



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GBEHO (Ghana)

later: Mr. ARNOUSS (Syrian Arab Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that he had received five communications containing requests for hearings, three regarding the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), under agenda item 28, and two relating to Namibia, under agenda item 36. He proposed that, in accordance with the usual practice, the communications should be circulated as documents of the Committee and considered at a later meeting.

2. It was so decided.

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3. Mr. MORAGA (Chile) said that so many United Nations documents were written in a kind of stereotyped language that it was hard to believe they dealt with crucial concerns for the present or future of a humanity weighed down by instability and injustice. Nevertheless, amid the tediously symbolic rhetoric there were exciting glimmers of truth, and perhaps that verbal style was the only means which human society had so far found for dealing with its priority problems without giving up its conflicting political positions. In fact, the flood of paper contained some real attempts and definite proposals for progress. Each of the items under consideration by the Organization, which were reflections of collective generosity, represented a desperate attempt to transcend the human condition and provide mankind with more acceptable and tolerable standards.

4. The objectives of decolonization did not differ greatly from the lofty purposes of the United Nations because, at the conceptual level, the self-determination of peoples was not unrelated to the doctrine of individual human rights. At the end of the Second World War, in accordance with the principle of the self-determination of peoples, a catalogue of anomalous situations had been prepared and a decision made to remedy them. Agencies had sprung up and measures had been adopted to defend the dignity of hundreds of thousands of persons who had been conquered and discriminated against in many regions. Referring to the first paragraph of article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (General Assembly resolution 2200 (XXI)), he said that the issue of human rights was thus not far removed from the basic issue dealt with by the Fourth Committee.

5. Nevertheless, there were contradictions within the United Nations system; thus the objectives of decolonization were desired and not desired, accepted but rejected, and the result was an exchange of accusations in which neighbours blamed each other for placing obstacles in the way of self-determination.

6. Chile could demonstrate its consistent support for the principle of self-determination. It had participated in the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples from its inception and in its Sub-Committee on Small Territories, where it had tried to mitigate the excessive politicization which was aimed at making a political issue out of the special situation of certain Territories.

7. The self-determination of peoples was a fundamental principle of contemporary international law and an obligatory theme when States, in their official statements, wished to express their sovereign will or to help to consolidate that principle in other regions of the world; it also had an invisible political component which influenced developments in the field of decolonization. The relevant resolutions of the Organization dealt with a series of factors designed to

(Mr. Noraga, Chile)

prepare certain regions or Territories to seek separation from the metropolis, integration into it or some other arrangement.

8. Chile had also participated from the beginning in the very important work of the United Nations Council for Namibia and had supported without reservation the cause of the immediate independence of that Territory, since it shared the concern of the international community at its illegal occupation. In General Assembly discussions and in other activities at the international level designed to secure the independence of Namibia, there was a need for calm and constructive action, avoiding the pursuit of tangential or immediate political ends and faithfully reflecting the firm agreement of Member States on the approach to that delicate and urgent question. The Organization itself had initiated a clearly diplomatic solution, to be achieved preferably by consensus, because division and the need to resort to voting, together with the singling out of certain countries by name or the drafting of aggressive texts, ran counter to the idea of a community of nations which had firmly endorsed a viable solution that could not be put off any longer.

9. Mr. Arnouss (Syrian Arab Republic) took the Chair.

10. Mr. PEQUENO (Sao Tome and Principe) said that the issue of Western Sahara was decolonization and it should be settled through the exercise by the people of the Territory of their right to self-determination and independence. The question was also an African one, involving two fraternal nations, namely, Morocco, with its history of contribution to the anti-colonial movement, and the Saharan people, with its legitimate national aspirations under the leadership of the Frente POLISARIO, its sole representative. Africa had carefully studied the matter and attached the highest importance to a just and lasting solution. In 1983, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) had proposed a formula for peace in its resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX), designed to put an end to the fighting, to satisfy the legitimate and recognized rights of the Saharan people and to uphold the principles and norms of international law, particularly those governing decolonization. The international community had recognized the wisdom of the peace plan when, in 1983, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 38/40, subsequently reaffirmed in its resolutions 39/40 and 40/50.

11. The international community had tried to implement that resolution by requesting the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the current Chairman of OAU to use their good offices to bring about negotiations between the two parties to the conflict, in the shortest possible time and in conformity with resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX), on the terms of a cease-fire and the modalities for organizing a referendum for the self-determination of the Saharan people.

