



# TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

## Thirty-fourth Session

### OFFICIAL RECORDS

Friday, 23 June 1967,  
at 10.55 a.m.

NEW YORK

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*President:* Miss Angie E. BROOKS (Liberia).

#### *Present:*

The representatives of the following States: Australia, China, France, Liberia, New Zealand, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

The representative of the following specialized agency: World Health Organization.

*In the absence of the President, Mrs. Anderson (United States of America), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

#### AGENDA ITEMS 4, 5 AND 9

Examination of annual reports of the Administering Authorities on the administration of Trust Territories for the year ended 30 June 1966:

(a) Nauru (continued) (T/1659, T/1662, T/L.1120)

Examination of petitions listed in the annex to the agenda (continued) (T/COM.9/L.3)

General Assembly resolutions 2111 (XX) and 2226 (XXI) on the question of the Trust Territory of Nauru (continued)

#### GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

*At the invitation of the President, Mr. Reseigh, special representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of Nauru, and Mr. De Roburt and Mr. Bop, advisers to the special representative, took places at the Council table.*

1. Mr. EASTMAN (Liberia) said that both the Council and the Administering Authority had made commendable efforts to bring the Trusteeship System to an end in Nauru, but there were still matters that required the Council's attention. First, the Administering Authority's proposal that Australia should continue to supervise the external affairs and defence of the Territory, which Head Chief De Roburt had said was unacceptable to the Nauruans, should be withdrawn,

since it was obviously a condition for the granting of independence and was therefore quite contrary to the United Nations Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement. It was entirely the prerogative of the Nauruans to decide whether they wanted Australia or any other nation to supervise their affairs after they had become independent. Secondly, his delegation doubted the usefulness of the holding of the plebiscite proposed by the Administering Authority and asked Australia to reconsider the proposal, because such a consultation, which would frustrate the unanimous desire of the people for complete sovereignty noted by the last United Nations Visiting Mission to the Territory and confirmed by the unequivocal statements of Head Chief De Roburt, would take time and hence might jeopardize the attainment of independence by 31 January 1968.

2. With regard to the economic future of the Territory and its people, his delegation noted that within thirty years the island would be an uninhabitable wasteland. It was the strong conviction of his delegation that the rehabilitation of the land was the least that the British Phosphate Commissioners could do by way of compensation. It could not agree with the special representative's argument that, despite Australia's concern for the future of the Nauruans, it would be a waste of funds to rehabilitate the island because the people might wish to settle elsewhere. The Nauruans had repeatedly said that they had no desire to settle elsewhere and that their only desire was to live on the island once it had been completely restored. Since the Nauruans had even volunteered to finance a sizable portion of the over-all cost, Australia's negative response and its constant hints that the people of Nauru should settle abroad were hard to understand. His delegation was confident that the Administering Authority would receive with sympathy its appeal to make a last magnanimous gesture and commence restoring the soil of the island.

*Miss Brooks (Liberia) took the Chair.*

3. Mr. SHAW (United Kingdom) said that the statements of the special representative and Head Chief De Roburt, and their very explicit answers to the questions put by members, had given the Council a clear picture of conditions in Nauru and of the issues which were still outstanding. Nauru was a unique Territory. The development of its considerable mineral resources had brought it benefits which, spread among a small number of people, had given them a standard of living that must be the envy of many larger developing countries. However, at the projected rates of extraction, the phosphate deposits would be exhausted in twenty-six years, and the possibilities of diversifying the island's economy were very restricted, except in agriculture, and even there only if a continuous and massive programme of rehabilitating the surface of the mined areas could be sustained. Despite the present healthy state of the Nauruans,

ruan economy and despite the large sums that the Nauruans would have set aside by the time the phosphates were exhausted, the island's economic future therefore remained in doubt. However, that doubt should not stand in the way of the taking of major decisions in response to demands from the people of the Territory to manage their own affairs and to exercise direct control over the main source of their livelihood, the extraction of phosphates. The United Kingdom Government therefore welcomed the achievement of a settlement reached in free and friendly negotiations and on terms acceptable to all the parties concerned, under which the Nauruans, in three years' time, would own the phosphate industry and direct its operations. That outcome did credit to all the parties concerned. In other economic fields, Nauru continued to enjoy prosperity; the value of its imports and the amount of Government expenditure had nearly doubled over the last five years, the turnover of the Nauru Co-operative Society had tripled; there were more than 900 private motor-cars on the island, as compared to some 600 a few years before.

4. In the educational field, pupil enrolment had increased from 1,150 to 1,775 and the number of teachers from 50 to 105; an appreciable number of students were taking higher-level training courses outside the island. In the field of health, the Administration and the British Phosphate Commissioners were providing for the medical and dental needs of the islanders. The Australian Government was to be commended for its record in those matters and the Local Government Council for its co-operation with the Administering Authority.

