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**Chairman:** Mr. Yordan TCHOBANOV (Bulgaria).

### AGENDA ITEM 23

Question of Oman (A/4521; A/SPC/62; A/SPC/L.78  
and Add.1) (*continued*)

1. Mr. MILLET (France) said that a good deal of highly-coloured language had been used to describe the situation in Oman, both in the explanatory memorandum (A/4521) and in the statements of a number of representatives. His delegation had been struck by the contrast between the grave allegations and charges that had been made, and the real situation. An unfortunate habit seemed to be developing in the United Nations: that of dramatizing, for private ends, situations which were no concern of the Organization; the current item was such a case. As his delegation had told the Security Council<sup>1/</sup> in 1957, when the Council had been considering the inclusion of the question of Oman in its agenda: peace and security, and the United Nations itself, would suffer if the Charter was used to cover attempts at subversion.

2. The draft resolution (A/SPC/L.78 and Add.1) was based on three separate allegations: first, that the Imamate of Oman should be regarded as an independent State; second, that the United Kingdom had committed aggression against Oman; third, that that aggression threatened the peace and security of the Middle East. Mainly for the reasons stated by the United Kingdom representative (301st meeting), the French delegation rejected those allegations. In the first place, the Imamate of Oman could not be regarded as a State under international law. It was untrue that the Territory's independence had been recognized in the Sib Agreement. The Agreement might perhaps have imposed certain limitations on the exercise of the Sultan's sovereignty, but it contained no general transfer of powers; on the contrary, it showed that the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman was an independent State. Although it had maintained close relations with the United Kingdom for 150 years, it had always kept its independence, and that independence had been recognized in a number of international instruments.

3. In the second place—as to the charge by the Arab States that the United Kingdom had committed aggression against the Imamate—the brief military intervention by the United Kingdom had been justified by its ties of friendship with Muscat; in assisting the Sultan to resist a rebellion instigated from abroad, the United

Kingdom had acted in accordance with the Charter. It had been accused of turning Oman into a battleground, but the only British soldiers now in the Sultanate were Army instructors, and an occasional act of terrorism was all that remained of the conflict.

4. In the third place—as to the allegation that the peace and security of the Middle East were threatened by United Kingdom aggression against an independent Imamate of Oman—the artificial agitation at the United Nations and the plotting outside the Sultanate seemed to his delegation more likely to endanger peace and order in that area. The United Nations had enough problems to solve without creating artificial ones.

5. For those reasons his delegation would vote against the draft resolution in the conviction that peace in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman would be served by freeing the question from all outside intervention and by giving those inhabitants of the Sultanate who had been led astray an opportunity to respond to the Sultan's generous offer. It was time to stop dragging colonialism, oil and sordid interests into the discussion of every item. Contrary to what some delegations appeared to believe, the conduct of foreign affairs was not confined to defending the selfish interests of States. France's vote would be dictated by the disinterested desire to foster a reconciliation which would be in the true interest of the great Arab family.

6. Mr. JHA (India) said that it seemed to be generally agreed that in earlier times the country of Oman had been a sovereign State. However, there agreement appeared to end. The Arab delegations alleged that in the late eighteenth century, when colonialism had been spreading over Asia and Africa, the phenomenon—familiar in India—of colonialist intrigue and fragmentation of territories had also occurred in the Arabian Peninsula; as part of that process the Sultan of Muscat had been set up as a secular ruler, under British protection and with British patronage and support, against the elected Imam of Oman, the rightful ruler of the entire territory now described as Muscat and Oman. The Arab delegations also claimed that the present Sultan had tried to assert his dominion over Oman, with the help of British troops, against the wishes of the Imam and the Omani people. The United Kingdom, on the other hand, alleged that the Imam had been assisted by neighbouring States to defy the authority of the Sultan—the lawful ruler of Muscat and Oman—and to rebel against him.

7. The territorial issues in particular were hard to grasp. Some Arab delegations appeared to regard the whole area comprising Muscat and Oman as a single entity entitled to have an elected head exercising both religious and temporal power according to Islamic practice; but their reliance on the 1920 Treaty of Sib seemed to imply that Muscat and Oman were separate entities. In addition, many of the historical facts seemed to be capable of interpretation in different

<sup>1/</sup> Official Records of the Security Council, Twelfth Year, 784th meeting.

ways, and the Indian delegation did not feel competent to pronounce any judgement.

8. However, some elements in the situation were clear. It had been alleged that in recent years British forces had assisted the Sultan of Muscat to suppress the Omani people, and that they were still doing so. The United Kingdom did not deny that charge, but claimed the right to assist the Sultan to suppress rebellion at his request. The Arab delegations had described such action as colonial domination inadmissible in international law; the United Kingdom delegation had defended it, also on the basis of international law, claiming that neighbouring Arab States were helping the Omani people against the Sultan. However the legal authorities might differ, his delegation was convinced that the practice of an outside Power coming to the assistance of a Government in order to suppress internal rebellion was politically inexpedient and often extremely dangerous. The Charter principle of collective security referred to by the United Kingdom representative should be applied, not to internal security, but to external acts of aggression only. His delegation therefore hoped that foreign intervention in Oman would cease. In that connexion it welcomed the United Kingdom statement that except for some non-combatants there were no British forces in Oman. However, that statement was contradicted by some Arab representatives.

