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

In the absence of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Eilan (Israel), Rapporteur, 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, A/C.4/L.581, T/SR.953-963) (continued)**

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

1. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the draft resolution tabled by the delegations of Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Republic (A/C.4/L.581).
2. Mr. ESPINOSA Y PRIETO (Mexico), resuming his remarks of the previous meeting, pointed out that the problem of the Cameroons under French administration had ceased to exist from the moment that France had announced that it was to become a free and sovereign State. The French Trust Territories—both Togoland and the Cameroons—would be among the first to attain full independence under the Trusteeship System and it was now possible to envisage the ultimate liquidation of that System.
3. In the belief that the main problem to be resolved by the Cameroons under French administration prior to its attainment of independence was that of reconciliation, the Mexican delegation had been among those who had suggested general elections under United Nations supervision. The suggestion had been made in good faith with a view to placing the Territory in a more advantageous position with regard to both its status as an independent nation and its competition with Nigeria for the other parts of the Cameroons. Since, however, the Administering Authority, the Cameroonian Government, the Trusteeship Council and the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1958, saw no need for such

elections, he would not press the point. He would point out, nevertheless, that if the Visiting Mission's conclusion had been interpreted somewhat differently, much of the concern to which the matter had given rise might have been avoided. Indeed the validity of the proposal for elections prior to independence appeared to be borne out by the fact that steps were being taken to remedy the situation in the Sanaga-Maritime Region and to place Cameroonians in the seats in the Legislative Assembly now occupied by French citizens, and by the announcement of the Cameroonian Prime Minister that elections would be held immediately following the attainment of independence. It had never been the intention of the Mexican delegation to suggest that elections should be a pre-condition of independence. It shared with all other Member States the desire that the Trust Territories should attain independence as rapidly as practicable. Moreover, it was keenly aware that the General Assembly could only make proposals regarding the Trust Territory; it could not impose solutions.

4. The question of reconciliation should be the primary concern in the French Trust Territory. The Mexican delegation had kept silent on the question of the dissolution of the Union des populations du Cameroun (UPC) on grounds that that party was attempting to force independence through violence, because it still had vivid memories of its own country's struggle for independence and did not wish to perpetuate rancour or encourage recrimination. It was glad that, under the Ahidjo Government, now that independence was a certainty, passions had cooled and order had been restored. The Prime Minister had announced independence, reconciliation, amnesty and new elections. He had called upon all Cameroonians to return to their country, but he had steadfastly refused to make heroes of many expatriates. Obviously, there was a delicate psychological situation in the Territory which should be borne in mind when the Assembly made its recommendations. For all those reasons, Mexico would vote in favour of the five-Power draft resolution (A/C.4/L.580), with minor changes which it would subsequently announce.

5. The Cameroonian question, while it concerned all Member States, was basically an African question and could not be satisfactorily settled without the support of the African States. The appeal for general agreement made earlier by the Liberian representative should therefore be heeded.

6. The Prime Minister had been offered an enviable opportunity to demonstrate his skill as a statesman and to effect the reconciliation essential to the future of the Trust Territory. The success of the present Assembly was in his hands.

7. The Mexican delegation was also encouraged by the great achievements of the United Kingdom in developing African political institutions and by France's vast

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

contribution to good relations between the peoples of the African Territories and the rest of the world, as reflected in the conduct of the French-speaking Cameroonians who had appeared before the Committee.

8. Mr. VITELLI (Italy) said that, bearing in mind the long and turbulent process whereby most independent States had attained their freedom, his delegation had heard with great sympathy the observations of some of the petitioners. If the new Cameroonian State wished to adopt the basic democratic principles on which many sovereign States had founded their political and social systems, the United Nations could not but encourage it. On the other hand, Africa was too important to the whole world for the United Nations to fall short of the objectives it had set for the Trust Territories. The five-Power draft resolution calling for the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement for the Cameroons under French administration (A/C.4/L.580) should therefore command a wide measure of support. That recommendation was in keeping with General Assembly resolution 1282 (XIII), with resolution 1925 (XXIII) of the Trusteeship Council and with the conclusions in the report of the Visiting Mission on the Territory (T/1427 and T/1434<sup>1</sup>). Moreover, by announcing the enactment of an amnesty law the Administering Authority had now reassured the General Assembly with regard to the only point that had needed further investigation: the existence in the Territory of an atmosphere of genuine reconciliation.

