



Trusteeship Council

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Fifty-seventh session

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SIXTEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOURTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 21 May 1990, at 11 a.m.

President:

Mr. RICHARDSON

(United Kingdom)

- Opening of the fifty-seventh session
- Adoption of the agenda
- Report of the Secretary-General on credentials
- Election of the President and the Vice-President
- Organization of work
- Examination of the annual report of the Administering Authority for the year ended 30 September 1989: Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
- Report of the United Nations Visiting Mission to Observe the Plebiscite in Palau, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, February 1990

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

OPENING OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the fifty-seventh session of the Trusteeship Council, and in doing so I wish to welcome the delegations of China, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United States of America and my own delegation, the United Kingdom. I should like also to welcome in particular our visitors from the Trust Territory. We shall be listening with great attention to what they have to say in the course of the Council's proceedings. Finally, I want to welcome those petitioners who wish to address the Council later in its proceedings.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The PRESIDENT: Members of the Council have before them the provisional agenda (T/1945) drawn up by the Secretary-General in consultation with the President of the Council under rule 8 of our rules of procedure.

If there are no comments and if there is no objection, I shall consider that the agenda for the fifty-seventh session is adopted.

The agenda was adopted.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON CREDENTIALS

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform the Council that the Secretary-General has still not received the credentials of all members of the Council. I suggest therefore that this agenda item be considered at a future meeting. If there are no objections it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE VICE-PRESIDENT

The PRESIDENT: I now invite members of the Council to elect a President for the fifty-seventh session. This election will be carried out by secret ballot, pursuant to rule 41 of the rules of procedure of the Trusteeship Council.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

Mrs. Anne Gazeau-Secret (France) was elected President unanimously.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the Council I want to congratulate Mrs. Gazeau-Secret on her election and to wish her the very best during her period in office. I am sure that her well-known diplomatic skill and finesse will contribute greatly to our work in the course of the coming session.

Let me also add that I have served for only a very short time as your President, but I wish to thank all Council members for their co-operation since my election in January and I wish also to thank all members of the Secretariat for the very valuable assistance they have given me.

I now invite Mrs. Gazeau-Secret to take the Chair.

Mrs. Gazeau-Secret took the Chair.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I am greatly honoured by the fact that Council members have entrusted me with the responsibility of presiding over the Trusteeship Council for the next session. I thank you most warmly.

I should also like to thank most warmly Mr. Thomas Richardson and his predecessor, Mr. Birch, for the work they accomplished in presiding over the Trusteeship Council last year and at the beginning of this year. I am happy to hear that Mr. Thomas Richardson is going to remain with us and will participate in our work during the course of this session since I am counting on his assistance. I know that his knowledge and experience of the Council's work will be very useful to us.

We shall now turn to the election of the Vice-President of the Council.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

Mr. Richardson (United Kingdom) was elected Vice-President unanimously.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I congratulate Mr. Thomas Richardson on his election. I am very happy, as I just stated, that we can thus continue working with him, which will be very useful for the Trusteeship Council.

The VICE-PRESIDENT: I simply wish to thank all members of the Council warmly for the confidence they have shown in me and to assure them personally of my wish and anxiety to co-operate very closely with them in the work of this forthcoming Council.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): A tentative timetable for the fifty-seventh session of the Trusteeship Council has been prepared and distributed to members of the Council. It has been drawn up on the same model as last year's. Of course the Council is quite free to change this programme of work in accordance with circumstances or the wishes of members and also according to the way our work progresses.

If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Council agrees to follow the timetable as closely as possible.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): Before proceeding to take up the substantive part of our work I should like to ask members of the Council to do their best to be on time for meetings so that the Council will be in a position to make maximum use of the time available to it and try to conclude its work.

The representatives of Fiji and Papua New Guinea have requested to sit at the Council table. As members will recall, Fiji and Papua New Guinea participated in a recent mission to observe the plebiscite in Palau on 6 February 1990. I propose, in accordance with rule 12 of the rules of procedure of the Trusteeship Council, to

(The President)

invite those representatives to take places at the Council table and to participate, without the right to vote, in the Council's deliberations.

