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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. Miss BROOKS (Liberia) said that the sole motive of the sponsors of the draft resolution in document A/C.4/L.581 was to further the interests of the peoples of the Cameroons. The Committee would have observed that the sponsors were all African States. Concern for the Cameroons was by no means confined to the African States, but the latter had a particular interest in restoring peace and understanding in the continent. The draft resolution had been framed with due regard for the views expressed by all parties concerned.

2. She would emphasize the fact that the draft resolution dealt only with the Cameroons under French administration. It contained a specific reference to the assurances given by the representative of France that his Government would sponsor the application of the Cameroons to be admitted to membership of the United Nations. In referring to the need to hold elections, the sponsors had above all been thinking of the timing of the elections.

3. In order to set any doubts at rest, operative paragraph 1 referred to 1 January 1960 as the date on which the Territory would become independent. The Committee would note that operative paragraph 2 called for the abrogation of the Decree of 13 July 1955; the sponsors had felt that that was the only course to adopt. Operative paragraph 3 called for general elections based on universal adult suffrage to be held prior to 1 January 1960, under the supervision of the

United Nations. No such request appeared in the other draft resolution before the Committee (A/C.4/L.580) and that indeed was the main point on which the two draft resolutions differed. Lastly, the recommendation in operative paragraph 7 was in accordance with precedent.

4. She hoped to make a fuller statement of her views later in the debate.

5. Mr. NONG KIMNY (Cambodia) said that he was speaking on behalf of a country whose experiences had been similar to those of the Cameroonian people. It was generally agreed that the Cameroons should become independent and that all the conditions for the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement had been fulfilled. The desire of the Cameroonian people for independence had been made known through their legislature and through their legally established Government and had been recognized by the Administering Authority. The Cameroonian people were to be commended for the courage, ability and patience with which they had prepared the way for their independence.

6. There were nevertheless two questions which continued to exercise the petitioners: the amnesty and the holding of elections. Despite differences of opinion among the Cameroonian people on the main problems facing them and the fact that some extremists had resorted to violence, the Cameroonian leaders had realized that, when the country was on the threshold of independence, wounds inflicted in the past must be healed. They had accordingly passed the amnesty law of 14 February 1959.^{1/} Some held that it should have granted an unconditional amnesty, but his delegation felt that the amnesty law should be viewed in the context of events in the Cameroons and that the authorities there, who wished to bring about a national reconciliation, were best placed to judge how far the amnesty law should go.

7. With regard to the proposal that general elections should be held before 1 January 1960, his delegation considered that the various reasons adduced for such a course had been dealt with by the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1958. In its report on the Cameroons under French administration (T/1427 and T/1434^{2/}) the Mission had explained why it had concluded that it was not necessary to consult the population on the subject of independence before the termination of the trusteeship. Again, the Visiting Mission had been of the opinion that on the whole the existing Legislative Assembly was representative in character and it had seen no reason why fresh elections to that body should be a pre-condition of the attainment of independence. Furthermore, the Cameroonian Government had said that by-elections would

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

^{1/} See A/C.4/395.

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

be held in April to fill the vacancies in the Legislative Assembly. Moreover, both the representative of the Administering Authority and the Cameroonian Government had given an assurance that the basic freedoms existed in the Territory. In his delegation's view, those statements and the conclusions of the Visiting Mission should set at rest any doubts that there might be.

8. Some petitioners had tried to suggest that independence secured from France by negotiation would not be true independence. That had been the experience of his country and there was surely no one who disputed the full independence enjoyed by Cambodia.

9. During the first part of the session, his delegation had still felt some doubts about the situation in the Cameroons. Now, however, the Visiting Mission had issued its report, which had been approved by the Trusteeship Council, and his delegation considered that the conclusions reached in that report must be taken into account. He would assure the Cameroonian people that his delegation had considered the problem as objectively as possible and with the sympathetic attention natural in a country which had only recently obtained its own independence. The road to independence was long and hard but the Cameroons were now reaching the end of it, in peace and by the common desire of the Administering Authority and the Cameroonian people. The Committee had no right to postpone that independence, which indeed was not an end in itself; it was but the beginning of a long period of hard and continuous work, for independence was as difficult to preserve as to obtain. The Cameroonian people should be helped in their task of building a peaceful and progressive future.