5. In the political field, the Legislative Council established in January 1966 had done good work and had gained valuable experience. However, the overriding political issue was the request made to Australia by Head Chief De Roburt and other Nauruan leaders, who had asked for independence for the Territory by 31 January 1968. That matter was being discussed, and the discussions were to be resumed after the Trusteeship Council had completed its session. No doubt Head Chief De Roburt would wish to consult his people, and the partner Governments might wish to exchange views. The United Kingdom Government knew from experience that all negotiations concerning the decolonization of a Territory had certain common features; it also knew that such negotiations invariably raised problems peculiar to the Territory in question which called for much time and patience in devising a solution acceptable to all concerned and appropriate to local circumstances. One such problem, in the case of Nauru, was the smallness of its population. The aspirations of the people of Nauru were clearly entitled to as much respect as those of much more numerous peoples, over some of whom they had the advantage of ethnic cohesion and unity, but the Administering Authority and, at the appropriate time, the Trusteeship Council were also obliged under the Charter to take account of the particular circumstances of the Territory in coming to a final decision concerning Nauru. If there was a divergence between the various provisions of the Charter relating on the one hand to the particular circumstances of the Territory and on the other hand to the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned, the United Kingdom

delegation believed it could be bridged with goodwill and sound sense. In that connexion, his delegation admired the views of Head Chief De Roburt, whose observations on the problems Nauru would face after its people had exercised their right to self-determination were notable for their common sense and objectivity.

6. At the 1311th meeting, the United Kingdom representative, referring to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, had spoken of the need to learn the lesson of interdependence as well as of independence. That concept was of yet greater importance and application in relation to Nauru, reflecting as it did one of the important principles enunciated in Article 76 of the Charter. The parties concerned undoubtedly recognized that principle and would give it full weight in their negotiations.

7. His delegation had been gratified to note that, in a joint statement by the Australian Minister for Territories and Head Chief De Roburt, in his capacity as leader of the Nauruan delegation, the two parties had stated that the partner Governments accepted in principle that it was appropriate that basic changes should be made in the Government of Nauru and that they should come into effect on 31 January 1968. That decision augured well for the future progress of the negotiations, and now that an acceptable settlement had been achieved on the major issue of phosphate extraction there was no reason why a mutually acceptable settlement should not be reached on the outstanding political questions. A spirit of understanding and friendliness had been built up between the Administering Authority and the Nauruan leaders, enabling them to discuss those matters with frankness and directness. His delegation was confident that, in the circumstances, the forthcoming negotiations would produce a result acceptable to the Nauruan people and to the three partner Governments and in full conformity with the provisions of the Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement.

8. Mr. GASCHIGNARD (France) said that his delegation sincerely welcomed the improvement in the situation of the Trust Territory of Nauru, including the agreement on the phosphate question and the meeting of minds on the political future of the Territory. Of course, decisions had yet to be taken on the date on which the Nauruans would fully exercise their right to self-determination and on the future relationship by which Nauru might be freely linked to some other country or group of countries. His delegation hoped that agreement would soon be reached on those major points. It had noted with interest the proposals submitted by the Nauruan delegation and the comments of the Administering Authority, which had stated that the Nauruans must expressly approve the detailed provisions of the Constitution. It was awaiting with interest the conclusions of the Select Committee on Constitutional Development established in February 1966.

9. His delegation was confident that the Nauruans would be capable of sound management of the capital that would accrue to them before the phosphate deposits were exhausted, so that later on they could live comfortably on Nauru or, if they so decided, elsewhere. His delegation welcomed Head Chief De Roburt's statement that the Nauruan leaders were

endeavouring to create work that could at least partially replace phosphate extraction. It regretted, however, that agreement had not yet been possible on the question of rehabilitating the worked-out land. Nevertheless, the situation was generally satisfactory in a Territory which had been wisely administered by Australia, and his delegation was sure that the Nauruans would soon be able to take a final decision on their future in total freedom and in complete conformity with their aspirations.

10. Mr. LIN (China) observed that the Trust Territory of Nauru was entering a new epoch of its history, which the Nauruan people were approaching in auspicious circumstances, thanks to recent developments. He congratulated the parties to the recently concluded phosphate agreement on their success in bringing about an orderly and planned transfer of the phosphate industry to the Nauruans.