If there is no objection I shall take it that the Council agrees to that proposal.

It was so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of Fiji and Papua New Guinea took places at the Council table.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): Before the Council begins its consideration of conditions in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, I call on the representative of the United States to introduce the members of his delegation.

Mr. WILKINSON (United States of America): I should like to introduce the principal members of the delegation who are here with me today. Present are Ms. Stella G. Guerra, Assistant Secretary from the Department of the Interior; Ms. Marilyn A. Meyers, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State; Mr. Samuel McPhetres, Department of the Interior; and Mr. Victor Uherbelau, head of the Palauan delegation, ably assisted by Senator Minoru F. Ueki, Chairman of the Palauan Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, and Delegate Hideo Tell, Chairman of the Palauan House Foreign Affairs Committee; and other members, including Mr. Steven Kanai, who is the Washington representative of the Republic of Palau.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Guerra, Ms. Meyers, Mr. McPhetres, Mr. Uherbelau, Mr. Ueki, Mr. Tell and Mr. Kanai, representatives, took places at the Council table.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I am very happy to welcome all the members of the United States delegation.

EXAMINATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 1989: TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS (T/1944)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): The Council will begin its consideration of conditions in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Mr. WILKINSON (United States of America): Madam President, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate you on your unanimous election as President of the Trusteeship Council at its fifty-seventh session. As Administering Authority for the remaining Trust Territory, we welcome the thoughtful contributions of all the participants in this Council's proceedings under your capable guidance and look forward to working with you.

(Mr. Wilkinson, United States)

Since many of us today are new to this Council, it is appropriate to share my delegation's special appreciation to those who have preceded us in the affairs of the Council, especially acknowledging today the guidance of former Council President John Birch, of the United Kingdom, and his compatriot, Ambassador Richardson, who so ably filled in during an interim period.

Around the world the events of this last year have proven unpredictable, surprising, contagious and hopeful. The decade of the 1990s promises to be an extraordinary decade for the exercise of acts of self-determination. Recently we have seen the peoples of Namibia, much of Eastern Europe, Latin and South America and elsewhere give clear expression to their will through the ballot, a peaceful, democratic and stabilizing means of determining their political future and enhancing their economic and social development.

It is in this same vein, therefore, that my Government conveys its support to the Government of Palau and to the people of Palau, who continue to persevere at the polls to reach a determination of their future. We fully recognize and respect the Palauan Constitution and the political processes required by that Constitution. The United States will continue to honour its obligations while the people of Palau seek a resolution of their dilemma, namely, reconciling the provision of their Constitution that requires 75 per cent approval of the Compact of Free Association with the overwhelming majority view consistently favouring adoption of the Compact.

That Compact, negotiated between the United States of America and Palau, provides that the Republic of Palau would become a sovereign, self-governing nation. The Compact offers significant continuing benefits to Palau for a period of 50 years, as well as certain security and defence obligations and rights for the United States.

(Mr. Wilkinson, United States)

In the light of the conclusion of the Compact, this Council found in 1986, in resolution 2183 (LIII), that the United States had satisfactorily discharged its obligations under the terms of the Trusteeship Agreement, and it requested the United States to agree on a date not later than 30 September 1986 for full entry into force of the Compact and to inform the Secretary-General of the date.

That is to say, this Council found that Palau was ready for self-government, that the Compact should be implemented at the earliest possible date and that the United States should inform the Secretary-General.

My Government believes that this resolution was fully in keeping with the Trusteeship Council's goal of promoting the advancement of the inhabitants of a Territory towards self-government or independence in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of the people. Resolution 2183 (LIII) echoes resolution 1541 (XV) of the General Assembly in recognizing that legitimate acts of self-determination can result in free association, independence or integration.