10. The Cameroons was ready for independence and his delegation would vote in favour of the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement and for the birth of the new State of the Cameroons.

11. Mr. PACHACHI (Iraq) said that for the time being he would confine his remarks to the subject of the Cameroons under French administration and would reserve his comments on the subject of the Cameroons under British administration until he knew the results of the conversations which he understood were being carried on.

12. The subject of the future of the Cameroons under French administration had already been extensively discussed by the African members of the Committee, most of whom had joined in sponsoring the draft resolution in document A/C.4/L.581. The question was really an African one, since the future of the Cameroons would be inextricably linked with that of the rest of the African continent.

13. He recalled that it had been the delegation of Iraq which during the first part of the session had, together with the delegations of Ghana, India and Yugoslavia, introduced a draft resolution for the convening of a special session of the General Assembly on 20 February 1959 (A/C.4/L.557). The sponsors of the draft resolution had felt that it was necessary to hold a special session only two months after the end of the thirteenth regular session, because the Prime Minister of the Cameroons and the French representative had informed the Fourth Committee that consultations would have to be held in the Trust Territory before 1 January 1960. In an effort to meet the wishes of the French delegation, it had been agreed that a resumption of

the thirteenth session should be asked for rather than a special session.

14. The purpose of the resumed session was to devise means and methods of consultation in the Cameroons under French administration. The delegations which had voted in favour of the resolution had not expected that the resumed session would take a final decision on the termination of the trusteeship, since that could have been done at the fourteenth regular session. The sponsors of the resolution had felt that, irrespective of the findings of the Visiting Mission and of any decisions taken by the Trusteeship Council, the General Assembly must take the final decision regarding the method and timing of the popular consultation. They had not even considered the possibility that there would be no consultation of any kind.

15. He believed it was the general feeling in the Committee that every Territory on the threshold of independence must be given the opportunity to pronounce its wishes with regard to its future. At the Committee's 809th meeting the representative of Mexico, while stating that he would not be able to vote in favour of a referendum in the Cameroons under French administration, had added that it was imperative that the people's desires with regard to their future should be ascertained before they acceded to independence; he had gone on to express the hope that general elections supervised by the United Nations as a preliminary step towards accession to independence would become a general rule of the Trusteeship System. The delegation of Iraq entirely agreed and commended that statement to the Committee's close attention.

16. At the 814th meeting the Indian representative had said that the future of the two Trust Territories should be decided by consulting the people of those Territories and that the United Nations had duties and responsibilities in that respect which it could not evade or minimize. Later he had specifically stated that elections were necessary in the Cameroons under French administration and that he had therefore viewed with some misgiving the statement by the Prime Minister of the Cameroons that there were more important things to be done than to hold elections on the eve of independence. The Indian delegation believed, he had added, that although it seemed at first sight that the wishes of the people of the Cameroons under French administration were known and that there would be no point in a consultation of the people, certain steps which would have to be taken before 1960 should be decided by a referendum or plebiscite, or in any other manner which appeared to be appropriate. The delegation of Iraq shared those views.

17. It was on the understanding that the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly would come to a decision on the details and methods of consultation that the Committee was meeting. The Visiting Mission had had a special mandate to examine the best method for consulting the population and he had therefore been greatly surprised to find the Visiting Mission stating that no elections were necessary in the Cameroons under French administration—a subject on which its opinion had not been asked.

18. According to the Visiting Mission's report, Mr. Ahidjo, the Prime Minister of the Cameroons under French administration, had returned to the Territory after attending the first part of the thirteenth session

with the impression that the holding of a popular consultation before independence was not necessary, although while in New York he had appeared to think that there would have to be such a consultation. It would be interesting to know when he had changed his mind on the subject.