12. The guidelines and principles governing the referendum, set out in OAU resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX), were the object of broad consensus in the international community. Sao Tome and Principe agreed with the Secretary-General of the United Nations that the United Nations should be given full responsibility for the organization and conduct of the referendum. In the International Year of Peace, the international community had before it a carefully elaborated formula for

(Mr. Pequeno, Sao Tome and Principe)

a just, political solution to the conflict in Western Sahara. However, if progress was to be made, a more sincere display of political will was needed. The international community must make every effort to encourage the two parties to the conflict to initiate the negotiating process with a view to achieving a peaceful settlement, while remaining true to its commitment to guarantee self-determination and independence for the Saharan people.

13. Mr. ORAMAS OLIVA (Cuba) said that, for many years, Member States had been expressing concern about the persistence of the situation in Western Sahara, which had become a threat to peace, security and stability in northern Africa. The question was one of decolonization and would be resolved only when the Saharan people exercised their right to self-determination and independence. A peaceful, just and lasting solution could be achieved by implementing OAU resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX) and General Assembly resolution 40/50, which established the most appropriate modalities for securing lasting peace in the region.

14. Enormous efforts had been made to enable the parties to the conflict, the Frente POLISARIO and the Government of Morocco, to reach a negotiated settlement leading to a cease-fire and the organization of a referendum, without any administrative or military constraints, under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity. However, once again that thorny question was being considered in the Committee because Morocco, which had made a positive contribution to the liberation of the African peoples, obstinately refused to withdraw its troops from the "Saharan Arab Democratic Republic" and maintained its intransigent position of the previous year when it had declared that it would not participate in any negotiations or discussions on the subject.

15. Even so the current Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General of the United Nations had managed to arrange for a joint mediation process to be initiated on 9 April 1986. It had soon become clear, however, that Morocco had no desire to negotiate. In the two series of preliminary talks, it had maintained its obstinacy and political blindness and resorted to evasions and ambiguities, in sharp contrast to the flexibility and openness which had been shown by the Frente POLISARIO, despite the fact that it was the latter which was losing most and suffering most in the war.

16. Morocco had tried to engage in aggressive military escalation against the Saharan people. However, the Saharan Republic was sparing no effort to consolidate its position in every respect. Currently over 90 Member States had recognized it and maintained diplomatic relations with it; that was the best testimony to the nobility of its principles and the justice of its cause.

17. Cuba endorsed the five fundamental points of the Frente POLISARIO's policy regarding the Saharan Republic: the problem of Western Sahara was a problem of decolonization; the right of the Saharan people to self-determination and independence was sacred and accorded with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV); the occupation by Morocco was illegal and was the cause of the war; the Frente POLISARIO was the authentic and legitimate representative of the Saharan people;

(Mr. Oramas Oliva, Cuba)

and the Saharan Republic was the legitimate expression of the aspirations of the Saharan people.

18. For all those reasons Cuba had participated in the drafting of draft resolution A/C.4/41/L.2, of which it was a sponsor. If the Government of Morocco did not wish to take part in the debate on that draft resolution or in its future implementation, it would be turning its back on history, and sooner or later, when the Saharan people were free, Morocco would have to hang its head before mankind.

19. Mr. KOSTOV (Bulgaria) said that since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2311 (XII), the Committee had step by step been focusing the efforts of nearly all the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations on support for the just and legitimate struggle of colonial countries and peoples for their independence.

20. During those years, UNESCO, ILO, FAO, UNICEF, WHO, UNDP and many other bodies had contributed to the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/41/407 and A/41/23 (Part IV)). For example, UNESCO had provided scholarships and equipment to training centres of the national liberation movements in Namibia and South Africa and a number of specialized agencies had decided to terminate South Africa's membership, a measure aimed at isolating and boycotting the racist régime of Pretoria, in conformity with the goals and principles of the Declaration and of relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

21. Despite the appeals of the international community and the resolutions of the General Assembly, South Africa was continuing to implement its policy of apartheid and colonialism against the indigenous population of that country. The illegal occupation of Namibia and the continuous aggression against neighbouring States posed a serious threat to peace and security in the region and in the world. The recommendation set forth in the Declaration of the World Conference on Sanctions Against Racist South Africa (A/CONF.137/5, para. 101) should therefore be implemented, and all the specialized agencies and other organizations and bodies of the United Nations system should comply with the request in paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 40/53.

