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

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Michalowski (Poland), Vice-Chairman, took the chair.

**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, T/SR.953-963) (continued)**

**STATEMENT BY MR. AHIDJO, PRIME MINISTER OF THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION**

1. Mr. AHIDJO (France), Prime Minister of the Cameroons under French administration, said that the statements of the petitioners had raised a number of questions which needed elucidation. He would concentrate upon three of them: reconciliation, elections and independence.

2. As far as reconciliation was concerned, attempts had been made to cast doubts upon the value of the amnesty law<sup>1/</sup> which had just been promulgated. Of a total of 2,303 persons sentenced or prosecuted in the past three years in respect of crimes or offences directly or indirectly related to occurrences having a political origin, there had been only 400 still in custody on 1 January 1959, while the number of exiles had fallen to below ten. All those people, including the petitioners representing the Union des populations du Cameroun (UPC) who had been heard by the Committee, had benefited by the amnesty, with the exception of fifty-six who had been sentenced to death or hard labour for life and who could apply for the remission of sentence available to them under the amnesty law. Those fifty-six prisoners were bandits who had taken advantage of the disturbances in order to loot and steal and who had not hesitated to commit murder in order to satisfy passions which had nothing

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

<sup>1/</sup> See A/C.4/395.

to do with politics. Nevertheless, since their offences were indirectly related to incidents of political origin, they were covered by special provisions in the amnesty law.

3. The programme of national reconciliation on the basis of which the present Cameroonian Government had come into office had been practically completed, since peace had been restored in the Sanaga-Maritime Region and an amnesty had been promulgated. What was being advocated in certain quarters was not in fact a reconciliation but the unconditional surrender of a lawful Government, which had behind it the immense majority of the country, to a minority which had actually described itself as illegal.

4. The Cameroonian Government had generously permitted those who had placed themselves outside the law to return to legality. It had gone very far along the road of forgiveness, but it could not go as far as those who confused the amnesty issue with that of the repeat of the 1955 decree dissolving the UPC. That decree had been issued by the French Government and the Cameroonian Government could rescind it at any time. It would not do so. But all the amnestied UPC members were free to form any association or party they chose in order to work for the realization of their political ideals, provided they remained within the law and conformed to democratic rules. The UPC had formed para-military groups and had used violence, sometimes even against women and children. The revival of such a movement would run counter to reconciliation, would be tantamount to restoring violence and crime and giving them international sanction, and might provoke individual acts of revenge.

5. The crimes of the UPC had been directed almost exclusively against Cameroonians, in many cases even against people who took no part in politics. Whenever he had been in the Sanaga-Maritime and the Bamiléké Regions he had found two factions among the people: on the one hand, UPC members or sympathizers, who had asked for an amnesty; and on the other a large section of the population, consisting mainly of women and children, who had implored him not to pardon those who had killed their husbands, brothers and children. The members of the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1958, had found the same unhappy situation.

6. With regard to the question of elections, he recalled the arguments advanced by the representatives of Iraq and Guinea, who were in favour of general elections before the attainment of independence because they could be held under the supervision of the United Nations, whose prestige, they maintained, would thus be protected. No one was more anxious than he to safeguard the prestige of the United Nations and that was why he had the greatest respect for the findings of the Visiting Mission and the recommendations of the Trusteeship Council.

7. Some Cameroonians, including some of the petitioners who had been heard by the Committee, would have liked Cameroonian independence to be proclaimed on 1 January 1959; indeed, the group of *Démocrates camerounais* had submitted an alternative draft resolution to that effect to the Cameroonian Legislative Assembly. His Government had, however, insisted on following the proper United Nations procedure, which it had been urged to violate by the very people who today wished to make supervised elections a sort of preliminary condition for independence.

8. Moreover, elections at the present stage would be anything but a means of reconciliation. A general electoral contest would merely revive grudges and range Cameroonians one against the other. It was essential to avoid anything which might weaken national unity.

9. Furthermore, an assembly was not dissolved at the request of a minority. One of the petitioners himself had admitted that, although his appeal for new elections had been endorsed at meetings held in two towns of the Territory, in most parts of the Cameroons the people were opposed to general elections.

