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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. FLEMMING (Saint Lucia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (continued) (A/46/23 (Parts V-VI), A/46/201, 336, 344, 359, 409; A/AC.109/1056-1059, 1060-1063, 1064 and Corr.1, 1065-1067, 1068 and Corr.1, 1069-1071, 1073, 1074 and Corr.1, 1075, 1077, 1078, 1079 and Corr.1, 1082; A/AC.109/L.1761; E/1991/116; S/21360 and S/22578)

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Question of Western Sahara

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that the report of the Secretary-General on the question of Western Sahara had been issued as document A/46/589 and that the Federated States of Micronesia had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.4/46/L.2.

General debate (continued)

2. Mr. DOUGLAS (Grenada) referred to the active participation by Caribbean Non-Self-Governing Territories in the activities of such subregional institutions as the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, the Caribbean Development Bank, CARICOM, the University of the West Indies and the Caribbean Group for Cooperation and Economic Development and expressed concern at the lack of direct communication between the United Nations and the peoples of those Non-Self-Governing Territories and the very infrequent dispatch of visiting missions.

3. In view of the difficulties involved in organizing visiting missions, Grenada supported the holding of United Nations seminars on decolonization alternately in the Caribbean and Pacific Ocean regions. In 1990, information had been submitted to the Fourth Committee and the Special Committee on the results of the seminars held that year in Barbados and Vanuatu to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

(Mr. Douglas, Grenada)

4. To underline the importance of participation by the administering Powers concerned, his delegation called on the Secretary-General and the Chairman of the Special Committee to intensify their consultations with the administering Powers in order to secure their fullest cooperation in the work of the Special Committee, including the reinstatement of regular United Nations visiting missions.
5. His delegation noted with satisfaction the initiatives launched in the Fourth Committee at the previous session to reform the methods and approach of the United Nations with regard to decolonization and was prepared to cooperate fully in such endeavours.
6. Mr. MAHMOUD (Ethiopia) said that his Government supported the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity to bring about a peaceful resolution of the question of Western Sahara. A peaceful settlement of the question of Western Sahara in accordance with the proposals accepted by the two parties and the Secretary-General's plan approved by Security Council resolution 658 (1990) would make a positive contribution to the stability and peace of the Maghreb region and of Africa as a whole.
7. His delegation endorsed the report of the Secretary-General on his plan for the implementation of the proposals for a settlement of the question of Western Sahara and urged the parties to the conflict to be more cooperative in that regard. In that connection, he appealed to the parties to the conflict to refrain from taking actions that could adversely affect the successful implementation of the settlement plan.
8. Since protracted and strenuous efforts had been made by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity to produce the plan for a peaceful settlement of the problem of Western Sahara, it was incumbent upon the Committee to encourage all efforts aimed at its implementation.
9. Mr. MAREHALAU (Federated States of Micronesia), speaking on behalf of the nine States members of the South Pacific Forum, said that, despite the dramatic progress achieved in the process of decolonization, efforts to bring about the universal realization of the historic Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples should not be relaxed. The Fourth Committee had a special responsibility in that regard.
10. At the most recent meeting of the South Pacific Forum, held in the Federated States of Micronesia on 29 and 30 July 1991, the Heads of Government of the South Pacific Forum countries had once again reaffirmed the importance of the universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles and practices of the United Nations pertaining thereto.
11. As was well known, the South Pacific was one of the regions in which the practice of colonialism had in the past been all but universal. Even now, the

(Mr. Marehalau, Federated States of Micronesia)

region contained many of the world's remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. Of those Territories, New Caledonia had been and remained the object of close scrutiny by the countries of the region.

12. The Forum countries had acknowledged the constructive actions being taken by all involved to facilitate the further development of the close links which existed between the people of New Caledonia, particularly the indigenous Kanaks, and other peoples of the South Pacific. They had also noted the positive measures being pursued in New Caledonia by the French authorities, i. cooperation with all sectors of the population, to promote equitable political, economic and social development in the Territory in order to provide a framework for its peaceful evolution to self-determination. They had also stressed the great importance of transparency in the preparation of the electoral rolls and of continued dialogue among all the parties involved in New Caledonia in preparation for an act of self-determination consistent with the principles and practices of the United Nations, in which all options, including independence, would be open, and which would safeguard the rights of the indigenous Kanaks and those of all other New Caledonians.