9. It was unreasonable to ask, as had some members, for too much to be done too soon. The Cameroonians should now assume full responsibility for what remained to be done. The framework of a modern State had been established in the Cameroons: it had all the prerequisites for an orderly and effective community life in which the people could have a say in their own affairs. Moreover, it was clearly the unanimous desire of the Cameroonian people that the country should become independent and the Administering Authority had accordingly pledged itself to grant that independence on 1 January 1960. The measures taken in the past few years by the Administering Authority and the present Cameroonian Government indicated that the Territory was ready for independence. The dissenting voices among the petitioners merely indicated that some sought to achieve it in a different way. No argument used by them could invalidate the basic proposal in the five-Power draft resolution. It would have been better if those dissenting voices had made themselves heard in Cameroonian constitutional bodies.

10. The objectives of the Trusteeship System were being attained in the Cameroons, and the Administering Authority, reflecting the general attitude of Member States administering African Trust Territories, had recognized that with the resurgence of the whole of Africa its task was coming to an end. For those reasons, Italy had co-sponsored the five-Power draft resolution (A/C.4/L.580) and could not support the other draft before the Committee (A/C.4/L.581).

11. Mr. SHANAHAN (New Zealand) said that the basic principles which guided his delegation's views on the question of the Cameroons under French administration had already been made clear at the Trusteeship Council's twenty-third session (956th meeting). It would be unthinkable for the United Nations to make

it more difficult for a Trust Territory to attain independence than for Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Cameroons would be the first Trust Territory to become an independent entity and it was surely the desire of all Member States to help smooth its passage to independence and eventual membership in the United Nations.

12. The Assembly must of course be satisfied that the essential objectives of the Trusteeship System had been attained and, in particular, that the Territory was ready for self-government or independence. In reaching a decision on that question, it should have in mind only the principles of the Charter, particularly those which bore directly upon Trust Territories, and should apply them fairly to each individual case. He was sure no delegation would seek to interpret or apply those principles in so rigid a fashion as to make their practical application unduly difficult.

13. The Committee had before it the report of the Visiting Mission, which had been sent to the Territory specifically to ascertain the extent to which the objectives of the Trusteeship System had been achieved and to report on the procedure of consultation by which the people of the Territory could voice their opinion concerning their future. It had been said that the Mission had not spent enough time in the Territory, had not travelled widely enough and had not met representatives of certain groups. The most cursory examination of the Mission's report would indicate, however, that it was fully aware of the various shades of public opinion in the Territory and had been careful to talk with the proponents of those views. Moreover, the views expressed by representatives of the Administering Authorities and the Territorial authorities, as well as by most of the petitioners, had amply borne out the Visiting Mission's main conclusions. The Committee must therefore regard its report as providing a solid basis for its discussion and a sound guide for its conclusions.

14. Although some might attempt to confuse the issue, the basic question before the Committee was a simple one: whether the Trusteeship Agreement for the Cameroons under French administration should be terminated on 1 January 1960, the date on which the Cameroonian people had requested independence and on which the Administering Authority had agreed to grant it. In the light of the evidence before the Committee, the question could admit of only one answer. The Visiting Mission considered that the independence the Territory would enjoy on the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement would be full and complete and that the people of the Cameroons were capable of assuming the responsibilities of independence. The dignity and competence shown by the representatives of the Cameroons Government in the Committee provided striking confirmation of the correctness of that view. Despite certain budgetary difficulties, the Trust Territory appeared to have an economic and social structure capable of supporting full independence, and a Government, legislature and administration capable of discharging their responsibilities. The Visiting Mission had, moreover, concluded that on the whole the Legislative Assembly was representative in character and that there were not sufficient grounds for holding a general election before the termination of the trusteeship, while the Prime Minister of the Cameroons had explained to the Committee (849th and 860th meetings)

<sup>1</sup>/ Transmitted to Members of the General Assembly by a note of the Secretary-General (A/4092).

the cogent reasons which had led his Government to conclude that general elections should not be held until after independence. Since its election two years previously the Legislative Assembly had amply demonstrated its competence and capacity. Moreover, the Committee had received assurances that by-elections would be held in the formerly disturbed Sanaga-Mari-time Region in April.