10. As he had already stated, general elections would be held after, and not before, the attainment of independence. If the Assembly was a representative body, why should they be held before? What would be the purpose of supervision? Would anyone try to question the fact of Cameroonian independence? After the attainment of independence the trusteeship would be ended and the Cameroonians would be thrown on their own resources; they would then be able to take sides on an electoral platform which concerned the affairs of the Cameroons alone, without fear of pressure from any quarter. The questions with which he had just dealt—the amnesty and the elections—were strictly Cameroonian affairs, which were no longer of direct concern to the Administering Authority or the United Nations. The true problem, the only problem, was that of independence and the termination of the trusteeship. The Cameroonian people, who could have eliminated the trusteeship by choosing a self-governing status, had chosen independence. They felt themselves fit and ready for it and they wished to prepare, in an atmosphere of calm and order, for the day when they would assume control of their own destiny. They would not allow themselves to be diverted from that objective, today so near at hand, for the purpose of settling quarrels to which they were completely foreign. On 1 January 1960 the transfer of sovereignty would be complete; no powers would be reserved and the Cameroons would immediately apply for admission to the United Nations. He could not imagine that the United Nations would not be unanimous in confirming the accession of the Cameroons to the dignity of a free, independent and sovereign nation.

#### GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

11. The CHAIRMAN declared the general debate open, and stated that the members of the Committee might refer in their statements to any draft resolutions that were submitted in the course of the debate.

12. Mr. SYLVAIN (Haiti) introduced the draft resolution submitted by his delegation and the delegations of

Italy, New Zealand, Paraguay and the United States of America (A/C.4/L.580), which provided for the attainment of full independence by the Cameroons under French administration on 1 January 1960 and for the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement on that date. All the sponsors were members of the Trusteeship Council and it was they who had submitted the draft resolution which the Council had recently adopted unanimously, except for one negative vote and one abstention, as its recommendation concerning the future of the Territory (resolution 1925 (XXIII)).

13. During its consideration of the recommendation of the Trusteeship Council and of the report of the Visiting Mission on the Cameroons under French administration (T/1427 and T/1434<sup>2</sup>), the Committee had heard important statements by the Administering Authority and by the Prime Minister of the Territory, statements which would affect the immediate future of the Territory, both before and after independence, and which constituted solemn commitments. For that reason, the sponsors of the draft resolution had thought it their duty to mention some of those statements in the draft resolution.

14. He did not think the draft resolution could be regarded as premature or as likely to frustrate the efforts being made to achieve a reconciliation among the different positions in the Cameroons. He would like to reassure the representative of Liberia on that point. The delegation of Haiti, too, was aware of its responsibilities towards the Cameroonian people and would continue to work to achieve that reconciliation which it considered indispensable for the future of the Cameroons.

15. The problem of national reconciliation in the Cameroons had until recently been a source of doubt and anxiety. Now, however, it had assumed a different aspect, for it was now for the Cameroonians, and for them alone, to find the solution that world opinion expected of their wisdom and that was necessary for the welfare of their country. It was because of that indispensable need for unity among all Cameroonians that the sponsors had noted with satisfaction the adoption by the Cameroonian Legislative Assembly of the amnesty law of 14 February 1959 and the assurances given by the Prime Minister of the Cameroons that his Government welcomed the return of all Cameroonians who in recent years had left the country and that it invited them to re-enter normal life without fear of reprisal.

16. As normal political life implied the free play of democratic institutions and unconditional respect for basic human rights, the sponsors had seen fit to refer to the assurance given to the Committee by the Administering Authority and the Cameroonian Government that the Territory enjoyed freedom of the Press, of assembly, of political association and other fundamental freedoms. The draft resolution took note also of the official statement that elections to fill the four vacant seats for the Sanaga-Maritime in the Legislative Assembly would be held in April.