19. The crux of the whole matter was really the question of elections. At the 861st meeting the representative of India had mentioned four points which required an answer: whether the Cameroons was ready for independence; whether the desire for independence was supported by the people; whether the Cameroons was likely to emerge as an independent country on 1 January 1960; whether the people of that Territory enjoyed and would continue to enjoy fundamental freedoms and human rights as envisaged in Article 76 c of the Charter; and he had answered all those questions in the affirmative. In the opinion of the delegation of Iraq, however, a fifth question should be asked, namely, whether the transition from trusteeship to independence would be peaceful and whether the Territory would live in an atmosphere of tranquillity. It might be argued that the Charter did not require such questions to be answered, but he maintained that the whole concept of the sacred trust required that the United Nations should ensure that a Territory which had been under international responsibility should start its independent life under the best possible conditions. Until the Cameroons became an independent State, everything that related to the welfare of the Cameroonian people was the concern of the United Nations.

20. In paragraph 141 of its report the Visiting Mission expressed the opinion that there was no reason why fresh elections to the Legislative Assembly should be a pre-condition of the attainment of independence. That question, however, did not arise; even what he would call the "African" draft resolution (A/C.4/L.581) did not recommend that elections should be a pre-condition of independence. Operative paragraph 1 would still be valid whether elections were or were not held and irrespective of their results. The argument of the Visiting Mission that it would be unfair to make elections a pre-condition of independence did not conform to the facts.

21. Another objection had been that to insist on holding elections would be to call into question the representative character of the Legislative Assembly. That again did not correspond with the facts. The question whether the Assembly was or was not representative had become largely academic, since the Cameroonian Government itself had decided to dissolve the Legislative Assembly and hold new elections soon after the attainment of independence.

22. It had been claimed that the holding of elections under United Nations supervision would encourage the Union des populations du Cameroun (UPC) and thus condone violence. It was unfortunate that the question of the UPC had become an issue in the debate. That had been partly the fault of the Visiting Mission, which had taken pains to prove that the UPC had disintegrated and had no following in the Territory. In his view that question had no relevance to the need for holding elections. At the 861st meeting the representative of India had noted with approval the Prime Minister's statement that there would be general elections after independence and had given his reasons for thinking that elections should be held with the least possible delay after

1 January 1960. The delegation of Iraq entirely agreed with the reasons given by the representative of India; its disagreement was on the point whether elections should be held before or after independence. In the latter event they would have to be held before May 1960 because of the onset of the rainy season. Therefore the proposal that they should be held not later than December 1959 entailed a difference of some five or six months at the most.

23. The reason why he thought they should be held before January 1960 was obvious; it would be in the interest of the Cameroonian people that they should be held under United Nations supervision, in order to obviate any possibility that the validity of the elections might be challenged or that the representative nature of the Legislative Assembly might be called into question.

24. There was no question of forcing elections on the Cameroons; that would obviously be impossible. The draft resolution should be interpreted as an appeal to Mr. Ahidjo as an African and as prospective leader of the newest African nation, an appeal which he could not ignore if he had the interests of the Cameroons at heart. He should realize that had his country not been under United Nations trusteeship, it would never have seen the day of independence. Until 1958 France had consistently refused to consider independence as a possible solution to the colonial problem in Africa. The 1958 elections in Togoland had completely changed the tenor of French policy as far as Trust Territories were concerned. It could hardly be a coincidence that shortly after the elections in Togoland the machinery had been put in motion for the independence movement in the Cameroons, or that two weeks after the results of those elections had become known the question of independence had become so prominent in the Cameroons under French administration. If the Cameroons had been a colony or a Non-Self-Governing Territory instead of a Trust Territory and had opted for independence, he wondered whether the French Government would have treated it as it had done Guinea. Mr. Ahidjo should reflect on those questions. His future lay not with France but with Africa and he would be performing an act of independence, of statesmanship and of friendship with his African brethren if he would agree now to elections under United Nations supervision.

25. Mr. BISBE (Cuba) drew attention to the interdependence of all peoples and the conciliatory mission which the small countries could perform in the modern world. It was a matter of satisfaction to the new Cuban delegation that the first debate in which it was taking part concerned the accession of a Trust Territory to independence. His country was opposed to colonialism and hoped to see all the remaining Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories achieve not merely nominal independence but freedom from economic vassalage to the colonizing countries.