11. His delegation was glad that, in accordance with the wish expressed by the Nauruans during the recent talks at Canberra, with which the Administering Authority was willing to comply, Nauru would realize its political ambitions on 31 January 1968. It noted with gratification that, according to the Nauruan statement, the first part of the Nauruan Constitution would be devoted to fundamental rights, and it was confident that that Constitution would protect not only the rights of citizens, but also the rights of man. With regard to institutions, the proposed combination of the functions of Chief of State and Head of Government within the framework of a parliamentary system was an original idea. The Territory would unquestionably make satisfactory arrangements for its defence and the conduct of its external affairs. There was no doubt that in the months ahead the Nauru Local Government Council and the Administering Authority would work together to create a new and independent nation.

12. Lastly, his delegation wished to express its profound sympathy with the Nauruans' wish to remain permanently on the island, which was the home of their physical, ethnic and spiritual being.

13. Mr. McHENRY (United States of America) said he was glad that agreement had apparently been reached during the negotiations on the political future of the Nauruan people; the representatives of the partner Governments and the Nauruan representatives had set 31 January 1968 as the date for the "basic changes" mentioned in the joint declaration made at Canberra, although further discussions were scheduled on some important questions, such as the rehabilitation of worked-out land.

14. Agreement had been reached regarding the phosphate, whereby the Nauruan people would assume ownership, management and control of the industry on 30 June 1970, it being understood that Nauruan phosphate would continue to be sold in the present markets. Due attention seemed to have been devoted to the training of the managerial personnel needed to ensure that the transfer of ownership did not affect the output of an industry which was the island's only current source of income. Lastly, it was gratifying that agreement had been reached on a considerable increase in royalties in comparison with those paid during 1965-1966. According to the statements of the special repre-

sentative and of Head Chief De Roburt, the talks had been conducted in a frank and friendly atmosphere which augured well for the settlement of the outstanding issues.

15. His delegation believed that the dominant influence of the phosphate industry on all aspects of Nauru's future should be the subject of careful and urgent consideration, and it had therefore been encouraged to learn from the Head Chief that attention was being given to the possibility of diversifying the Nauruan economy. However, consideration should also be given to certain variables in that economy; for scientific progress, which could help to solve the Nauruan water supply problem, could also reduce the need for phosphate. It was difficult, therefore, to predict with certainty whether future generations of Nauruans would wish to remain on the island, as the present generation did. That problem inevitably affected the question of who should rehabilitate the worked-out land, and more particularly whether, when and at what rate rehabilitation should be carried out. His delegation therefore hoped that the representatives of the Nauruan people would consider those questions carefully, both before and after the expected political changes in the Territory.

16. On behalf of the Government and people of the United States, he wished the Nauruan people every success for the future; their success would testify to the efforts made by the Australian Government, not only in Nauru but in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea as well.

17. Mr. McDOWELL (New Zealand) said that he was pleased to learn from the statements of the special representative and his advisers, particularly Head Chief De Roburt, that the uncertainties over the future of the Nauruan people were in the process of being resolved.

18. The previously thorny question of ownership and development of the phosphate industry, for example, had been finally settled. The agreement between the Nauruan representatives and the Administering Authority on the future of the industry was, like all sound commercial transactions, mutually beneficial, since the Nauruans were assured of a firm market and a fair price and the partner Governments were assured of a steady supply of what was for them an important commodity. Under the agreement, the Nauruan people would receive large sums of money which, with sound planning, would enable them to shape their environment and establish their economic future on a firm foundation.

19. The Nauruans' political future was the subject of talks which the Head Chief had said had a good hope of success, thanks to the climate of mutual understanding established between the representatives of the Nauruans and those of the partner Governments. In those circumstances, there was no point in trying to precipitate premature decisions by tendering the astute Nauruan leaders gratuitous advice on the subject. Decisions to be made would continue to affect the people of Nauru long after they had been forgotten by those who would volunteer advice. The Administering Authority had said that it was sympathetic to the Nauruans' wish to realize their political

ambitions by 31 January 1968; the Nauruans had put forward political and constitutional proposals to which the Administering Authority had suggested some modifications, and the outstanding questions were neither numerous nor intractable. The Nauruans, with their usual common sense, had no ambition to cut a figure on the world stage; they had indicated that they would ask another country, or other countries, to assist them in handling their affairs overseas, and also that in certain technical and communications spheres they would need further outside assistance. The Administering Authority had made certain suggestions with regard to the relationship envisaged, not in order to obtain substantial advantages but because it was concerned to ensure that all possibilities were examined before decisions were made and because it seemed

logical and mutually beneficial for countries in the same area of the world to establish such a relationship. The talks were to resume shortly, after the Head Chief had conferred with the Local Government Council on decisions that would affect the lives of generations of Nauruans to come.

20. There was no doubt as to New Zealand's instinctive reaction in such situations where self-determination was being exercised—its record in decolonizing the islands previously dependent on it was known. His delegation trusted that arrangements satisfactory to the people of Nauru, the Administering Authority and the United Nations would be reached at the forthcoming discussions.

*The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.*