22. In order to accelerate the full and speedy implementation of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, those bodies should intensify their support for the struggle of the Namibian people and for SWAPO, their sole authentic representative. In that regard, Bulgaria fully supported the relevant recommendations of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/41/23 (Part IV), para. 6). Bulgaria also believed that assistance should be provided to the front-line States to enable them to resist the attacks by the South African racist régime against their sovereignty and territorial integrity, and it endorsed the recommendations addressed to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to put an end to all types of support to that régime.

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

23. Bulgaria therefore supported the draft resolution of the Special Committee appearing in paragraph 18 of document A/41/23 (Part IV) and hoped that the resolution would play an important role in extending greater moral and material assistance to the peoples of the colonial Territories in their struggle for independence and freedom.

24. Mr. MUTSVANGWA (Zimbabwe) said that the problem of Western Sahara had existed for over a decade, and was primarily a decolonization issue. Its sole solution lay in allowing the Saharan people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. That people alone must decide whether or not it would join any of its neighbours.

25. At the recent summit meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries held in Harare, the Heads of State or Government had expressed their conviction that the solution to the question of Western Sahara lay in the implementation of resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX), adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU, and of resolution 40/50 of the United Nations General Assembly. It was encouraging that both parties to the conflict had accepted the good offices of the Secretary-General as a means of achieving a peaceful solution to the problem. However, it was dismaying that that mediation process seemed to be used as a stalling tactic to avoid a solution and to prolong the conflict.

26. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries was concerned lest any of the small nations belonging to it should seek to treat the highest world collective office with what appeared to be less than honest intentions, because it was precisely those countries which gained most when the United Nations system discharged its mission in conformity with its sacred principles.

27. For that reason, Zimbabwe called upon both parties to the conflict to demonstrate the necessary will to facilitate the efforts of the Secretary-General, so that his mission could be successfully carried out. The time had come to put an end to the conflict in Western Sahara, one of the many problems plaguing the community of non-aligned countries.

28. Mr. TAEB (Afghanistan) said that the situation in Western Sahara continued to pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region. That question was a problem of decolonization, which should be solved by allowing the Saharan people to exercise its inalienable right to self-determination and independence. The people of Western Sahara, under the leadership of the Frente POLISARIO, the sole, legitimate representative of that people, was struggling for its right to self-determination against the occupying Power, which was supported by the major imperialist Power of the world, the United States. The Democratic Sahrawi Arab Republic had celebrated its tenth anniversary of continuous struggle for the independence of the Territory.

29. Afghanistan believed that resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX) of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity and resolution 40/50 of the General Assembly served as a basis for the solution to the conflict in Western Sahara. The summit meeting of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned

(Mr. Taeb, Afghanistan)

Countries, held in September 1986 in Harare, had urged both parties to the conflict to take up direct negotiations with a view to achieving a cease-fire aimed at creating the necessary conditions for a just and peaceful referendum, which might allow for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. Both parties to the conflict should co-operate so that the United Nations and OAU might supervise that referendum.

30. Afghanistan noted with satisfaction that the process of joint mediation of the Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the implementation of those resolutions, had begun on 9 April 1986 in New York. Furthermore, it called upon the parties to the conflict to seek a solution to the problem and to show political willingness for putting an end to it.

31. Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea) said that decolonization was one of the central elements in Papua New Guinea's foreign policy, because colonialism degraded, exploited, and dispossessed colonial peoples, and denied their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. At the heart of colonialism lay the colonial Powers' selfish economic, political, strategic and other interests. It was always accompanied by racial and cultural discrimination and oppression.

32. In his statement before the General Assembly on 10 October 1986, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea had said that the South Pacific was one of the few regions of the world where old-style colonialism was still to be found. The peoples in that region looked to the peoples elsewhere for help and support in bringing colonialism to an end. In that spirit, Papua New Guinea had fully supported the people of Western Sahara in its struggle against colonial domination and oppression, so that the Saharan people could determine its own destiny without interference of any kind.