15. Some delegations might argue that a general election before independence was desirable as a stabilizing influence. The suggestion that there was at present a serious lack of stability in the Cameroons was, in his delegation's opinion, not supported by the facts. Moreover, to hold elections at a time when the Government had work of great urgency and importance to do in preparing the country for independence would be to introduce a disruptive rather than a stabilizing influence. At such a crucial time, he was sure the Committee would not wish to recommend any action which might shake the confidence of the people of the Cameroons in their present institutions and Government or lessen the chances of their peaceful evolution towards independence.

16. The question of amnesty had also been a source of anxiety to some delegations. Those doubts should, however, have been allayed by the adoption of the new amnesty law <sup>2/</sup> and the assurances given by Mr. Ahidjo that it was being put into effect on the widest possible basis and with the least possible delay. Those who had left the Territory had been invited to return home and to take a full and constructive part in the affairs of their country. It was his delegation's earnest hope that they would respond to that call. Both the Administering Authority and the representatives of the Cameroons Government had made categorical and convincing statements concerning the existence in the Territory of political liberty and fundamental freedoms. The presence of petitioners from the Territory, some supporting and some criticizing the Government, and the activity of opposition parties in the country and the legislature, was proof of the reality of those liberties.

17. The internal stability of the Cameroons and the freedoms enjoyed by its people and by all political parties which eschewed violence compared favourably with the situation in many independent States. His delegation considered that the Cameroons was ready to play its part as a sovereign State and was sure it would exercise a beneficent influence in Africa and in the international community.

18. For all those reasons, his delegation had considered it a privilege to co-sponsor a draft resolution (A/C.4/L.580) by which the Assembly would agree to the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement on 1 January 1960, when the Territory became independent. It hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted unanimously and without delay. The possibility of the reunification of the two Trust Territories of the Cameroons would in no way be prejudiced by its adoption. Reunification was an objective of all parties in the Cameroons under French administration, although the Government and people of that Territory naturally did not want the question to prevent or delay the attainment of independence. Reunification would also affect the people of the Southern Cameroons under British

administration and only they could decide whether reunification was practicable.

19. The first basic fact about the situation in the Cameroons under British administration which emerged from the Visiting Mission's report on that Territory (T/1426 and Add.13/) and from the views expressed to the Committee was that the Territory had two distinct parts which must decide their future separately. The people of the Northern Cameroons belonged to the Northern Region of Nigeria by history, language, ethnic ties and personal inclination. Malam Abdullahi had endorsed the Visiting Mission's conclusion that it was manifestly the opinion of the population of the North that they should become a part of the Northern Region of Nigeria and that if the General Assembly accepted such a union no further consultation need be held. His delegation agreed with that conclusion but it respected the view expressed by a number of delegations that it would be desirable for a plebiscite to be held in the Northern Cameroons under United Nations supervision and it would raise no objection if that should prove to be the general opinion.

20. Some members might, for various reasons, be opposed to dealing separately with the two parts of the Territory and have reservations about the union of either with Nigeria. All should be aware, however, that, given the virtual unanimity of the North, the only result of consulting the Territory as a whole would be to strengthen the proportion of those who wished to accede to Nigeria.

21. The situation in the Southern Cameroons was more complex, for the opinion of the people on their future was not manifest and substantial minorities in the region would disagree with whatever choice was finally made. His delegation agreed with the Visiting Mission and the Administering Authority that the result of the recent closely fought elections had been indecisive for the determination of the Territory's future. Since the two main bodies of opinion in the House of Assembly had failed to reach agreement on a common objective, a plebiscite would seem to be necessary.