13. They had also expressed the hope that the French authorities would expand their assistance in the field of education and vocational training for the Kanak population, in order to ensure that all the inhabitants of New Caledonia were able to exercise their right to self-determination under the best possible conditions.

14. Turning to the draft resolution recommended by the Special Committee, he said that the South Pacific Forum countries which were also Members of the United Nations wished to point out that, in previous years, the Committee and the General Assembly had adopted resolutions on the question of New Caledonia by consensus. At the current session, the proposed text reflected many, although not all, of the concerns which the countries of the South Pacific region regarded as being both relevant and important. None the less, recognizing the progress that had been made, and in particular the return to peaceful conditions in the Territory, the Forum countries supported the draft resolution and urged its adoption.

15. In conclusion, he said that, speaking as Permanent Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia and on behalf of the people of Micronesia, he wished to express gratitude to all members of the Committee, who had provided constant encouragement during the period of trusteeship, and also to the members of delegations and the staff of the Secretariat who had taken part in visiting missions and had carried out various other tasks.

16. Mr. MARTINEZ BOUE (Cuba) said that, since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1514 (IV), the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee had been playing an important role in the field of decolonization. There were no grounds, however, for complacency regarding the progress achieved, and the fate of those who had not yet attained freedom should not be forgotten.

(Mr. Martinez Boue, Cuba)

17. He noted that appeals had been made in the Fourth Committee with regard to the need to find wording based on consensus and to refrain from definitions which, according to some, were pejorative, to avoid referring to specific colonial Powers, and to try to rationalize the Committee's work. The view had also been expressed that the lessening of tension in relations between East and West, and also the changes which had taken place in international relations, provided a sufficient basis for such an approach. However, it was impossible not to ask in what way the relaxation of tension between the great Powers and the new spirit of the times, to which reference was constantly being made, also promoted the process of decolonization. Some speakers had also expressed the view that colonialism and apartheid, as well as their consequences, were the result of the "cold war", and that, with its end, such phenomena would disappear of themselves. In fact the situation of the colonial Territories had not essentially changed - their economies remained virtually entirely dependent on the colonial Powers and other foreign circles; in many of those Territories there were still military bases and installations which constituted an obstacle to implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples; despite the changes that had occurred in the world, societies continued to come into being which were based more on models of the colonial Powers than on the historical, cultural, linguistic and moral values to be found in those Territories; and in some Territories every means was being used to ensure that the local population not only recognized, but also adopted, models previously established by the colonial Powers.

18. It was suggested that some of the resolutions submitted to the Fourth Committee by the Special Committee were outdated and had lost their relevance. His delegation firmly rejected that approach and regarded it as a slap in the face for the members of the Committee. It should be recalled that many provisions of the Special Committee's resolutions, although similar to provisions adopted in previous years, had had to be included once again solely because they had not elicited the anticipated response from the colonial Powers.

19. His delegation was firmly convinced that the work of the Special Committee should be assessed on its own merits, and that the Committee had the right, if its members so wished, to continue its activities along the lines they had chosen in order to find solutions to the problems of colonialism and to arrive at appropriate recommendations.

20. His delegation called on those who had brought colonial problems into existence to refrain from rhetoric and to demonstrate in practice their adherence to the cause of decolonization by adopting positive measures to facilitate effective and full implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. They must show that, in the field of decolonization, the spirit of change and renewal also prevailed, thus enabling peoples still under the colonial yoke to exercise their rights at the earliest possible opportunity. It was not acceptable that the Organization should become the instrument of any group of States, however powerful they might be.

(Mr. Martinez Boue, Cuba)

21. He observed that, until colonialism had been eradicated, the Committee's work could not be regarded as completed. It was essential to continue to apply pressure at the international level to the Pretoria regime and to give support to the "front-line" States and the national liberation movements of South Africa. The deprivations to which they had been subjected over many decades as a result of that odious practice would not be effaced by watering down the wording of the text to be adopted or by failing to call a spade a spade.

