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REPORT OF THE TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

NAURU

Letter dated 7 November 1967 from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On 24 October I sent you a letter^{1/} with which I enclosed the text of a statement which was made on that day by the Minister for Territories, the Honourable C.E. Barnes, M.P., in the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Australia, concerning the future of the Trust Territory of Nauru. In that statement Mr. Barnes read the text of a joint statement made by representatives of the Governments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, New Zealand and Australia, and by the representatives of the Nauruan people, in which it was recorded that the three Governments had agreed to meet the request of the representatives of the Nauruan people for full and unqualified independence. It was also stated that the actual date on which Nauru would become independent was still under consideration, but that every effort would be made to adhere to the date which the representatives of the Nauruan people wanted, that is 31 January 1968.

I wish now to advise you that the Australian Government announced today, 7 November, that this matter has been determined and that the date on which Nauru becomes independent will be 31 January 1968.

* Also issued under the symbol T/1669.

^{1/} See annex.

A/6903
English
Page 2

May I request that the texts of this letter, of my letter of 24 October and of the statement by the Minister for Territories, be circulated as documents of the Trusteeship Council and of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Patrick SHAW
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

24 October 1967

My dear Secretary-General,

For your information I enclose with this letter the text of a statement which is being made today, 24 October, in the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Australia by the Minister for Territories, the Honourable C.E. Barnes, M.P., concerning the future of the Trust Territory of Nauru.

Mr. Barnes reviewed the course of the discussions which were held in Canberra in June this year and resumed in October between representatives of the British, New Zealand and Australian Governments, which are at present responsible under the Trusteeship System for the administration of Nauru, and the representatives of the Nauruan people, headed by Head Chief Hammer de Roburt. Mr. Barnes read the text of a statement made jointly by the representatives of the three administering Powers and the representatives of the Nauruan people, in which it was stated that the three Governments had agreed to meet the request of the representatives of the Nauruan people for full and unqualified independence. The date on which Nauru will become independent requires consideration in the light of the constitutional and administrative steps that are necessary to enable the change to independence to be made, and the three Governments and the Nauruan representatives will make every effort to adhere to the date of 31 January 1968, if this is found to be practicable, as the date on which Nauru shall receive its independence.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Patrick SHAW
Permanent Representative

Statement by the Minister for Territories, the
Honourable C.E. Barnes, M.P., in the House of
Representatives on 24 October 1967

Discussions on the constitutional future of the island of Nauru have been proceeding between representatives of the Nauruan people and of the three Governments - Britain, New Zealand and Australia - which are at present responsible under United Nations trusteeship, for the administration of the island.

My colleague, the Attorney-General, and I have represented the Australian Government in these talks.

The British and New Zealand Governments have been represented by their High Commissions.

The Nauruan people have been represented by delegates of the Nauru Local Government Council headed by Head Chief Hammer de Roburt, O.B.E.

The conclusions reached in those discussions are recorded in a Joint Statement subscribed to by the representatives who took part in the talks.

The text of the statement is:

"Discussions between representatives of the Nauruan people and representatives of the Governments of Australia, Britain and New Zealand on the constitutional future of Nauru were recently resumed.

"At the earlier discussions held in June this year proposals by the Nauruan delegation seeking the agreement of the Partner Governments to Nauru becoming an independent State on 31 January 1968 were considered.

"At that time the Governments agreed that it was appropriate that basic changes should be made in the Government of Nauru but they put forward for consideration alternative arrangements under which Australia would exercise responsibilities for external affairs and defence but which would otherwise give the Nauruans full autonomy.

"At the resumed talks the Nauruan delegation said that they remained grateful to the Partner Governments for the careful thought that had been given to the problems of the political future for Nauru but that the particular proposals suggested by the Partner Governments presented substantial difficulties from the Nauruan point of view.

"The Nauruan delegation envisaged that Nauru should in the future maintain close links with all three Partner Governments.

"They proposed that the relationship with Australia would remain a closer one than that with any other country.

"The Nauruans would wish to maintain a Nauruan office in Australia as a main channel of communication with the outside world and would be happy to see an Australian office established in Nauru if this were desired.

"They hoped that Australia would agree that the High Court of Australia should hear appeals from the Supreme Court of Nauru and that Nauruan students could continue to come to Australia.

"The position of the Nauruan delegation was, however, that the nature of the future links between Nauru and the three countries which were now the Administering Authority should be determined by agreement after independence had been attained.

"The primary objective of the Nauruan delegation was the attainment for Nauru of full and unfettered sovereignty.

"The Partner Governments responded that they would respect the views put forward by the Nauruan delegation.

"The Partner Governments were therefore agreeable to meet the request of the Nauruan delegation for full and unqualified independence.

"The date on which Nauru will become independent requires consideration in the light of the steps that are necessary to enable the change to be made.

"The Partner Governments have agreed to take the necessary steps to seek from the present United Nations General Assembly a resolution for the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement upon independence being achieved.

"The Australian Government has agreed that the passage of legislation by the Parliament should be sought during the current parliamentary session so that Australian law will cease to apply in Nauru upon a date to be proclaimed, this being the date agreed upon for independence.

"The Nauruan delegation is now engaged in examining in detail with a working party of officials the arrangements required to enable a constitution to be drafted for discussion by the Nauruan people and the many other administrative steps that need to be taken to prepare the way for a smooth transition from trusteeship to independence.

"In the light of progress made, a date for independence will be agreed upon.

"The Nauruan delegation and the Partner Governments will make every effort to adhere to the date of 31 January 1968, if this is found to be practicable.

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"At the same time both the Nauruan delegation and the Partner Governments place importance on proper consideration being given to the drawing up of the constitution as well as ensuring that the essential administrative requirements to enable the Nauruan people to take over their own government are met.

"The Partner Governments have undertaken to co-operate with the Nauruan representatives to the fullest possible extent and to provide all possible assistance that may be needed and sought by the Nauruan representatives towards the achievement of their objectives."

The agreement that has been reached is an historic one and is of far-reaching importance to the Nauruan people.

The choice of full independence is theirs.

We wish them well.

If after independence the Nauruan Government wishes to continue close links with Australia, as forecast by the Nauruan delegation at these talks, the Australian Government will be ready to respond and to consider sympathetically any requests that may be made for assistance.

I expect to introduce in the House in the near future the bill referred to in the Joint Statement.