9. His delegation supported operative paragraphs 2 and 3 of the draft resolution (A/SPC/L.78 and Add.1); its only difficulty related to operative paragraph 1. India recognized the right of all peoples to independence, but the relevance of self-determination was not clear. That principle would apply if Oman were under colonial rule, but it was not. Self-determination implied the existence and exercise of a choice; but there could be nothing higher than independence, and self-determination was often used by interested parties—as in Algeria for example—to delay independence. In those circumstances self-determination might be too little rather than too much.

10. The problem seemed to be whether one part of the area was independent of the other, and which was the sovereign authority for those parts, or for the whole. All the people of Muscat and Oman were Arabs. His delegation felt, therefore, that theirs was a case for peaceful negotiations without any interference from outside; it would vote in accordance with the views he had expressed.

11. Mr. COMPAH (Mali) said that his delegation was deeply interested in all colonial questions, and was always in sympathy with peoples fighting for their independence against technically superior forces. Some Members of the Organization professed adherence to the principles of the Charter but did not hesitate to violate them as soon as their economic interests came into conflict with the rights of small countries. In the question of Oman, the issue was clearly the oil interests of the United Kingdom in that part of the Arabian Peninsula; but it seemed to his delegation needlessly confusing that the United Kingdom representative should represent the Administration of a sovereign Arab State. Mali would support the draft resolution, which was a very moderate proposal based upon the principles of peace and the self-determination of peoples. The United Kingdom representative should bear in mind that history had already tolled the death-knell of colonialism.

12. Mr. PAPAGOS (Greece) said that the attitude of Greece to the principle of self-determination and to the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, which were referred to in the draft resolution, was well known. Unfortunately, the Committee had not resolved the legal questions involved in the matter now at issue, and there was so little agreement even on facts and events as to afford no basis for a decision. His delegation wished to be fair and impartial, for it enjoyed friendly relations with both sides in the dispute; it would therefore abstain on the draft resolution.

13. Mr. PERERA (Ceylon) said that his delegation would welcome further statements from members of the Committee before forming a final judgement on the draft resolution. The reference in the last paragraph of the preamble to the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples (General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV)) was quite appropriate, and he would be able to support operative paragraphs 2 and 3. In regard to operative paragraph 2, his delegation felt that foreign forces should never be stationed on the soil of another country, whether for the defence of a Government or for purposes of collective security. In regard to operative paragraph 3, the statements made by spokesmen from Oman had not advanced the situation to the point where a clear-cut decision by the Committee could take the place of bilateral negotiations. Operative paragraph 1 presented certain difficulties; although Ceylon was in favour of national liberation and, in the proper context, self-determination, many grave problems were involved in the present case.

14. Mr. GEBRE-EGZY (Ethiopia) felt that the question of Oman concerned neo-colonialism because of the presence of foreign troops to safeguard oil and other interests. His delegation would vote in favour of operative paragraphs 2 and 3, abstain on operative paragraph 1, and vote in favour of the draft resolution as a whole. The most important provision was that calling for the withdrawal of foreign forces.

15. Mr. SALUM FLECHA (Paraguay) said that his delegation had not voted (299th meeting) in favour of hearing the Omani delegation for fear of setting a dangerous precedent that would have laid the United Nations open to importunity by dissident groups all over the world. Paraguay would also abstain from voting on the draft resolution. It was true that the United Kingdom had lent assistance to the Sultan of Muscat, but the dissident group had also received assistance from outside; furthermore, self-determination was a domestic matter. His delegation found it strange that the Government of the Sultan of Muscat and Oman had not sent its own delegation to attend the discussion. The most desirable outcome would be spontaneous negotiations for a peaceful settlement, free from all outside interference.

16. Mr. DUNCAN (Panama) felt that the main point at issue was the real status of Oman. In his view Muscat and Oman constituted a single country ruled by a single Government, headed by the Sultan. The Agreement of Sib, to which so many references had been made, confirmed that conclusion; it was not a treaty between two States but an arrangement providing for certain measures of decentralization and conferring certain benefits on the people of Oman. Thus the adoption of the draft resolution would encourage dissidence and in fact constitute interference in the affairs of the State of Muscat and Oman. The cable from the Sultan to the President of the Assembly (A/SPC/62) had increased his delegation's doubts regarding the action proposed.

17. Operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution implied that Oman was not in fact independent and separate from Muscat—as the sponsors of the draft resolution claimed—for, if it had been, the paragraph would be redundant. The whole question was clouded by emotion, and attempts to make it a colonial issue were not helpful. Panama would vote against the draft resolution. Its vote betokened no opposition to the principle of self-determination or to freedom for the people of Oman, for these issues were not involved; what it did betoken was reluctance to set a precedent by seating a dissident delegation in an Assembly of representatives of Member States. Such a practice could only encourage internal conflict and subversion.

18. Mr. GOMEZ ROBLEDO (Mexico) considered that, although the Committee had been given a considerable amount of information on Oman, it had insufficient evidence on which to decide the question raised by operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution. Mexico had always taken a firmly anti-colonialist position, for example in the recent discussion in the General Assembly on the implementation of resolution 1514 (XV) (1058th plenary meeting). However, the principle of self-determination should not be used to bring about the disintegration of a united country. The principle depended for its relevance on whether the people in question had been subjected by force to the rule of another people of a distinct character. In the case of African territories under the rule of European States, for example, that had clearly been true, but the present case concerned two contiguous territories and no attempt had been made to show that their peoples were distinct.

19. Great caution should be exercised in applying Western concepts to the question. Even in the Western world, the distinction between a unitary and a composite State was hard to draw. Much emphasis had been laid on the 1920 Treaty of Sib in that connexion; although that treaty seemed to indicate that the Sultan's authority had not been very firmly established at the time, that did not prove that Oman was a separate State. Such a view would require confirmation from other agreements, for many such agreements could be expected to exist between two adjacent States. It was therefore difficult to reach a definite decision on the legal position of the people of Oman in relation to the Sultanate of Muscat, all the more so since, apart from a brief cable from the Sultan (A/SPC/62), the Committee had not heard the latter State's views.

20. As to operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution, Mexico did not like to see the forces of one State in the territory of another; but in the hypothesis that the Sultan of Muscat had sovereignty over Oman it was surely within his rights to request military assistance from another State, and it was not clear what Article of the Charter would authorize the Assembly to call for the withdrawal of foreign forces. Nor was it clear on what authority the United Nations could address a recommendation, as in operative paragraph 3, to parties of which at least one, the Sultanate of Muscat, was not a Member State; Article 2, paragraph 6, of the Charter seemed insufficient for that purpose. Moreover, there was an inconsistency between the reference, in the preamble to the draft resolution, to the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples (resolution 1514 (XV))

and the sponsors' claim that the Imamate of Oman was, and had always been, an independent State.

21. For all those reasons his delegation would abstain on the draft resolution.

22. Mr. REYES (Colombia) considered the evidence brought forward insufficient to clarify the problem before the Committee, a problem which had been further obscured by the political nature of much of the discussion. His delegation shared the views expressed by other Latin American countries. Although Colombia upheld the right of all countries to self-determination it had not been clearly shown either by the delegations claiming to speak for Oman or by the Omani spokesman, that that principle was relevant in the present case.

23. Operative paragraphs 2 and 3 were also unclear, for they did not define the "foreign forces" or state who "the parties" were. Nor had it been established that an independent State called Oman existed; if, as the Sultan of Muscat claimed, Muscat and Oman constituted a single State, the draft resolution would clearly involve intervention in the domestic affairs of a State, in contravention of the Charter.

24. The representative of Colombia stated that his delegation would therefore abstain on the draft resolution as a whole.

25. Mr. LYNCH-SHYLLON (Sierra Leone) said that his delegation, being understandably unfamiliar with the historical background to the issue before the Committee, had had to determine its position on the basis of the arguments presented by the two sides. He regretted that the Sultan of Muscat and Oman had not felt it necessary to put his case through a delegation instead of merely submitting a formal protest (A/SPC. 62). Sierra Leone would always oppose colonialism or imperialism in any form, on the part of people of any colour; but it was hard to accept the implication of the draft resolution that General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) authorized any portion of a country to exercise a right of self-determination and to set itself up as an independent State. The application of such a principle in Africa could lead to the further fragmentation of that continent. It had not been incontrovertibly shown that Oman was a separate entity from the Sultanate of Muscat.

26. For the reasons he had stated, Sierra Leone would abstain from voting on the draft resolution as a whole.

27. Mr. AKE (Ivory Coast) said that his delegation had not been convinced by any of the arguments advanced during the discussion. It would vote in favour of operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution for it was anxious to see the question happily settled, but could not support the third preambular paragraph nor operative paragraphs 1 and 2; he therefore asked for a separate vote on those paragraphs.

28. Mr. DA COSTA (Brazil) associated his delegation with the views expressed by the representative of the Ivory Coast.

29. Mr. JHA (India) proposed the adjournment of the meeting under rule 119 of the rules of procedure.

*The motion for adjournment was adopted by 14 votes to 4, with 67 abstentions.*

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.