22. Referring to the question of Western Sahara, he said that Territory seemed to be on the verge of exercising its right to self-determination and independence under the auspices and monitoring of the United Nations. His delegation fully supported the plan for a settlement submitted by the Secretary-General, and welcomed the deployment in the Territory of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which would be of assistance in enabling the people of the Sahara to exercise their right to self-determination.

23. Mr. IBRAHIM (Egypt) said that one of the most important problems currently under consideration in the Fourth Committee was that of Western Sahara. His delegation attached particular significance to that issue, for the reason that the Territory was situated in the African continent. The question was directly linked to the right to self-determination, and its solution by peaceful means would lead to closer cooperation between the Maghreb countries. Moreover, by bringing to a conclusion the process through which the people of the Sahara would exercise their free choice, the United Nations would enhance its opportunities in the field of peace-keeping and would promote implementation of the principles of the Charter, while demonstrating the desire of members of the international community to participate, on a basis of equal rights, in the solution and settlement of disputes in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter.

24. In his delegation's view, consideration of the question of Western Sahara at the current session took on special significance, and should be distinguished from its consideration the previous year. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 45/21 of 20 November 1990, the Security Council had adopted resolution 690 (1991) of 29 April 1991, pursuant to which the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara had been established. His delegation was convinced that cooperation between the interested parties, in conjunction with effective action by, and the expertise of, the Secretary-General, as well as political support from the international community, would ensure the success of the Mission and would enable the people of the Sahara to exercise free choice and their right to self-determination.

25. He noted that the General Assembly and the Security Council had adopted their resolutions on that question unanimously. In his delegation's view, it would be wholly appropriate to preserve consensus among all the interested parties in regard to any resolution to be adopted by the Fourth Committee, inasmuch as it would usefully supplement the United Nations plan and the efforts of the Secretary-General.

26. Mr. SAVUA (Fiji) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of the Federated States of Micronesia. Clear successes had been achieved in the decolonization process. The attainment of independence by the Baltic States, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the admission of those countries together with the two Korean States to membership in the United Nations gave hope that the remaining 10 Non-Self-Governing Territories would achieve independence by 2000. The administering Powers must play a major role in educating and guiding the peoples of their Territories to ensure that they fully understood the choices presented to them. The visiting missions of the United Nations did useful and very important work and they should continue to be dispatched.

27. On the question of New Caledonia, his delegation welcomed the decision by France to allow three ministers from the South Pacific Forum to visit the Territory. The visit provided a means of monitoring the actual progress of the implementation of the various phases of the programme of action worked out under the Matignon Accords. It was to be hoped that such visits would continue right up to the scheduled referendum in 1998.

28. His delegation had always believed that not all foreign economic interests were exclusively self-serving. Many corporations, while pursuing profits, also made a significant contribution to the development of the host countries. The United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations deserved commendation for its efforts to remove major differences between corporations and countries. For their part, the headquarters countries of transnational corporations must assist with the drafting and enforcement of guidelines to ensure that the corporations acted justly and responsibly towards the developing countries in which they operated. However, mention must also be made of the destabilizing influences of other foreign interests which continued to operate in countries after they became independent. That was a typical experience of many former Non-Self-Governing Territories.

29. Although the Committee's attention should be focused on the remaining 18 Non-Self-Governing Territories, the other issues must not be forgotten. Thanks to the efforts of the Secretary-General and Member States considerable progress had been achieved in several areas. Examples of such progress were the establishment of MINURSO, the events in South Africa, and the opening of talks between South Africa and Namibia with a view to reaching an agreement on Walvis Bay.

30. Mr. VAN LIEROP (Vanuatu) said that as a member of the South Pacific Forum Vanuatu fully supported the statement made by the representative of the Federated States of Micronesia. In recent years doubts had been expressed about the relevancy of focusing attention on the problem of Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories. With the independence of Namibia and the progress towards solution of the problem of Western Sahara, such doubts had been expressed even more frequently. However, the admission of seven more countries to membership in the United Nations indicated not only the progress made but also how much still remained to be done before the process was complete. Although the international community was certainly faced with other

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

urgent problems, a number of difficult decolonization issues remained to be solved, and the topic had lost none of its urgency.