17. In view of the fact that on 24 October 1958 the Cameroonian Legislative Assembly had adopted a resolution calling for independence, that the report of the Visiting Mission had drawn attention to the desire

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

of all Cameroonians for independence, that the Administering Authority and the representative of the Cameroonian Government had made statements to the same effect and that all the petitioners heard by the Committee had confirmed that that desire existed, the sponsors of the draft resolution could scarcely have done otherwise than take that unanimous desire for independence into account.

18. Lastly, since the doors of the United Nations were open to all independent and peace-loving peoples anxious to fulfil the obligations laid down by the Charter, the sponsors of the draft resolution had been happy to note the assurance given by the French representative at the 849th meeting that his Government would sponsor the application of the independent State of the Cameroons for admission to membership of the United Nations. It was in the light of all those considerations that the operative part of the draft resolution recommended that the Trusteeship Agreement should be terminated on 1 January 1960, when the Cameroons under French administration became independent.

19. He would conclude his remarks by conveying to the Administering Authority his delegation's congratulations on the splendid work it had just completed in the Cameroons, which it had led to independence despite many difficulties. The delegation of Haiti shared the joy of its Cameroonian brothers at the prospect of the forthcoming attainment of independence by the Cameroons. It would venture to urge them to show tolerance and unity, so that the dawn of independence would find them at one in their enthusiasm for the task which lay before them.

20. Mr. SEARS (United States of America) said that his delegation was proud to be among the sponsors of the draft resolution calling for the total independence of the Cameroons under French administration without complications or delay. If everything went according to plan, the Cameroons would be the first Trust Territory to become a free and independent nation.

21. Careful examination of the unanimous report of the Visiting Mission which had recently visited the Territory had convinced his delegation that a resolution along such lines deserved support in the Trusteeship Council. There had been only one dissenting vote in the Council. The United States had been strengthened in its conviction by the statements recently made in the Committee by Mr. Ahidjo, which were the most forthright requests for independence ever heard by the United Nations. Members of the Fourth Committee could accordingly have no doubt as to the will and capability of Mr. Ahidjo and his Government to guide their country to full and complete independence.

22. There was no such thing as being half independent, and the Cameroonian Prime Minister himself had stated that once they had attained independence, the Cameroonian people would not become integrated with any other community. He had added that for the Cameroons, independence would mean "a complete international personality" (849th meeting) and that he hoped his country would be admitted as a Member of the United Nations.

23. Having heard the petitioners, some of whom supported, while others opposed, the Cameroonian Government, the United States delegation was con-

vinced that, provided that resort to force and violence was avoided, it was a sign of political health in a country to have not only groups supporting the Government, but also groups supporting a loyal opposition. It also thought that it was eminently desirable that in the ten months remaining before independence was attained, all Cameroonian patriots should work together in a spirit of reconciliation for the good of their country.

24. His delegation welcomed Mr. Ahidjo and the members of his Government as the leaders of one of the great African national movements of the time. It congratulated the French delegation on its statements and on the assistance which France had provided to Mr. Ahidjo's Government to help the Cameroons to pass from trusteeship to independence. It was convinced that the draft resolution would prove acceptable to the great majority of the Members of the United Nations, which were favourably disposed towards the Government of the Cameroons, and would not fail to admit that country to the Organization in the not too distant future.

25. Mr. ESPINOSA Y PRIETO (Mexico) pointed out that the difficulties of the problem lay in its complexity, and also in the complexity of the United Nations itself. The Fourth Committee had already dealt with the matter several times, but the moment of decision had come. Over ten years earlier, a chain reaction had started in the Gulf of Guinea. Like all revolutions, that great movement would cause disturbances but it was needed to strengthen the foundations of world society. Two great Powers, France and the United Kingdom, were involved and were vying with each other, no longer in securing hegemony in Europe and the world, but for the honour of providing the United Nations with new free States.