33. Papua New Guinea was pleased with the constructive role that the Organization of African Unity was playing to help solve the question of Western Sahara, and with the support given by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries at the summit meeting of Heads of State or Government held in Harare. Furthermore, the difficult, ongoing review of the situation in Western Sahara undertaken by the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee was commendable. The direct involvement of the Secretary-General and the agreement of the main parties to the conflict to participate in a dialogue with the United Nations and OAU were encouraging, despite the obstacles which still must be overcome.

34. Papua New Guinea concurred with the views expressed by the Secretary-General in paragraph 19 of his report (A/41/673). For that reason, it endorsed draft resolution A/C.4/41/L.2 regarding the situation in Western Sahara, and was grateful to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the Chairman of OAU for the important role they were playing in the search for a just and lasting political solution to the situation in Western Sahara, so that the Saharan people might exercise its inalienable right to self-determination and independence. Furthermore, it urged the international community to give its full support to the Secretary-General so that his mission, which was also that of the Committee, would be successful.

35. Mr. THABET (Democratic Yemen) said that the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had had a major impact on the struggle against colonialism, although it was deplorable that one-quarter of a century later, scores of peoples were still under the yoke of colonialism.

36. The people of Namibia, under the leadership of SWAPO, was waging a liberation struggle against the racist régime of South Africa. Democratic Yemen urged the international community to step up its assistance to that struggle, and called for an end to the collaboration of certain western Powers with the Pretoria régime. Such support enabled Pretoria to survive and continue its racist policy condemned by the international community as a crime against humanity. Furthermore, it called for the imposition of sanctions against that régime and its continued isolation, in conformity with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

37. Democratic Yemen believed that, in order to settle the question of Western Sahara, Morocco must agree to direct negotiations with the Frente POLISARIO, so that a cease-fire could be achieved through the implementation of resolution AHG/Res.164 (XIX) of OAU and General Assembly resolution 40/50 and the conditions for a referendum without administrative or military restrictions could be created. In that regard, Democratic Yemen supported the joint mediation process of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the current Chairman of OAU, as well as the activities of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and hoped that the international community would continue to support the aspirations for freedom of colonial peoples, particularly the Saharan people. In that spirit, it supported the draft resolution appearing in document A/C.4/41/L.2.

38. Several countries were concerned about the situation in various Territories under colonial administration in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean. Democratic Yemen shared that concern, and emphasized the seriousness of the militarization taking place in those areas, because it believed that such domination must be ended in order to achieve stability and peace there. The implementation of the Declaration would help all the peoples subjected to the colonial yoke to enjoy their right to freedom in the future.

39. Mr. NAVARRO IVAS (Nicaragua) said that, since the approval of resolution 1514 (XV), scores of peoples had broken the chains of colonialism and had joined the community of independent nations. However, 25 years later, there still remained Territories under colonial domination in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

40. Decolonization did not end with the granting of political and administrative independence to a Territory. Indeed, there was a more subtle and profound colonialism: colonialism in the areas of economics, culture, information and education. The hopes of the peoples under colonial or neo-colonial domination were placed in the work of the Fourth Committee.

41. With regard to the question of Western Sahara, the Committee reaffirmed in its debate two fundamental aspects: first, that the problem was colonial in nature and could be solved only by implementing the relevant decolonization resolutions and, secondly, that the very fact that the issue was still being considered

(Mr. Navarro Rivas, Nicaragua)

indicated that the Saharan people was still being denied the exercise of its inalienable right to self-determination and independence. Morocco, which had played an exemplary part in the anti-colonial struggle, should know perfectly well that when a people, however small or poor, decided to take the first step towards independence, there was no force capable of stopping it. Hence, given the relentless march of history, prolongation of the Saharan people's suffering could not be allowed.

42. There was no alternative to a political solution negotiated in the clearly defined framework of resolutions AHG/Res.104 (XIX) of the Organization of African Unity and 40/50 of the United Nations General Assembly. The King of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO should start negotiations aimed at reaching an agreement on a cease-fire which, following the withdrawal of the Moroccan administration and troops, would provide for the entry of a peacekeeping force and the creation, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations, of the requisite conditions for holding a referendum on self-determination free of administrative and military pressure.

43. The international community should press for an end to the occupation of part of the territory of Western Sahara. Morocco should accept the fact that it could not win the war, because it was an illegal and unjust war of occupation and because, for the Saharan people, it was a popular, legitimate and victorious war supported by the moral authority of a worthy and proud people.

44. The people of Nicaragua, which also had law, justice and truth on its side, reiterated its unswerving solidarity with the heroic struggle of the Saharan people and with Frente POLISARIO, its sole and legitimate representative.