31. The Committee was concerned with the problems of those Territories which were still listed as Non-Self-Governing. It must be recognized that perhaps not all of them were anxious to acquire political independence. But all of them deserved equal consideration, equal opportunity and equal justice. The same applied to the Territories which, although not currently on the list, were still not free to govern themselves. South Africa was a case in point.

32. The view was held that the problem of apartheid should not be discussed in the Committee, but his delegation could not agree with that view, for colonialism and apartheid were closely interrelated. It was an indisputable fact that the current economic and social order had been imposed in the earliest days of the colonial era. In any land it was the people living there who must govern, but that principle was not observed in South Africa. South Africans had never been free to choose their form of government, participate in the drafting of a constitution or laws, or determine the nature and shape of their State. A similar situation existed for Palestine and a number of other lands.

33. All those issues must be approached with the same objectivity and the same standards, regardless of the region concerned. In some countries of Europe measures were currently being taken to make restitution for the harm done to people whose personal freedom or right to own property had been restricted by past regimes. Yet it was difficult to cite even one example of similar restitution made to victims of colonialism or apartheid. That was evidence of the application of a double standard in different situations.

34. During the debate on the item a number of useful comments had been made which would contribute to the successful completion of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. In particular, the statement made by the representative of Netherlands on the questions of Western Sahara and East Timor and by the representative of France on the question of New Caledonia deserved commendation. Vanuatu noted with satisfaction the positive measures taken by France and the people of New Caledonia to ensure civil tranquillity and address the problem of the political, economic and social imbalances in the Territory.

35. The new ideas put forward during the debate could help to improve the Committee's working methods and thus benefit the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation continued therefore to support proposals to make the language of the Committee's resolutions more precise, concise and acceptable in tone, and the proposal to add the items considered by the Special Political Committee to the agenda of the Fourth Committee as a means of further rationalizing and enhancing the work of the United Nations.

36. Mr. MESSAOUD (Tunisia) said that recent events on the international stage had undoubtedly helped to create an atmosphere of détente and cooperation

(Mr. Messaoud, Tunisia)

throughout the world and to produce the first elements of the emerging new world order. That trend had considerably eased the noble task of the United Nations and strengthened its position enabling it to discharge more effectively its functions and obligations in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter.

37. One of those principles, vital in the past, present and future, was the right of peoples to self-determination, and that would remain a topical issue as long as there were people in the world who were denied the opportunity freely to determine their future. Despite the enormous achievements of the United Nations in the elimination of colonialism, even greater efforts must be made in order to put an end to that shameful phenomenon and rid mankind of all forms of oppression, hegemony and domination. His own country had travelled a long and difficult road to independence and remained just as determined as ever to support the efforts of the United Nations to secure strict observance of the principle of self-determination. In that connection his delegation called upon the administering Powers to show a willingness to cooperate with the relevant organs of the United Nations and help them to do their work.

38. The Organization had set the goal of eliminating colonialism by 2000. That commitment had been solemnly confirmed during the celebration at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Today the international community could note with satisfaction the successes reflected in particular in the Committee's agenda, which had grown steadily shorter as time went by. In view of the substantial progress already made, it was obvious that the Committee should now reorient its activities and adapt its working methods to the new situations and the specific nature of the unresolved issues. His delegation had joined in the efforts to restructure the Committee's work and supported in principle many of the proposals put forward in that regard. But the restructuring must in no way divert the Committee from its specific purpose, i.e., to work for the elimination of colonialism.

39. Tunisia had noted with great satisfaction the plan for settlement of the conflict in Western Sahara drawn up by the United Nations and confirmed by the Security Council. The cease-fire achieved on 6 September 1991 was particularly encouraging, as was the gradual introduction of the machinery for guaranteeing the self-determination process. Tunisia, which together with other Member States was taking part in the work of MINURSO, awaited impatiently the successful completion of the process.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.