As this Council observed through its latest Visiting Mission, at the request of the Government of Palau, the electorate of Palau went to the polls in February of this year to attempt for a seventh time to determine whether the necessary 75 per cent of the voting public approved of the Compact. More than 60 per cent of the voting public approved the Compact. This was a sizeable majority, but still insufficient to satisfy the specific constitutional requirement.

Palau continues to conduct itself as a geographical, political, cultural, social and economic entity with a clear identity. As Administering Authority, we regard this as active testimony to our continued fulfilment of our stewardship responsibilities under the Trusteeship Agreement. Furthermore - and I will state this as clearly as possible - the United States continues, and will continue, to exercise its trusteeship obligations fully and responsibly until such time as the people of Palau resolve the issue of their status.

(Mr. Wilkinson, United States)

We are confident that Palau will overcome the current impasse. Resolving this issue will require the political will, courage and self-confidence of all Palauans to pull together, launch themselves into full political maturity and set sail in the direction of their choosing.

Madam President, I should be grateful if you would next call upon Ms. Stella Guerra, Assistant Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, charged with responsibility for the Office of Territorial and International Affairs. Secretary Guerra will lay out for the Council the thoughts of the United States Government on how we can best exercise our trusteeship responsibilities until such time as Palau decides on its future status.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I now call on Ms. Stella Guerra.

Ms. GUERRA (Special Adviser): First, let me congratulate you, Madam President, and the new Vice-President on your unanimous elections to your high offices. While this is my first opportunity to participate in these proceedings, I have been assured by veterans of previous meetings that we can look forward to close co-operation and mutual benefit over the weeks and months ahead. I certainly offer my full co-operation and that of my delegation.

I also want to thank the outgoing officers of the Council and express the thanks of the Administering Authority for the excellent work they did over the past year.

It is with great sympathy that we extend our condolences to President Etpison and his family on the tragic loss of his son Beches, who died while rendering assistance to other injured persons. Beches Etpison was also the Governor of Ngatpanq State and, as such, generously acted as host to the last couple of Visiting Missions from the Council.

I would now like briefly to review the events involving the Trust Territory over the past year up to the present. This statement is intended as a supplement to the more detailed information provided in the annual report.

Since the early 1980s, and particularly in recent years, the United States has acted on the assumption that Palau would adopt the Compact of Free Association quickly and become fully sovereign in the near future. In keeping with that assumption and in line with our obligation to promote self-government in the Trust Territory, the United States progressively delegated more and more decision-making authority to the constitutional Government of Palau.

In the light of recent events, however, the United States can no longer assume that Palau will adopt the Compact in the near future. As you know, the seventh plebiscite on the Compact, held in early February of this year, failed to garner the 75 per cent required by the Constitution for approval. The people and

(Ms. Guerra, Special Adviser)

Government of Palau are now considering the next steps, but no decision has been reached on a specific strategy or time-table. I do wish to assure the Council that the Administering Authority respects the will of the people of Palau and their elected representatives and will wait for them to decide their next course of action.

Given the situation, nevertheless, the United States has decided to carry out its continuing responsibilities as Administering Authority in a more active and intensive fashion. We are of course aware that in July 1989 the United States General Accounting Office issued a report entitled "Issues Associated with Palau's Transition to Self-Government". The report notes, among other things, that the policy of delegating increasing degrees of authority to the Government of Palau has deprived that Government of the benefits of some advice and guidance from the Administering Authority, particularly in the financial area.

While my office does not completely agree with all of the findings contained in the report, we have decided to take certain steps to address some of the issues that have been called to our attention. In particular, we will be naming a Resident Representative of the Department of the Interior to provide more guidance to the Government of Palau, especially in fiscal and planning issues.

My office, which is responsible for the administration of the Trust Territory, is also in the process of reorganizing in order better to carry out our obligations. Part of that reorganization consists of strengthening the Trust Territory Government at Koror with greater support facilities based at Honolulu. We believe that with this approach we shall be able to serve the people of the Territory better while at the same time exercising our administrative responsibilities under the Trusteeship Agreement.

