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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 13th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. ADOUKI

(Congo)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/45/23 (Part VI), chap. IX; A/AC.109/1015-1021, 1023 and Add.1, 1024-1036, 1038, 1041, 1044, 1048 and Rev.1; A/C.4/45/L.2 and L.3)

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General debate

1. Mrs. SAMATE (Burkina Faso), noting that 1990 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, welcomed the progress made in decolonization but observed that further efforts would be needed as long as colonialism persisted. Colonial exploitation was a violation of fundamental human rights and seriously undermined the principles governing the development of peaceful relations among nations, thereby posing a serious threat to international peace and security.

2. Significant progress had been made on one question of decolonization, namely Western Sahara: the principle of a referendum for self-determination was now accepted by the parties and the Security Council had adopted resolution 658 (1990) unanimously. She hoped that the remaining problems, namely, questions relating to the code of conduct and the suspension of military activities for the referendum campaign and the launching of a direct dialogue indispensable to the peace process, would be ironed out. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/87 and despite its critical economic situation, Burkina Faso was providing four higher education scholarships for Saharans.

3. United Nations agencies must increase their assistance to colonial Territories and their liberation movements. Administering Powers, for their part, must agree to and prepare the way for self-determination by the populations under their trusteeship.

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4. Mrs. RIBADANEIRA (Ecuador) reiterated her country's support for the Republic of Namibia, whose admission to the United Nations was overwhelming evidence of the Organization's ability to use its mechanisms effectively to achieve the objectives set forth in the Charter.
5. Ecuador adhered resolutely to the principle of self-determination. In the case of Western Sahara, therefore, it welcomed the outcome of the mission of good offices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the current Chairman of OAU, which had resulted in proposals for a settlement and an implementation plan approved unanimously by the Security Council. The parties concerned must now show a spirit of co-operation and the necessary political will to overcome the remaining obstacles.
6. The decolonization of the 18 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories would be no easy task, given the diversity of conditions there. The United Nations remained the most appropriate body for performing that task. Administering Powers had a duty to inform the populations of those Territories, however small, of the various options open to them, and to prepare them for self-government while helping them develop their economies. Those Powers should co-operate fully with the Special Committee on decolonization and transmit the information called for in Article 73 e of the Charter. United Nations visiting missions were also very important.
7. Her delegation agreed that the working methods of the Fourth Committee should be urgently reviewed in order to bring them more closely into line with the new situation prevailing in the world.
8. Mr. THOMSON (Fiji), speaking on the question of New Caledonia, associated himself fully with the statement made on 22 October by the Permanent Representative of Vanuatu on behalf of the countries members of the South Pacific Forum who were represented at the United Nations. His delegation was happy to note the continuing participation of the FLNKS, the recognized body of the Kanak people, in the work of the Fourth Committee and other decolonization bodies.
9. His delegation noted with satisfaction that since the signing of the Matignon and Oudinot accords in 1988, the climate of confrontation which had prompted the General Assembly to put New Caledonia back on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories at its forty-first session had been replaced by a spirit of co-operation and accommodation. The leaders of the South Pacific Forum had consequently endorsed the process under way in New Caledonia at their meetings in July 1989 and July 1990. The Fourth Committee and the Special Committee on decolonization must make sure that the administering Power transmitted the information called for in Article 73 e of the Charter. The members of the South Pacific Forum had requested that such information be supplemented by visiting missions.
10. The draft resolution on New Caledonia contained in document A/45/23 (Part VI), which the Special Committee on decolonization had adopted by consensus, was aimed at consolidating the process of reconciliation and confidence-building between the parties concerned. It had the full support of the seven South Pacific Forum countries who were members of the United Nations.

11. Mr. RAHMAN (Pakistan) said he hoped that the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 43/47, proclaiming the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, would ensure the demise of colonialism before the turn of the century. Pakistan, which had suffered long years under colonialism and knew the value of freedom, was delighted at the independence of Namibia, and was happy to see it occupy its rightful place in the comity of nations.

12. The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples not only gave voice to the aspirations of the colonized peoples for self-determination but it also required the administering Powers to recognize the principle that the interests of the inhabitants of territories under their administration were paramount, and that peoples under alien rule had the right to independence in all spheres. It was incumbent on Members of the United Nations to keep a close watch over conditions obtaining in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In that regard, he wished to emphasize the importance of the work of the Special Committee, of the information provided by petitioners and of United Nations visiting missions.