26. Some of the mistakes made by the United Nations could have been avoided. Others were inherent in the very operation of the Organization. The United Nations dealt in a very complicated fashion with affairs relating to dependent peoples. It used two systems, one for the Non-Self-Governing Territories, i.e., colonies, the other for the Trust Territories. The second were much more highly privileged and the slightest problem which arose in connexion with them could be discussed in the Trusteeship Council and in the General Assembly, and those bodies were informed of the views of the Administering Authorities, the visiting missions, the petitioners and even of the Government leaders of such Territories. In the case under discussion, the situation was complicated by the fact that a large Non-Self-Governing Territory, Nigeria, was involved, together with a large Trust Territory, the Cameroons under French administration and a small Trust Territory, the Cameroons under British administration, the third lying between the two first-named and administered from Nigeria. The Assembly received no political information on the Territories known as Non-Self-Governing Territories. It had never had the opportunity of examining the consequences of African nationalism in the Gold Coast or in Nigeria; it had only a hazy idea of the preparatory constitutional work and the discussions which had been held in Nigeria on the subject of federalism and central government, while France had had to provide detailed information on the violent incidents which had occurred in the Cameroons under French administration and the rapid developments in that Territory.

27. Since the settlement of the question of the two Togolands, Members of the United Nations had known that the question of the Cameroons must arise shortly. However, even in November, during the first part of the session, the item on the agenda had been the general question of the report of the Trusteeship Council (A/3822); the separate debate on the Cameroons eventually proposed by the Yugoslav delegation (780th meeting) had been completely disrupted by the semi-official consultations which should have been held from the very outset. The Trusteeship Council, mysteriously convened to meet on 6 and 7 November 1958, in its ninth special session, had amended the terms of reference of the Visiting Mission by adopting resolution 1924 (S-IX) without any reference to debates in progress in the Assembly at that very time, although the Mission was under the authority of the Assembly. It had then been learned that the two Administering Authorities were in disagreement. The semi-official consultations which had been expected to result in a draft resolution had been broken off abruptly. Fortunately, the Assembly had unanimously adopted resolutions 1281 (XIII) and 1282 (XIII), the first of which provided for a resumed session on 20 February 1959.

28. The existing situation differed from that of December 1958 in that the Assembly had at its disposal the reports of the Visiting Mission (T/1426 and Add.1, 3/T/1427 and T/1434); moreover, elections had been held on 24 January in the southern part of the Cameroons under British administration. The Mission was to be congratulated on the fine work it had done, particularly when the short time at its disposal and the large number of petitions it had received were borne in mind. But, although the Mission's report contained certain details of great value, some of its conclusions were unacceptable. Every effort must be made in the future to prevent the possibility of criticism of a United Nations document such as that which had been directed against the Visiting Mission's report.

29. With regard to the Cameroons under British administration, the vast majority of members of the Assembly and both Administering Authorities considered that a plebiscite might be held to determine the wishes of the people. The Mission, however, seemed averse to the idea of a plebiscite, and it was to be feared that the ideas expressed in paragraphs 172, 173 and 174 of its report (T/1426) might have created confusion in the minds of the Territory's people. The Mission, which was opposed to the holding of any elections before the Cameroons under French administration became independent, commented approvingly on the elections held in the Cameroons under British administration on 24 January. Had those elections been organized under United Nations supervision, they could doubtless have served as a substitute for the proposed plebiscite. Since, however, the United Kingdom delegation had been unwilling to delay the elections or to have them supervised by the United Nations, consultation in that form did not solve the Territory's problem, for its future had not been the only issue put to the voters. Moreover the Mission had ultimately become convinced that the elections of 24 January could only sharpen the difference between

two points of view, which made it necessary to hold a plebiscite.

30. The recommendation made by the Mission which had most disturbed the Mexican delegation was that in paragraph 181 to the effect that no popular consultation was needed in the Northern Cameroons, which should become permanently a part of the Northern Region of the Federation of Nigeria. That area was claimed both by Nigeria and by the Cameroons now under French Administration, which was to attain independence and which desired the reunification of all the component parts of the former German Cameroons. The Northern Cameroons could not be recognized as belonging to one of the Territories which claimed it rather than to the other merely because an assembly of notables and other personalities had expressed their wishes to the four members of the Trusteeship Council making up the Visiting Mission. It was essential that the people should have an opportunity to state their will unequivocally on that specific issue.