To that end, in the nine months I have been in the position of Assistant Secretary, I have held five personal meetings with President Etpison of Palau, as

(Ms. Guerra, Special Adviser)

well as others with the leadership of Palau, all in our continuing effort under article 6 of the Trusteeship Agreement to foster and promote self-government. In April several members of my staff in the Department of the Interior, including my Deputy Assistant Secretary, went to Palau to familiarize themselves with the situation there. Using their recommendations, we shall make certain additional decisions concerning the role of the Administering Authority in the administration of Palau. We shall, of course, keep the Council informed of the developments in this area as they occur.

I am sure that the Council is aware that the Administering Authority in the past year has, in co-operation with the Government of Palau, mounted a very serious campaign against the spread of controlled substances. In July of last year a major sweep of dealers, importers and vendors was successfully carried out. Forty-three people were arrested, and all of them have admitted guilt. Out of those 43 there were 13 Trust Territory citizens.

While the war on harmful drugs is far from being won in many parts of the world, we are taking the situation in the Trust Territory very seriously and wish to assure the Council that we will continue to do so for as long as necessary, as part of our Administration's greater campaign to eliminate dangerous substances from all of society.

We are pleased that there is very little in the way of natural disasters or crises to report this year. There has been little or no politically oriented violence in Palau, there have been no controversial court cases, no natural disasters such as typhoons or other events that resulted in hardships or problems for the new Palauan Administration. Things have been going relatively smoothly, and we must congratulate President Etpison for this.

As I mentioned earlier, the seventh plebiscite on the Compact of Free Association was held in Palau on 6 February of this year without incident. Since

(Ms. Guerra, Special Adviser)

the Visiting Mission of the Council was present, there is no need for me to comment on the conduct of the voting. I particularly want to express my hope that the Chinese member of the Mission found the experience worth while. We hope that this is but the first time that China will fully participate in the activities of the Visiting Mission and that other delegations will follow suit at the next opportunity.

In the area of economic development, we can see from the annual report that tourism has increased substantially. But the most important development is waiting for the right moment, when the political-status issues are completed. We wish to associate ourselves fully with the observations made in paragraphs 36, 69 and 70 of document S/20843, the report from the Trusteeship Council to the Security Council last year, concerning the potential for economic development and the need not to let non-existent or imaginary standards stand in the way of the attainment of self-government.

It is extremely gratifying to inform the Council that payment of Title I war claims is nearly 100 per cent completed. As we announced last year, the United States Congress appropriated a second fund to bring the total up to 100 per cent of the adjudicated claims, and, with some small exceptions, the payment process is going smoothly and should be completed very soon.

(Ms. Guerra, Special Adviser)

In some cases, probate of estate is holding up final payment, and in others disagreement over amounts or signing releases is slowing payments. But I am pleased to tell the Council that we will shortly be concluding this lengthy chapter in Trust Territory history.

We are particularly pleased to announce to the Council that the Administering Authority has made money available for a new programme of operations and maintenance on capital improvements projects in the islands. The purpose of this report is to review projects carried out under the Trust Territory's capital improvement programme over the past 10 years and make appropriate repairs and adjustments where deficiencies in construction or design are identified. The other half of the project is to train local people in the correct operations and maintenance of these projects.

This operations and maintenance project will be carried out by a private contractor who will be responsible for the whole programme subject to the supervision of a special committee of Government officials according to priorities fixed by the local authorities. The contracts have been awarded and the project is currently under way.

We expect this to take several years to complete. Included in the programme will be repairs to the Koror Babelthaup Bridge, airport work, construction of hospital facilities and public utilities in Palau, and many other projects on Palau and other islands. A total of \$7,821,000 has been made available for this fiscal year alone to begin these projects. In addition an additional \$5,719,000 has been set aside for the new \$24 million Palau hospital.

Last year there were several references to the 902 consultations between the Federal Government and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. I should like to assure the Council that we concur wholeheartedly with conclusion No. 4 in the Council's report of last year.

(Ms. Guerra, Special Adviser)

On behalf of my staff and myself I would say that we look forward to another productive session with this Council and pledge our full co-operation with the membership to achieve that goal.