45. Mr. BRAVO (Angola) said that, as in southern Africa which had been turned into a theatre of war by the detestable apartheid régime and its allies, the Saharan people in the north-western region of the continent was waging a just struggle for its inalienable right to self-determination and independence. That state of war and instability endangered peace and security. Hence, the United Nations in collaboration with the Organization of African Unity was attempting to find a just, honourable and definitive settlement of the issue of decolonizing Western Sahara. His delegation called upon the Acting Chairman of the Organization of African Unity and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to continue their commendable efforts, and once again reaffirmed that a settlement of the issue depended upon the implementation of OAU resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX) and General Assembly resolution 40/50. His Government also reiterated its unswerving support for the cause of the fraternal Saharan people and called upon Frente POLISARIO and the King of Morocco to demonstrate the political resolve needed to complete the process of decolonizing the Maghreb.

46. As the Secretary-General had pointed out in his latest report on the work of the Organization (A/41/1), the task of decolonization was well advanced, but still not complete. Some of the remaining colonial territories were, or could become, the cause of serious international conflict. That statement, which was of particular importance in the International Year of Peace, called for deep reflection on the objective need to put an end to colonialism in Western Sahara.

47. Mr. LUPINACCI (Uruguay) said that Uruguay was in favour of a just, peaceful, negotiated and definitive solution to the conflict in Western Sahara and believed that it was time to take concrete measures. With that in mind, he referred to the report of the Secretary-General (A/41/673) and considered that with the joint efforts of the Secretary-General and the Acting Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, progress could be made towards definitively achieving a cease-fire and holding a referendum to allow the Saharan people to exercise its sacrosanct right of self-determination.

48. His delegation therefore supported the action taken pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/50 in accordance with international norms and practices and drawing upon the rich experience of the United Nations. Only in that way would the Saharan people be enabled to express its will to achieve self-determination without administrative or military pressure in a referendum guaranteed by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity.

49. Mr. TANOH (Ghana) said that his delegation had no hesitation in joining other delegations which had described the situation in Western Sahara as an issue of decolonization which was firmly within the ambit of resolution 1514 (XV). The United Nations had been addressing itself to the status of Western Sahara for almost a quarter of a century, as evidenced by resolutions dating from 1963 to the present unequivocally affirming the separate and distinct geographical existence of that Territory and the right of its peoples to self-determination. A decision handed down by the International Court of Justice in October 1975 and the resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity provided the legal and political basis for the independent existence of Western Sahara, which was recognized by many States.

50. OAU resolution AHG/Res.104 (XIX) and General Assembly resolution 40/50 were the legal context within which the Secretary-General and the Chairman of OAU continued their mission of good offices with a view to achieving a political solution. In that connection, reference should be made to the report of the Secretary-General on the question of Western Sahara (A/41/673). As noted in paragraph 11 (e) of the report, the combined efforts of the two parties would enable a solution to be reached. The claim made in paragraph 11 (c) implied that that zone was independent of the territory of any neighbouring sovereign State having its own international boundaries. If, as was clearly established by paragraph 11 (c), there was no disagreement about the distinct geographical existence of western Sahara, his delegation wondered who was to determine the legitimate political representatives of the people of that territory. Frente POLISARIO was the legitimate representative of the people of Western Sahara, as attested to by the admission of Western Sahara as fifty-first member of the Organization of African Unity and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General's satisfaction with the credible framework in which the ongoing negotiations continued to be conducted between the parties did not explicitly or implicitly exclude direct talks between the parties, and such talks were, in fact, recommended in paragraph 17 of the report.

(Mr. Tanoh, Ghana)

51. As noted in the Secretary-General's report, negotiations had reached a stage at which they were likely to be upset by any posture that suggested a belief by certain of the parties that the conflict could be resolved by military means. Recalling the long common struggle on behalf of the colonized peoples of the continent, Ghana urged Morocco to return to the Fourth Committee and to start direct negotiations with Frente POLISARIO in accordance with the relevant resolutions of OAU and the General Assembly.

52. Mr. KORGA (Togo) said that Togo had followed with close attention the evolution of the question of the Western Sahara, whose people continued to struggle for self-determination. It was a matter for regret that, notwithstanding the different political and diplomatic initiatives which had been taken since 1975, it had not been possible to find a just solution to that problem which was clearly of a colonial nature.