13. In general, the economic infrastructure and human resource development in Non-Self-Governing Territories were weak. More often than not, their fragile economies were linked to the interests of the administering Power. Those conditions often proved to be an impediment in their movement towards independence. The best possible use must therefore be made of available local resources. Since the shortage of trained managerial manpower was an obstacle to self-government, training of cadres was a basic priority. Pakistan was accordingly offering scholarships for study in various fields to students from Non-Self-Governing Territories, thereby making a modest contribution to the process of decolonization.

14. The organizations of the United Nations system were playing a crucial role in liquidating colonialism through the assistance they provided, and those efforts should be well co-ordinated.

15. Pakistan deplored the fact that colonialism in its worst form continued to be practised in South Africa, where the abhorrent system of apartheid denied the right of self-determination to the black majority and also denied the black population its basic human dignity. It was clear that the system of apartheid could not be reformed. It had to be completely eliminated in all its forms, and to that end continuing pressure must be brought to bear on the Pretoria régime and the sanctions maintained until there was evidence of profound and irreversible changes. It was therefore of the utmost importance that United Nations agencies should follow the guidelines set forth in the programme of action contained in the Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa, adopted at the sixteenth special session of the General Assembly.

16. As long as even a single Territory remained under the colonial yoke, the principles enshrined in the Charter would not be respected and the work of the Fourth Committee would not be complete.

17. Mr. BLANC (France) said that France maintained its reservations concerning consideration by the United Nations of the question of New Caledonia, over which France had sole sovereignty. His delegation was, however, prepared to give Member States full information on conditions in that Territory.
18. Outlining those conditions, he said that the dialogue between the leaders of the two main political parties had resulted in the 1988 agreements, which had been overwhelmingly endorsed by the people of France. According to those agreements, the Caledonians would pronounce on their future in a vote on self-determination in 1998, in which only voters continuously domiciled in New Caledonia for at least 10 years could take part. In the mean time the Territory would largely be administered by its own elected representatives and would benefit from a policy of economic expansion and social justice. In each of the three provinces, an assembly elected by universal suffrage was exercising its full powers with the assistance of several thousand officials assigned to it by the Administration. The French Government shared the view of the provinces that the training of Melanesians was a major priority and had allocated substantial budgetary resources in that area, to help to train 400 higher-level personnel, mostly Melanesians, over a 10-year period. The effects of economic realignment could already be seen, particularly in such areas as agriculture, employment, infrastructure and mining, a sector in which the Melanesians were preparing to assume higher-level responsibilities. Lastly, the French Government considered that cultural development was also an important goal, and was endeavouring to promote Kanak culture.
19. The implementation of the 1988 agreements, which the parties monitored on a regular basis, was a long-term task which enjoyed the support of practically all the countries of the region. The French Government was encouraging that regional co-operation, to which it attached great importance.
20. Once again at the current session, the French delegation would not be calling for a vote on the proposed draft resolution (A/45/23, chap. IX, I), which took account of the positive developments in the situation in the Territory. However, it could not associate itself with the adoption of that text, as it dealt with a question that, under Article 73 of the Charter, which had not been affected by General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV), 1541 (XV) and 41/41 A, came within the competence of France and under its exclusive sovereignty.
21. In conclusion, he paid a tribute to the leaders of the two political movements in the Territory, whose willingness to achieve a reconciliation had enabled the New Caledonians to live under conditions of peace and stability and devote themselves, with the firm support of the French Government, to the development of their community, until they had an opportunity, in a few years' time, to exercise their right to self-determination in complete freedom, without any outside interference.
22. Mr. AL-MAHMOUD (Qatar) said that the attainment of independence by colonial peoples and Trust Territories was the most important phenomenon of the past 45 years. As the twentieth century drew to a close, only a few small and sparsely populated territories were still dependent. But their demographic or geographical limitations could not prevent their accession to independence. The credit was due to the United Nations, which applied the same principles to all territories

(Mr. Al-Mahmoud, Qatar)

regardless of size. Small countries, like Qatar, whose security and territorial integrity depended on respect for the principles enshrined in the Charter, greatly appreciated the work done by the Organization in that area.