Mr. WILKINSON (United States of America): Madam President, I would be very grateful if you would call on Mr. Uherbelau to give the third part of the United States statement.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I call on Mr. Uherbelau of the United States delegation.

Mr. UHERBELAU (Special Representative): Madame President, it is my privilege to congratulate you on your unanimous election to preside over the Council for the coming year. Our sincere appreciation goes to the outgoing President, Mr. John Birch of the United Kingdom, for his effective leadership during the past year.

Please allow me to introduce the members of the official Palau delegation: the Honourable Minoru Ueki, Chairman of the Olbiiil Era Kelulau Senate Foreign Affairs Committee; delegate Hideo Tell, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; delegate Alan Seid; Mr. Noriwo Ubedei, Consultant to the Palau National Congress; Mr. Pable Temol, Administrative Officer of the Ministry of State; and Mr. Steve Kanai, Representative of Palau, based in Washington DC. I am Victorio Uherbelau, Presidential Legal Assistant and Director of the Bureau of Foreign Affairs. Together, we bring the Council warm greetings from President Etpison and the Government and people of Palau.

We wish at the outset to convey our sincere thanks to the Council for dispatching the United Nations Visiting Mission to observe the 6 February 1990 plebiscite on the Compact of Free Association. Although we would have liked a more

(Mr. Uherbelau, Special
Representative)

favourable result to the referendum, we take comfort in the Mission's conclusion that

"the referendum was conducted freely, fairly and in accordance with the rules, and that the results reflect the freely expressed wishes of the people of Palau". (T/1492, para. 51)

As we reported to the Council last year, the new leadership united in supporting the seventh Compact Plebiscite and RPPL No. 3-1 was enacted establishing the Commission of Future Palau/United States Relations, which subsequently negotiated and signed the Guam Accord on 26 May 1989 with a representative of the United States Government. In spite of this development, however, the voters once again failed to approve the Compact by a constitutionally mandated 75-per-cent voter approval margin, and the result was the lowest of all previous plebiscites, and so was the turn-out.

The Council is familiar with other activities leading up to the 6 February 1990 plebiscite, some of which are amply covered by the Visiting Mission's report presented for review by the Council today. It remains for us to advise the Council that no definite national plan exists at this point with respect to the resolution of Palau's future political status. Meanwhile, certain Palauan leaders endorse the holding of a constitutional-amendment referendum for the purpose of lowering the Compact-approval-vote requirement to a simple majority vote. Others are taking a more cautious approach and have petitioned the office of the President for a moratorium on future plebiscites on the Compact in order to let the matter cool off for a while before deciding which direction to take next. The leadership, however, is not idle but is reviewing possible options in order to recommend to the general public which one to undertake.

(Mr. Uherbelau, Special
Representative)

When we reported to this Council last year, we enumerated certain unfulfilled obligations of the Administering Authority which in our estimation would have rendered the Republic more economically self-sufficient had they been fulfilled. Some of these remain outstanding.

(Mr. Uherbelau, Special
Representative)

Over the years the Trusteeship Council has heard strong criticism of the United States administration of Palau. Much of this criticism has been justified. In many years the Compact could have been viewed as an attempt to compensate for the failings of the United States trusteeship. And it is beyond question that the United States obligations in this regard will continue in full force and effect until a new political status is implemented. It is hoped that until it is we can, jointly with the United States, work out a viable and sustainable economic development that will free us, Palauans, from the strangulation of economic dependence and the welfare state that has been created. Only then can we have a real, free act of self-determination regarding our future status.

Our economy still survives largely on an annual cash infusion from the United States Government, although there is some reason to be optimistic about economic development. However, lack of strong infrastructure, particularly on our largest island, Babelthuap, has prevented our full economic potential from being realized. It is again beyond question that we shall need substantial assistance to put necessary infrastructures in place, and we anticipate that this will flow from the United States trusteeship and whatever subsequent relationship is entered into. Our hope is that the United States will honour and fulfil its trusteeship responsibilities, whether or not the Compact is implemented.