53. His delegation appealed to all persons of good will to renew their sustained and valuable efforts so that, through patient and constructive work, the parties concerned in the conflict in the Western Sahara could be induced to realize their dream of peace by accepting a general cease-fire and by establishing a time-table for the organization of a referendum on self-determination in the Territory, without any military or administrative constraints. In that connection his delegation paid a tribute to the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity to stimulate the implementation of OAU resolution 104 and General Assembly resolution 40/50, which represented the basis for solving the problem once and for all; he appealed to them to continue those efforts. He also urged the parties concerned to resume negotiations and to develop the conditions necessary for a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

54. The Secretary-General's initiative, which had been accepted by the parties and involved the participation of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, represented a reliable framework for negotiations. All parties should therefore moderate their positions in a demonstration of flexibility in order to help achieve the final objective, namely that the Saharoui people should exercise their right to self-determination, safeguarding the peace and security of the region.

55. Mr. MBA MEDJA (Equatorial Guinea) said that his delegation reaffirmed once again its position, which was based on the resolutions of the OAU and the General Assembly and on a detailed examination of the Secretary-General's report (A/41/673), on the question of Western Sahara: only a referendum of the Saharoui people on self-determination under the supervision of and guaranteed by the United Nations, could lead to a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

56. His delegation accordingly supported the initiative taken by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in cooperation with the current Chairman, of OAU to dislodge the Sahara problem from the dead-end street where it had lain for many years.

(Mr. Mba Medja, Equatorial Guinea)

57. He welcomed the optimism expressed by the Secretary-General regarding the possibility of a promising framework for negotiations and the news that the parties concerned had accepted the proposed procedure for indirect negotiations; he also expressed satisfaction at the decision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the current Chairman of OAU to continue intensified mediation efforts which would facilitate progress in reaching the goal sought on the Sahara question. He hoped that the resolution adopted by the General Assembly would take into account the proposed negotiating framework and would be supported widely by the international community for that would contribute to the success of the peace initiative undertaken by the Secretary-General and would culminate in the establishment of a cease-fire and the organization of a referendum in Western Sahara.

58. In conclusion, his delegation wished to express its deep condolences to the friendly and fraternal people of El Salvador, with which Equatorial Guinea maintained historic and cultural links in connection with the natural disaster which had devastated that country.

59. Mr. WENEZOUL (Central African Republic) said that the Central African Republic wished to pay a tribute to the efforts of the current Chairman of OAU and the Secretary-General of the United Nations based on the resolutions adopted by those organizations on the question of Western Sahara. Those efforts, with the collaboration of all interested parties, had led to the development of a promising plan of action which might well contribute to a genuine solution of the issue, provided it had the support of the entire international community.

60. In the relevant report on the issue (A/41/673), the Secretary General had emphasized that, in the contacts which he had had with the parties, the latter had admitted that the final goal in Western Sahara was to enable the people of the Territory to exercise its right to self-determination in a free and impartial referendum, without any administrative or military constraints. As the goal had been clearly outlined it only remained to establish the modalities for achieving it. In that connection, the two parties, in a joint act of political will had agreed to retain the negotiating framework established by the United Nations Secretary-General which deserved to be given every chance to succeed so that the population of the Western Sahara could exercise its inalienable right to self-determination and so that peace and harmony could be re-established in that region of Africa.

61. The Central African Republic was convinced that it was time to end the debate on the question of Western Sahara since the two parties had expressed their willingness to co-operate closely on the issue. In addition, the Central African Republic considered that no further action was required of the international community than to participate in the activities which the United Nations Secretary-General would shortly undertake in co-operation with the current Chairman of OAU for the purpose of organizing the proposed referendum on the basis of the modalities adopted.

62. Mrs. KING-ROUSSEAU (Trinidad and Tobago) said that in the case of Namibia - a Territory for which the United Nations had assumed direct responsibility - there was an indisputable link between the activities carried out by the Organization and the success attained to date in the unrelenting struggle of the people of that Territory for the achievement of genuine self-determination and independence. There was no doubt that United Nations support for the just struggle of the Namibian people provided satisfaction and encouragement to Namibians and to SWAPO, their liberation movement, which had been accorded observer status at both the United Nations and an increasing number of specialized agencies within the United Nations system. That was, regrettably, not the case with respect to some small non-self-governing Territories. Her delegation wished to emphasize that the Fourth Committee should ensure that the interests of the peoples of those Territories which still appeared on the list of Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories, including the small vulnerable entities, should not be disregarded in favour of other broader concerns of certain Member States, some of which bore little, if any, relation to the decolonization process to which most Governments had expressed their unequivocal commitment.