23. Qatar welcomed Namibia's independence, which had come as the crowning point of the efforts made by the United Nations Council for Namibia over many years. It appreciated the personal missions and initiatives undertaken by the Secretary-General with a view to settling regional differences, and particularly the question of Western Sahara, by peaceful means in accordance with the Charter. It was to be hoped that the Fourth Committee would adopt a draft resolution that would contribute to the settlement of that question, now that there was a consensus on holding a referendum. The situation in New Caledonia still gave cause for considerable concern, since the right to self-determination and the other principles enunciated in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples were not being applied in that Territory. In spite of the major changes that had occurred in southern Africa, apartheid had not yet been abolished, and further efforts must be made to ensure that all citizens of South Africa could live under conditions of equality.

24. Mr. MDEE (United Republic of Tanzania) recalled that for a number of years Tanzania had co-sponsored the draft resolutions on Western Sahara, being convinced that colonialism had to be eradicated everywhere in the world. Although Tanzania was not found wanting when the situation called for a form of struggle over and above peaceful negotiations, its preference was for such negotiations. Tanzania had therefore been delighted when Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO had agreed to pursue a negotiated settlement of the question of self-determination for Western Sahara. His country had encouraged that process, and it was also pleased that a set of proposals and a timetable for their implementation had been agreed upon. It particularly welcomed the plan for a referendum, to be organized under the auspices of the United Nations in co-operation with the Organization of African Unity. However, there remained the problem of the number of troops that Morocco should be allowed to keep in the territory at the time of the referendum. Such a military presence could exert an intimidating influence on the general population and thus have a negative effect on the referendum. With its recent experience in Namibia, the United Nations was conversant with such matters as appropriate troop levels, and Morocco should continue to show its good faith by co-operating with the Secretary-General in that regard. After the sacrifices made by the Saharan people, the basic ingredients of a negotiated settlement were in place, and if the process were to derail, it would be a tragedy not only for the people of Western Sahara or Africa, but for the entire international community as well. Morocco must therefore work closely with the OAU and the United Nations to overcome the last obstacle to a fair settlement, in the interests of all.

25. Mr. ZEIN-UDDIN (Islamic Republic of Iran) stressed the importance of information on the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which was essential for a full review of the situation. Despite the changes in the political situation in the world, the issue of decolonization could not be relegated to second place. The decolonization process had not yet been completed, and bodies such as the Special Committee on decolonization and its sub-committees, which had played an essential

(Mr. Zeinelddin, Islamic Republic of Iran)

role in the work of the Fourth Committee, needed the co-operation of the administering Powers, which had an absolute obligation to provide information on the conditions in the Territories which they administered. The committees could not be content merely with following developments in the general international situation, for they would be acting against the interests of those Territories by ignoring the realities.

26. The United Nations, in line with the changes in the international climate, must pursue constructive discussions on ways of eliminating colonialism, strengthening the Special Committee on decolonization as much as possible. As a result of the efforts of all concerned, progress had been made towards a peaceful settlement of the question of Western Sahara. There was a need for more constructive co-operation with the Fourth Committee, pending completion of the process of decolonization, which would be possible only in an atmosphere of understanding and co-operation.

27. Ms. FOUNTAIN (Canada) said that during the 45 years of its existence, the United Nations had pursued with great success the ideals of its Charter, and particularly the realization of the principle of equal rights and self-determination for all peoples. The United Nations had thus played a crucial role in the independence of Namibia. Canada was proud of having been a part of that process and would continue to assist Namibia in its economic and social development.

28. At the present time, the United Nations, held in such high esteem by the nations of the world, represented hope. It therefore had a responsibility to turn its attention to the future with vision, foresight and imagination. For example, the time had come for the Fourth Committee to examine its agenda and procedures. Several items still discussed by the Committee were no longer relevant, or were the responsibility of other bodies. For instance, with the independence of Namibia, the struggle against apartheid no longer had a place in the decolonization agenda. Canada would not wish anyone to mistake its resolve to bring about the end of apartheid, a repugnant and wholly unacceptable system, but it took the view that there were more appropriate forums within the United Nations for dealing with the issue. Canada hoped that by the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the Fourth Committee would have rationalized its agenda, focusing its efforts on the important questions that remained legitimately within its mandate.