On a positive note, we are glad to report that the construction of the modern hospital and health facility is progressing on schedule. The Administering Authority has provided the sum of \$16 million towards the first and second phases of the project. The hospital, however, requires an additional \$8.8 million for its completion. We wish to have the entire amount appropriated in the coming fiscal year, and we have requested this from the Administering Authority.

(Mr. Uherbelau, Special Representative)

It is gratifying to learn also that the Department of the Interior has included in its appropriation budget request the sum of \$1.5 million for special programmes in Palau, a sum which was authorized in United States Public Law 101-219. This legislation authorized the implementation of the Palau Compact pending its approval by Palau according to its constitutional process.

Despite the fact that the Palau Compact has not been implemented, the Administering Authority recognizes the Republic's special needs, and thus has requested the United States Congress to provide funds for the construction of a new gaol facility, drug enforcement assistance and rehabilitation programmes and assistance for a Special Prosecutor's Office and for a Public Auditor's Office.

Just two weeks ago Palau presented a joint budget statement of the Palau leadership to the United States Congress requesting a grand total of \$89.2 million for other much-needed capital infrastructure projects. They range from Babelthuap road development and electric power distribution and transmission to expansion and improvement of the Koror sewage treatment plant, as well as electric power and water improvements for outlying islands, including an efficient telecommunications system. Again, these are basic capital improvements needed for Palau's economic development and self-sufficiency, and should not be held contingent on Palau's approval of the Compact.

While much remains to be done in the field of economic development, we are happy to report that, with additional funding from departure and hotel room taxes, the Palau Visitors Authority has launched ambitious programmes for the promotion and development of the tourism industry. Currently the Republic has 10 hotels, with a total of 355 available hotel rooms. Our tourism industry, however, cannot reach its highest potential without much-needed infrastructures.

(Mr. Uherbelau, Special
Representative)

The 1989 statistics indicate that 19,383 tourists visited Palau, compared with 16,450 in 1988. Because of its geographical proximity, Japan provides about 60 per cent of the visitors, followed by the United States, with 22 per cent, with Europe and Asian countries other than Japan making up 10 per cent. With the inauguration of direct flights between Guam and Sydney last April, the number of tourists from Australia increased sevenfold in 1989.

The Republic has also seen improvements in its fisheries industry, particularly in the exploitation of the fisheries resources within its 200-mile exclusive economic zone. Having ratified the Multilateral Fisheries Treaty between the United States and 16 Pacific island countries in November 1987, Palau has benefited from its proportionate share of the Treaty funds, both in cash payments and in technical assistance, worth more than \$200,000 annually.

The Republic also has a fisheries access agreement with four Japanese fisheries associations, under which the Republic is paid a fishing fee of approximately \$500,000 for licensing up to 290 Japanese fishing vessels to fish in its waters. With the recent completion of a cold-storage facility and a block-ice-making plant by the Palau Marine Industrial Corporation (PMIC), the Republic now has two locally-based fisheries operations employing longline and pole and line boats from Taiwan. Palau International Traders Incorporated (PITI) has been in operation locally for the past five years, and its fishing agreement is up for extension or renewal.

Furthermore, the Republic of Palau has actively participated in and benefited from regional programmes and activities of the Honiara-based Forum Fisheries Agency in co-ordinated regional co-operation for the management, conservation and

(Mr. Uherbelau, Special
Representative)

exploitation of tuna and other highly migratory fish. Most notable in this co-operation were the conclusion and signing in Wellington, New Zealand, last November of the Convention for the Prohibition of Drift Net Fishing in the South Pacific Region, and we note with deep appreciation the action of the United Nations General Assembly in this regard. The Convention is now before the Olbiil Era Kelulau, the Palauan National Congress, for legislative approval.

(Mr. Uherbelau, Special Representative)

Before closing, we should like to express another concern of Palauans, as well as of all Pacific islanders: the United States plan to dispose of an estimated 500 tons of chemical weaponry, including deadly nerve gases, on Johnston Islands in the central Pacific. We firmly support the formal protest of the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia against that weapons-disposal plan, as well as the objections of other Pacific Island nations.