63. Given the importance of economic and social development for the eventual exercise by those dependent peoples of their right to self-determination, greater attention should be paid to the economic and social plight of the peoples of the small colonial Territories. Her delegation wished to refer to the situation in the British Virgin Islands, where, as noted in document A/AC.109/856, the importance of primary production in agriculture, fisheries and forestry to the gross domestic product had gradually declined. That fact was highlighted because the administering Power had indicated that growth in two of the sectors identified - those of fishing and agriculture - as well as the handicraft industry, was expected to help the British Virgin Islands attain economic self-sufficiency in the near future. Those, however, were the very two sectors in which production was gradually declining. It was therefore not surprising, in view of the seemingly insurmountable economic problems plaguing the open and highly dependent economies of many of the remaining colonies, that the common refrain of many dependent peoples, namely, that independence was inevitable but that it was not being sought at the present time, should continue to be heard.

64. Her delegation believed that the importance of the role of the United Nations in assisting the remaining dependent territories to alleviate their political, economic, social and administrative difficulties could not be overstated and noted that, in addition to the provision of increased assistance by the specialized agencies of the United Nations, it was possible to provide guidance and to formulate specific recommendations. In that connection, her delegation expressed the hope that the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Declaration by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations would, in future, more fully reflect the extent to which the small dependent Territories benefited from the invaluable assistance of those agencies and institutions. That could, among other things, help delegations to determine the extent to which the withdrawal of an administering Power from such bodies was affecting the provision of assistance to those dependent Territories.

(Mrs. King-Rousseau, Trinidad and Tobago)

65. Political and constitutional developments in those small island dependencies should also be subject to intense scrutiny. In that context, her delegation would only draw attention to the fact that there were still misunderstandings relating to the role of the Special Committee of 24 and of the United Nations in the decolonization process. The letter addressed to the Sub-Committee on Small Territories by the representative of American Samoa in the United States Congress clearly revealed the need to devote greater attention to the political education campaign, as well as the need for the continued dispatch by the United Nations of visiting missions to the countries which still appeared on the list of Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories.

66. The unfortunate political and constitutional developments in the Turks and Caicos Islands also underscored the need to send visiting missions which would provide valuable information to the Committee. Significant interim amendments had been made to the Territory's 1976 Constitution, including the suspension of certain provisions relating to the powers of the Governor, the Executive Council and the Legislative Council. As a result of the amendments, changes had been made, inter alia, the posts of Chief Minister, Minister and Permanent Secretary had fallen vacant and the Executive Council had been suspended. In that connection, her delegation only wished to point out that, according to the information contained in document A/AC.109/859, the former Chief Minister had as recently as 1985 reiterated that his political party wished the Territory to remain a British Crown Colony. However, in his petition to the Fourth Committee on 16 October 1986, in which he still did not seek to obtain independence, the former Chief Minister had changed his position on the issue of the Territory's status. Members of the Committee should be reminded that the situation in the remaining dependent Territories was not static and therefore deserved their careful and continuing attention. The important developments in the Turks and Caicos Islands should also raise questions about the timeliness of the submission of pertinent information on the dependent Territories and the question of non-participation by the administering Powers in the work of the Special Committee of 24, which had adopted its report on the Territory of the Turks and Caicos Islands in August 1986. In that connection, it should be noted that the report of the Commission of Inquiry appointed in April 1986 to investigate the situation in the Turks and Caicos islands had been available since July 1986 and that the amendments to the 1976 Constitution had entered into force in the same month.

67. The United Nations could and must be permitted to play a positive role, directly or indirectly, in the political, economic and social development of the remaining Territories, with a view to facilitating their progress towards independence. That task would best be fulfilled if the respective administering Powers continued to provide their unstinting co-operation.