29. Canada had also hoped that, in the draft resolutions submitted, account would have been taken of the developments that had occurred in South Africa and of the consensus texts adopted at the sixteenth special session of the General Assembly, but that was not the case. The Committee was not acting in the best interests of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories by adopting resolutions containing provisions that were outdated, unrealistic and, in certain cases, inconsistent with work being carried out elsewhere in the Organization. It must not play into the hands of those who, as the number of Territories dwindled, sought to trivialize the work of the Committee.

30. Mr. JOHANSEN (Norway), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that they attached the utmost importance to the right of all peoples in Non-Self-Governing Territories to self-determination. It was the duty of the United Nations to safeguard that right. The United Nations, through the Special Committee on decolonization and the Fourth Committee, had played an important role in decolonization, which constituted one of the greatest successes in the 45 years of its existence.

31. However, in the light of the change in the international political climate, the growing consensus on many issues in the United Nations could be better reflected in the Fourth Committee than was presently the case. The time had also come to take a good look at the nature of the Committee's work and the way in which it dealt with the decolonization issue. Issues extraneous to decolonization should be kept outside the work of the Committee. That was true, for example, of the question of apartheid which, since Namibia's independence, was now the responsibility of other bodies. There was also a need to rationalize the work of the Fourth Committee, and of the Special Committee on decolonization and its sub-committees, in order to avoid the overlapping that occurred at present. Drafts submitted should focus on their main issue, and should also be shorter. The Nordic countries saw merit in the proposal that many of the traditional consensus texts should be presented in one omnibus resolution. Such rationalization of the work should not in any way diminish the importance of specific needs of certain Territories, which could be reflected in an annex to the omnibus resolution. However, the Nordic countries objected to the tendency to submit draft resolutions which, for the most part, were hardly negotiable. That trend would ultimately not serve the interests of the Territories still remaining on the Committee's agenda.

32. Mr. FUENTES-IBÁÑEZ (Bolivia) drew attention to the scale of the changes which had taken place since the Charter of the United Nations had established the right to self-determination in 1945. If colonialism had now become an outdated phenomenon, that was largely due to General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), the corner-stone of a process which had enabled many peoples to take their place in the comity of nations. For example Namibia, whose struggle for liberation had been encouraged by Bolivia, was now a sovereign State, while in Western Sahara there were clear prospects for a settlement based on self-determination.

33. Bolivia was following with keen interest the liberation movement in which the peoples still governed by administering Powers were involved. It therefore felt that the idea - inspired by budgetary considerations - of a "catch-all" resolution dealing indiscriminately with all the Territories that were still dependent, should be rejected. The Committee had thus far considered the Territories on an individual basis, so that each case could be studied in detail. It could certainly do for the remaining Territories what it had done for former Territories, even though they did not take up so much space on the map of the world. In fact, they needed all the more assistance precisely because they were smaller and had no political resources. It would not be in keeping with the spirit of resolution 1514 (XV) to lump them all together and give them second-class treatment.

34. Of the territories still under foreign rule, special attention should be given to the archipelagos in the South Pacific, which were exposed to the effects of nuclear tests conducted by foreign Powers.

35. Mrs. KING-ROUSSEAU (Trinidad and Tobago) said that with the momentous occasion of Namibia's accession to independence, the decolonization process was entering on a complex new phase. What was appropriate for a vast territory like Namibia was not necessarily suitable for the small territories. However, in making the necessary adjustments, it would be wrong to depart from certain fundamental principles.

36. Some who were largely motivated by ideological considerations, were still somewhat hesitant when it came to discussing the small territories. Now that the cold war had ended there was, however, reason to hope that "ideological obsessions" were a thing of the past, and that from now on priority could be given to the well-being and the self-determination of peoples that were still dependent. In that area, the emphasis should be placed on co-ordination, which was essential, and account must be taken of the specific needs of each Territory, particularly where there was a danger of natural disasters. To show that the Territories were indeed fully-fledged partners in dialogue, technical and advisory services should be placed at their disposal. Thus, for example, in the crucial matter of the environment, which affected the very existence of the islands, UNCTAD could contribute to the study of specific problems. The recent example of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) could be followed, and Territories could become involved in regional activities.