22. The leaders of both groups agreed that before any plebiscite was held the people should be given time to understand the issues involved and that, for practical reasons, the consultation should take place in the dry season. They did not, however, agree on the questions to be asked, Mr. Foncha, the Premier of the Southern Cameroons, suggesting a vote merely on remaining with Nigeria or seceding, Mr. Endeley, the Leader of the Opposition, suggesting a vote on the issue of continued association with Nigeria or unification with an independent French Cameroons. His delegation found it difficult to accept the idea that the Southern Cameroons might remain under trusteeship until it became a separate State, for the economic viability and political integrity of such a small entity would seem to be most doubtful.

23. Those questions could clearly not be decided at present. His delegation would therefore suggest that, with regard to the Southern Cameroons, the Committee should adopt a resolution agreeing in principle to the holding of a plebiscite during the next dry season but leaving the exact timing, the qualifications for voting

<sup>2/</sup> See A/C.4/395.

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

and the questions to be put, to be decided by the General Assembly, in consultation with the Administering Authority, at its fourteenth session. It hoped that during the next few months conversations would take place between the Governments of the Cameroons under French administration and of the Southern Cameroons on the nature of a possible union and that the two main groups within the Southern Cameroons would endeavour to reach an agreed approach to the form and timing of the plebiscite.

24. His delegation congratulated both the Administering Authorities for having developed the Trust Territories to the stage in which they now found themselves; it also congratulated the Government and people of the Territories—especially those of the Cameroons under French administration, whose well-earned independence was so near.

25. Mr. JHA (India) said that India had always advocated the independence of all Trust Territories at the earliest possible date. Referring to the basic objectives of the Trusteeship System set forth in Article 76 of the Charter, he said that four points should be considered with regard to the Cameroons under French administration: first, whether the Territory was ready for independence; secondly, whether the people themselves desired independence; thirdly, whether the Territory was likely to emerge as a fully sovereign nation on 1 January 1960; and lastly, whether the people of the Territory were now enjoying and would enjoy on 1 January 1960 the rights and freedoms referred to in Article 76 c of the Charter.

26. On the basis of the Visiting Mission's report (T/1427 and T/1434) and the statements by Mr. Ahidjo, Mr. Mbida and other petitioners, India considered that the Territory was fully ready for independence. In fact, independence had been too long delayed, which was perhaps the reason why violence had broken out in the Territory. Paragraphs 13 and 14 of the Visiting Mission's report showed that the Territory had highly developed institutions of local government based on the elective system and universal suffrage. Democratic institutions had developed progressively to the point where there was a Legislative Assembly elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage. His delegation was impressed by the quality of the leaders in the Cameroons under French administration, both within and outside the Government, and was satisfied that there would be no lack of people with the ability to discharge the responsibilities that would fall to the Cameroons as an independent nation. It therefore accepted the conclusion in paragraph 134 of the Visiting Mission's report that the Cameroonians had the capacity to assume the responsibilities of independence.

27. With regard to the desire for independence on 1 January 1960, he referred to paragraphs 134, 135 and 136 of the Visiting Mission's report and to the Legislative Assembly's resolution of 24 October 1958, from which it appeared that the desire for independence was felt by the whole population of the Territory. Some petitioners had questioned the representative character of the Legislative Assembly. The first reason adduced was that the Assembly had been elected in December 1956 as a Territorial Assembly to consider the draft Statute and that it was therefore not competent to pronounce itself on the question of independence. The very fact, however, that the Assembly of 1956 had