26. Most of the difficulties of the Cameroonian problem had their origin in the colonial policy pursued by the two Administering Authorities. Although his delegation accepted the validity of the conclusion set forth by the Visiting Mission in its report on the Cameroons under British administration (T/1426 and Add.1³) to the effect that the people of the Northern

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

Cameroons wished to join the Northern Region of Nigeria, it was surprised that the people of the two parts of the British Trust Territory had not acquired a greater sense of identification after forty years of British colonization. For that reason, and because the decision to be taken was one of fundamental importance for the future of a people, his delegation favoured the holding of a plebiscite under United Nations supervision to decide the issue.

27. With regard to the Southern Cameroons, his delegation agreed with the Visiting Mission that the results of the election of 24 January 1959 could not be considered decisive for the future of the area and it therefore supported the holding there, too, of a plebiscite under United Nations supervision.

28. All the statements the Committee had heard confirmed the Visiting Mission's conclusion that no consultation of the population of the Cameroons under French administration was necessary so far as the question of independence or of the date fixed for it was concerned. For that Territory, the two problems remaining to be solved were whether new elections should be held before independence and what should be done to achieve national reconciliation before that date. His delegation did not think that the partial solutions proposed by the Visiting Mission and the Cameroonian Government—by-elections in the Sanaga-Maritime Region and the amnesty law adopted on 14 February 1959—were adequate. The present Legislative Assembly had been elected solely as a Territorial Assembly for the purpose of considering the new Statute of the Cameroons, and a number of parties had not taken part in the elections from which it had emerged. Among those parties was the UPC which had been in the vanguard of Cameroonian nationalism since 1948. Moreover, the Visiting Mission had recognized the legacy of uneasiness left in the Territory by the long sequence of events involving the UPC. The United Nations should not ignore that reality or take the easy course of leaving the matter to be settled by the Cameroonians themselves after independence.

29. It seemed to his delegation that the most judicious assessment of the situation in the Territory had been made by Mr. Bebey-Eyidi, who had called for a total amnesty and general elections under United Nations supervision and had appealed to the French Government to make a gesture which would facilitate the task of the United Nations. His delegation hoped that that appeal would evoke a generous response. It could not understand the stubborn intransigence of the Administering Authority and the Cameroonian Government in refusing to accept those steps, which alone could guarantee genuine national reconciliation.

30. His delegation hoped that those objectives of a total amnesty and general elections before independence could be achieved through the United Nations. Failing that, it would urge the leaders of the Cameroonian opposition to show restraint and subordinate their own feelings to the all-important goal of independence.

31. It had been said that to reject part of the Visiting Mission's conclusions would be to question the work of the United Nations. His delegation did not share that view, for it held that the United Nations, in spite of its imperfections, had accomplished a great deal, not least in facilitating the gradual accession to independence of the Trust Territories. The Trusteeship Council, the Administering Authorities and the General Assembly were to be congratulated on the decisions they had taken during the first part of the thirteenth session.

32. Mr. VILAIHONGS (Laos) said that his delegation had noted with satisfaction both the statement by the French representative that his country would support the admission of the Cameroons to the United Nations when it had achieved independence and the solemn assurances given by Mr. Ahidjo that the amnesty law adopted on 14 February 1959 would be applied as quickly and as widely as possible.

33. His delegation was in favour of the accession of the Cameroons under French administration to independence on 1 January 1960 without any prior popular consultation, as the Visiting Mission's report had recommended. It would therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution in document A/C.4/L.580.

34. As an Asian country which had only recently acceded to independence and national sovereignty, Laos could not but welcome the entrance of its African friends into international political life on a footing of equality. It hoped that all the Cameroonians, both those in power and those in opposition, would find in independence and the new amnesty law the path to a genuine national reconciliation which would make it possible for all to co-operate in the task of building their country.

35. His delegation thanked the United Kingdom representative and the authorities of the Cameroons under British administration for the very specific statements they had made concerning the future status of that Territory, which should enable the United Nations to solve the problem, when the time came, to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.