37. The fact that the decolonization process had to undergo a change did not mean that States should indulge in complacency and, regardless of proclaimed principles, lose interest in Territories that were considered geographically unimportant. All Territories had an intrinsic importance. Therefore, Trinidad and Tobago had serious reservations about lumping them all together in a "catch-all" resolution, and her country would ensure that the small territories were not marginalized. It had been said that, the 1980s had been the "lost decade" from the point of view of development; the coming years should not become the "decade of lost opportunities".

38. Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil) recalled that his country had, from the very beginning, pledged itself to the principle of self-determination established by the Charter of the United Nations, which had dealt the death-blow to colonialism. The United Nations was being transformed into a real instrument of the great revolution of the times - the economic and political liberation of the colonial peoples - and that had been made possible by its efforts to promote conciliation. In that connection, a tribute should be paid to the work that had been done over many years by the Committee on decolonization. The cause of self-determination had everything to gain from the new climate of co-operation and negotiation, and it could only be hoped that the administering Powers would take account of developments in international relations. He noted with satisfaction that Namibia had joined the ranks of sovereign nations, and also welcomed the prospects of settling the question of Western Sahara and the dialogue in the case of East Timor. However, in the general détente that had been achieved, the Territories that were still not self-governing should not be relegated to second place. On the contrary, it was important to broaden the political and economic base of those Territories.

39. Mr. OTHMAN (Malaysia) noted that considerable progress had been made since the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and that the United Nations, on increasing its membership from 100 in 1960 to 159 in 1990, had become more representative. However, the Organization should not relax its efforts to ensure that by the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, which was beginning in 1990, all colonized peoples had finally achieved their independence and freely decided on their own political, economic, social and cultural development. It was absolutely essential that that process should be accelerated, as it was still too slow. The Committee on decolonization therefore needed the co-operation of all members of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Furthermore, the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories would have to be educated politically, and the organization of some regional seminars for that purpose was a positive development. International public opinion also needed to be sensitized.

40. An administering Power was obliged to protect the natural resources of the Territory under its control and to diversify and develop its economy. Territories with limited economic bases could very well become viable through integration or co-operation with others. The flow of immigrants and settlers into the sparsely populated Territories was disturbing, because such flows could modify the demographic composition of the Territories so that the indigenous population became a minority. The practice of allowing residents from the administering country to vote after staying only three months in the Territory should not be tolerated.

41. In Western Sahara there had been very positive developments. The United Nations could conceivably formulate a plan that would be acceptable to all the parties to the conflict and enable a free and fair referendum to be held. His delegation was willing to co-operate in that peace process.

42. Administering Powers which were also founding Members of the United Nations should be reminded that the Charter of the United Nations required them to co-operate fully with the Organization, that the interests of the Territories were paramount and that world peace partly depended on the eradication of colonialism.

43. Mr. YOUSIF (Sudan) said that his country had been one of the first States in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and in the Organization of African Unity to sponsor draft resolutions on the exercise of the right to self-determination, and it was optimistic about the prospects of the final eradication of all traditional forms of colonialism. However, new forms of foreign domination were emerging, and the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and other Arab territories was a clear example of that trend. In view of the gap between rich and poor, and between weak and powerful, a broader interpretation should be given to the term "colonization" to cover such forms of undue influence and abuse of power as zionism, racial discrimination, and foreign intervention. A greater effort must be made to introduce a new world order, in which there was a proper balance of power and wealth, and in which the peoples were emancipated from all forms of economic, cultural or other hegemony and no longer enslaved in the interests of others. Sudan, which had itself been a colony for some 50 years, knew from experience that the administering Powers in particular could not be reminded too often of the rights of the peoples under their administration.

44. The CHAIRMAN announced that Brazil, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Venezuela were joining the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.4/45/L.2, entitled "Question of Western Sahara" and submitted under agenda item 18, that Colombia was becoming a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.4/45/L.5, entitled "United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa" and submitted under agenda item 114, and that Argentina and Colombia were joining the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.4/45/L.6, entitled "Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories" and submitted under agenda item 115.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.