been elected on the basis of universal suffrage showed that the intention had been to extend legislative powers to that Assembly. Approximately 54 per cent of the registered voters had gone to the polls in the 1956 elections; if the Sanaga-Maritime Region, where it had been impossible to hold elections because of disorders, and two other areas where participation had been meagre were excluded, the percentage of voters who had gone to the polls varied from a minimum of 60 to a maximum of 80 per cent. The successive stages of political advancement that had been secured by the Assembly thus elected showed that it had succeeded in negotiating the various stages of independence with the French Government within a comparatively short time, through peaceful constitutional procedures that were in accordance with the principles of the Trusteeship System. The Legislative Assembly was thus entitled to the confidence of the United Nations. The achievement of complete domestic autonomy and the promise of independence on 1 January 1960 showed the vigour of the movement for independence in the Territory. He could not accept the proposition that every stage of the advance towards independence in a Trust Territory should be preceded by general elections to secure a specific mandate from the electors. The electoral campaign of 1956 in the Cameroons under French administration had been entirely concerned with the future of the Territory and the theme of independence. India therefore considered that it was in no way improper for the Legislative Assembly thus elected to pronounce itself in favour of independence.

28. The validity of the 1956 elections had been questioned because they had been conducted without the participation of the UPC and its two affiliates, which had been banned by the Government. Conflicting statements had been made about the popular support enjoyed by the UPC. The Visiting Mission had observed that whatever the strength of the party at the outset, it had lost popular support because of its violent activities. The United Nations Visiting Mission to the Trust Territories of the Cameroons under British Administration and the Cameroons under French Administration, 1955, had also observed that the UPC had unfortunately become a violent revolutionary party. The General Assembly could not discuss the question whether violence was permissible in order to gain independence, nor could it lay down that the Administering Authority should ignore or condone violence in the Trust Territory. India deeply regretted that a political party in a democratic society should have been outlawed but it also regretted the violence that had preceded the dissolution of the UPC. It considered that the 1956 elections could not be invalidated on the grounds that the UPC had been banned and that as a result of the disturbances four seats had remained unfilled in those elections.

29. With regard to the need for reconciliation in the Territory, he pointed out that General Assembly resolution 1211 (XII) had implied that the renunciation of violence was essential for the restoration of normal conditions. Unhappily there had been no clear declaration of renunciation of violence by the representatives of the UPC and their associate groups who had been heard by the Committee; on the contrary, there had been implied threats of resort to violence unless the UPC was legalized and elections held before 1 January 1960.



30. Some petitioners had asserted that the Legislative Assembly was not representative because it included eight Franco-Africans. On behalf of the Administering Authority and the Cameroons Government it had been stated that on 31 December 1959 the membership of those persons would automatically lapse, inasmuch as no one other than a Cameroonian citizen would be able to sit thereafter in the legislature of an independent Cameroons. The Legislative Assembly had demanded full independence from 1 January 1960; no Assembly, however composed, could have asked for more. India therefore considered that the presence of eight Franco-Africans in the Legislative Assembly did not affect the validity of the demand for independence or the representative character of the Legislative Assembly for that purpose.

31. There had been a call for general elections before independence. Article 76 b of the Charter and article 5 of the Trusteeship Agreement provided for consultation of the people on the subject of self-government or independence. In spite of the unanimous wish of the population for independence on 1 January 1960, the United Nations could, if it so wished, organize a consultation on the subject of independence and its possible date. Such a consultation would not, however, affect the continuance of the existing Legislative Assembly. Unless it could be shown that that Assembly had not been legally and properly constituted, there was no justification for general elections for a new Assembly. India would not be opposed to general elections if the present Government decided to dissolve the Legislative Assembly but there was no reason to make general elections a prior condition for independence. India had, however, noted with approval Mr. Ahidjo's statement that elections would be held after independence in order to settle various constitutional and other questions, and that by-elections would be held on 12 April 1959 to fill six vacancies in the Sanaga-Maritime Region and the Mbouda Subdivision.

