the opportunity offered by the Territory's accession to independence to promote reconciliation and understanding, and thus ensure peace, happiness and prosperity for the Cameroonian people.

43. It was in the spirit of the conferences of Accra, Tangier and Conakry, and in the belief that the future of the Cameroonians was intimately linked with that of their African brothers, that the Moroccan delegation, together with the delegations of other African States, had sponsored the draft resolution in document A/C.4/L.581. It believed that any equitable solution of the Cameroonian problem had to be based on two principles: transfer of sovereignty to the true representatives of the Cameroonian people, and the designation of those representatives through free elections held under the auspices of the United Nations.

44. So far as the Cameroons under British administration was concerned, the Moroccan delegation was guided by the same principles. Whatever destiny that Territory might eventually choose—whether union with Nigeria, union with the Cameroons under French administration or the maintenance of a provisional trusteeship—the main thing was to allow the inhabitants to determine their own fate through a plebiscite, in complete freedom and with full knowledge of the issues. Under Article 76 b of the Charter, such a plebiscite had to be held before the attainment of independence.

The meeting rose at 1.5 p.m.