31. The Mission had described the perceptible differences between the Northern and Southern Cameroons. But the same differences existed between the northern and southern parts of the Cameroons under French administration, which was to attain independence, and they existed likewise in Nigeria, Togoland and the Gold Coast. He saw no reason to stress those differences if the Cameroons under British administration was destined for union with either Nigeria or the Cameroons under French administration. There was probably not a country in the world where similar differences could not be found. The Mission, speaking of the South, added that the people were as varied as the landscape. Should it be inferred from that that the Territory should be divided among the Fons of Bali, Bafut, Nsaw and Bum? Great masses of populations were coalescing in Africa which were destined to form nations possessed of the means of subsistence. Several years of shared political, economic and social life would certainly be needed before a national consciousness emerged.

32. He did not mean to underestimate the moral authority of the traditional chiefs in the Northern Cameroons, but it should not be forgotten that, through contact with the outside world, a blend of traditional institutions with new, more democratic features had been taking shape in Africa in recent years. According to the Visiting Mission, the two elections held in the Northern Cameroons in 1951 and 1956 had given good results. In the circumstances he saw no reason why a plebiscite should not be held. Moreover the Mission stated in paragraph 146 of its report that for the elections to be held in 1959 nearly all the features of the previous procedures would give way to the methods to which the southern regions were already accustomed. On the eve of the greatest decision in their history, the people of the North must not be denied an opportunity to make their voice heard by democratic means. He felt sure that the traditional chiefs in the Northern Cameroons would recognize the need for such a procedure.

33. Moreover it would be unfair to lead the people of the Northern Cameroons to believe that they constituted a monolithic entity. The Visiting Mission itself stated, in paragraphs 14 and 15 of its report, that in that region the semi-Bantu pagan tribes, though nu-

<sup>3/</sup> Transmitted to Members of the General Assembly by a note of the Secretary-General (A/4093/Rev.1).

merically the strongest, were still dominated by the Fulani, Hausa, Kanuri and others professing the Moslem faith and had not yet fully made their mark on the political situation. He wondered what better opportunity the members of those tribes could have of making their influence felt than a plebiscite by secret ballot. It should be realized that, contrary to what was widely believed, the Northern Cameroons did not consist only of the separate section in the north but accounted for two-thirds of the Cameroons under British administration.

34. In the Mexican delegation's opinion, therefore, it was not sufficient to follow the advice of Northern Cameroons personalities and the Visiting Mission's recommendation; a plebiscite should be held throughout the Trust Territory. The main problems involved were to set the date for the plebiscite and to decide what questions the people should be asked. From the small size of the Territory and its position between two larger Territories which were shortly to attain independence, the choice might be expected to lie between union with the Federation of Nigeria and union with the Cameroons now under French administration. Unfortunately it was not as simple as that. While the solution for the Southern Cameroons which Mr. Endeley proposed—that the Southern Cameroons should join Nigeria as a federated region—presented no special difficulties, that did not apply to the solution proposed by Mr. Foncha. The latter envisaged a form of federal union between the Southern Cameroons and

what was now the Cameroons under French administration; but the idea of a federation had not yet been entertained in the Cameroons under French administration, which had a centralized administrative system. Mr. Ahidjo had been unable to give any precise answer to the question which Mr. Espinosa y Prieto had put to him regarding the form of association desired by Mr. Foncha, and the latter had resolutely opposed the integration, pure and simple, of the Southern Cameroons in a centralized and unitary independent Cameroons. If Mr. Foncha and Mr. Ahidjo could agree on that point forthwith the Assembly could recommend at the present session that a plebiscite should be held before the rainy season began. If not, the matter should be postponed for further consideration at the Assembly's fourteenth session. What should be avoided at all costs was a plebiscite which obliged the people to choose between association with Nigeria and the continuation of trusteeship.

35. Sir Claude COREA (Ceylon) proposed that the complete text of the statements made by Mr. Ahidjo, Prime Minister of the Cameroons under French administration, and by the representative of Haiti, should be circulated as documents.

It was so decided.<sup>4/</sup>

The meeting rose at 1.5 p.m.

<sup>4/</sup> For the statements by Mr. Ahidjo, and by the representative of Haiti, see A/C.4/401 and A/C.4/402, respectively.