32. The third point to consider was whether the Cameroons under French administration was likely to emerge as a free independent country on 1 January 1960. On 30 December 1958 the French Government had conferred full internal autonomy on the Territory, which constituted the last stage in the evolution of the Cameroonian institutions before independence. France had stated that it wished to comply with the request for full independence on 1 January 1960, that on that date the Territory would possess the full attributes of a sovereign State and that France, as the Administering Authority, would sponsor the application of the Cameroons for admission to the United Nations. Mr. Ahidjo had also stated categorically that after 1 January 1960 the Cameroons would have a complete international personality. There had been some discussion of the nine Conventions annexed to the Statute of 30 December 1958 (T/1427, annex II, and T/1434). Those Conventions reflected the position which the Government of France would occupy till the end of 1959 as the Administering Authority, but it had been stated on behalf of the Administering Authority and the Government of the Cameroons that the Conventions would automatically end on 31 December 1959 and that thereafter an independent Cameroons would be free to enter into new conventions with France or any other State. It had also been suggested that after 1 January 1960 the Cameroons might join the French Community and would therefore not be fully independent. Nothing

that had emerged in the Fourth Committee could justify such a suggestion and the Prime Minister of the Cameroons had categorically stated that for the Cameroons to take such a step would be inconceivable. India fully accepted that assurance.

33. In view of the foregoing considerations, India considered that there was no doubt that on 1 January 1960 the Cameroons under French administration would emerge as a fully independent country.

34. With regard to the rights and freedoms referred to in Article 76 c of the Charter, the question of amnesty for offences alleged to have been committed in the course of the disturbances was important. The Indian delegation had recommended at the Trusteeship Council's twenty-third session (958th meeting) the immediate grant of amnesty on the widest possible basis and had suggested that it would be an act of statesmanship to grant unconditional amnesty. It appeared that the amnesty law of 14 February 1959 granted complete political amnesty for all except those who had been sentenced for murder or manslaughter, whose sentences would be commuted and reduced. India would have preferred an unconditional amnesty, but it recognized that the amnesty granted was very liberal and doubted if there was justification for asking the Government to release unconditionally persons who had been convicted by a court of law for such acts of violence as murder. India welcomed the statement of Mr. Ahidjo, the Prime Minister, that there was complete freedom of speech, freedom of the Press and freedom of association in the Territory. It also noted with satisfaction that members both of the Legislative Assembly and of local bodies had been elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage. India was therefore satisfied that the necessary fundamental freedoms and respect for human rights prevailed in the Territory and that the new State would emerge on 1 January 1960 under those conditions.

35. There remained the question of unification. India did not consider that that issue would be prejudged by a decision that the Territory should become independent on 1 January 1960. Through an arbitrary historical process the Cameroons had been divided in two under the former Mandates System and had eventually become two separate Trust Territories. The United Nations was therefore called upon to deal with two Trusteeship Agreements and to ascertain the wishes of the people in those two Territories. The wishes of the people of the Cameroons under French administration were already known to be for unification and independence. If there was to be any delay in ascertaining the wishes of the people in the Cameroons under the British administration, that should not delay the independence of the other Territory.

36. India was anxious that the Cameroons under French administration should emerge as another free and independent State in Africa with the least possible delay. Both the Government and those who opposed it must take a broad view of the future of the Cameroons and of their own responsibilities and make sincere efforts towards reconciliation. He hoped that all concerned would strive to ensure that violence, which could never be a sound foundation for a free society, did not reappear. He rejoiced at the prospect of welcoming the new State of the Cameroons as a full Member of the United Nations.

37. It was clear from the Visiting Mission's report on the Cameroons under British administration (T/1426 and Add.1) and the statements made in the Committee that the situation differed in the two parts of the British Trust Territory and that those two parts must be dealt with separately. While it gave due weight to the Visiting Mission's conclusion that the population of the Northern Cameroons manifestly desired unification with Nigeria, his delegation considered that that conclusion must be ratified by a consultation of the population, particularly in view of the fact that the area had no representative institutions and because the question involved was not merely independence but integration with another country.

38. The situation was more complex in the Southern Cameroons, where opinion on the question of the Territory's future seemed fairly evenly divided. While the leaders of both major political groups favoured a consultation of the population, the question of the timing of such a plebiscite was complicated and the reasons advanced for postponing it seemed well founded. His delegation would make a statement on that question later in the debate.

39. His delegation would make its decision on the draft resolutions submitted to the Committee on the basis of the principles he had just outlined.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.