The foregoing highlights some of the major events and developments which have taken place in Palau during the year under review. On behalf of the Palau delegation, I thank you, Madam President, and members of the Trusteeship Council for giving us the opportunity to speak before you today.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): Are there any other speakers on this item of this morning's agenda?

If there are no further speakers, the Council will continue consideration of this item at its next meeting, this afternoon.

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS VISITING MISSION TO OBSERVE THE PLEBISCITE IN PALAU, TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS, FEBRUARY 1990 (T/1942)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): The Council will now commence its consideration of item 6 of its agenda, the report of the United Nations Visiting Mission to Observe the Plebiscite in Palau, document T/1942.

I call on the Vice-Chairman of the Visiting Mission, Mr. Stephen Smith, of the United Kingdom, to introduce that report.

Mr. SMITH (United Kingdom): Ambassador Louis Amiques of France, the Chairman of last February's United Nations Visiting Mission to Palau, is unfortunately unable to be present in New York for the current session of the Trusteeship Council. I therefore have the honour, as Vice-Chairman of the Visiting Mission, to introduce the Mission's report, which members of the Council will find before them in the document just mentioned.

(Mr. Smith, United Kingdom)

Members will recall that, following an invitation from the Government of Palau to the Trusteeship Council to send such a mission, the Council met on 8 January this year and adopted resolution 2192 (S-XX), by which it authorized the dispatch of a mission to Palau to observe the 6 February plebiscite, specifically the polling arrangements, the casting of votes, the closure of voting, the counting of ballots and the declaration of results. The Council also requested the Mission to report to it as soon as practicable.

The Mission was made up of five members, from China, Fiji, France, Papua New Guinea and the United Kingdom, accompanied by four members of the United Nations Secretariat and escorted by two representatives of the Administering Authority. It visited Palau from 31 January to 10 February of this year. Details of the Mission's itinerary and activities in Palau are contained in its report. When we come to discuss the report in detail, I shall, of course, be ready to answer any specific questions that representatives may wish to raise. For the moment, I shall limit myself to a brief summary of the main points of the Mission's report.

As the report makes clear, the Mission was present in Palau for a number of days prior to the referendum. During that time it was able to carry out an extensive programme of visits and public and private meetings throughout the Palauan islands. The Mission heard a wide range of views on the conduct of the political education programme and of the political campaign, which it took into account in preparing its report. It also observed the final stages of the campaign.

The Mission concluded that there was no evidence that the political education programme had been conducted in other than a fair and unbiased manner, in accordance with the relevant Palauan law. It also concluded that the political campaign was extremely low-key, peaceful and restrained. Both opponents and

(Mr. Smith, United Kingdom)

proponents of the Compact of Free Association had access to the media and to public platforms. There was no evidence of political tension or of attempts at coercion or intimidation. The people of Palau clearly understood the issues on which they were asked to decide and were able to express their views freely at the ballot-box.

On polling day itself the Mission divided into five teams in order to observe the voting process at as many polling stations as possible. In the Mission's view, the poll was conducted in full accordance with the rules and regulations of the plebiscite. The Mission saw no evidence of malpractice or of improper attempts to influence voters, who were able to cast their votes in secrecy.

Members of the Mission were also present throughout the counting and tabulation of votes, which were carried out openly and in a methodical and scrupulous manner.

The Mission is therefore satisfied that the referendum was conducted freely, fairly and in accordance with the rules and that the results reflect the freely expressed wishes of the people of Palau.

In conclusion, I should like once again to express the Mission's deep appreciation for the full co-operation it received at all times from the Government of Palau and from the Administering Authority. I should like also to thank those representatives of States which are not members of the Trusteeship Council for their participation in the Mission.

Lastly, I should like to express our appreciation to the members of the Secretariat who accompanied the Mission for their invaluable and expert contribution to our task.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.