68. Mr. SINGH (Fiji) said that the United Nations should be commended not only for its promotion of social and economic development in third-world countries, but also for its role in the decolonization process. Whereas in 1946 there had been 72 colonial or Trust Territories, by 1985 the list had shrunk to 18. It was gratifying to note from the report of the Special Committee that the administering

(Mr. Singh, Fiji)

Powers concerned were acting in accordance with the United Nations Charter and General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV). Those Powers were taking adequate measures to promote social, economic, educational and political development in their Territories to prepare them for acts of self-determination whereby they would attain whatever status accorded with their wishes.

69. Fiji laid particular emphasis on the principle of respect for the wishes of peoples. Most remaining colonial or Trust Territories were small islands whose natural resources, if any, were limited, so that their economic base was fragile. That was why they wished to proceed with caution. That caution should not be interpreted as a deliberate delaying of the decolonization process by the administering Powers. The peoples in most of those Territories had expressly stated that they had no wish to hasten the attainment of independence until they were ready and that wish, which might appear contrary to the Declaration, should be respected.

70. Despite what was generally said about the economic exploitation of Non-Self-Governing Territories by foreign and other economic interests, Fiji took the view that foreign economic interests did not always impede the decolonization process, but, on the contrary, contributed in many cases to those Territories' progress and development; they could not therefore all be condemned. Tokelau was a case in point, as its people had stated clearly that, for the time being, they did not wish to change their status. On the other hand, the people of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands had asked for the termination of their Trusteeship status and, while the subject was outside the purview of the Fourth Committee, he ventured to state that their wishes should be respected.

71. His delegation hoped that concerted and mounting international pressure would soon move South Africa to cease its illegal occupation of Namibia, which was creating a most volatile situation in southern Africa.

72. His delegation had had the honour of serving on the Special Committee since 1971, and of participating in visiting missions to various Non-Self-Governing Territories. Visiting missions were a useful means of obtaining first-hand information in the Territories and he acknowledged the co-operation of the administering Powers. However, he noted with regret that the United Kingdom had chosen no longer to co-operate with the Special Committee, although it would continue to discharge its obligations under article 73 (e) of the Charter.

73. His delegation hoped that as the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories grew smaller, the work of the Special Committee and of the Fourth Committee would decrease so that, in time, the need for those bodies would disappear.

74. Mr. BAGBENI ADEITO NZENGEYA (Zaire) said that judging from the report on the question of Western Sahara (A/41/673), the Secretary-General's mediation efforts had been fruitful and encouraging.

(Mr. Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya, Zaire)

75. The Acting Chairman of OAU had demonstrated his good will in carrying out, jointly with the Secretary-General, a mission of good offices with the parties to the conflict. The Moroccan Government had responded swiftly and positively to the communication from the Secretary-General requesting it to send representatives to the negotiations which had been scheduled to open on 8 April 1986, and the Frente POLISARIO had done likewise. Algeria and Mauritania had also participated as observers in the negotiations, whose aim was to reach agreement on a cease-fire and on the organizing of a referendum in Western Sahara, and the Presidents of those two countries had had sent messages of support to the Secretary-General. The negotiations, which had resumed on 5 May had helped considerably to clarify the positions of the parties to the conflict. The latter had agreed that the people of Western Sahara should be allowed freely to exercise their right to self-determination in a free and impartial referendum without any administrative or military constraints, and had agreed to recognize that the borders of that Territory were the current international borders and that relevant international practice and standards should be applied for the referendum, in accordance with the international arrangements for such purposes. Negotiations of that nature could be satisfactory only if the parties to the conflict showed flexibility, and the Secretary-General had spared no effort to schedule a second series of negotiations which were to be devoted to an in-depth examination of the relevant practical arrangements. Subsequently, at meetings between the King of Morocco and a representative of the Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had been apprised of the positions of both parties on the remaining practical questions. The President of the Congo, who had recently become current Chairman of OAU, had applauded the successful outcome achieved by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and had appointed a personal representative to attend further negotiations on the issue.

76. Thus, a step-by-step process had been set in motion and Member States must give that process every chance of a satisfactory conclusion. The time for polemics and draft resolutions which could only help to draw out the negotiations had passed. The time for dialogue and constructive suggestions with a view to reaching a peaceful solution had come. In view of the urgency of the matter, any draft resolution on the subject must meet with the approval of both the parties to the conflict, especially as the contact established between them by the Secretary-General had already brought about a certain rapprochement between the two positions. Zaire would oppose any attempt to alienate the two sides from each other, within the framework of the negotiations and dialogue initiated by the Secretary-General.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.