



Trusteeship Council

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Fifty-seventh session

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SIXTEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-NINTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 29 May 1990, at 11 a.m.

President: Mrs. GAZEAU-SECRET (France)

- Examination of the annual report of the Administering Authority for the year ended 30 September 1989: Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
- General debate
- Dissemination of information on the United Nations and the International Trusteeship System in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
(continued)
- Appointment of a drafting committee

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The meeting was called to order at 11.20 a.m.

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

GENERAL DEBATE

Mr. DING Yuanhong (China) (interpretation from Chinese): First, Madam President, allow me to congratulate you on your election as President of the Council for its current session. I am confident that under your able guidance the session will be crowned with success. I wish also to take this opportunity to express my congratulations to the representative of the United Kingdom on his election as Vice-President.

Last year, in keeping with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Chinese delegation took part in the work of the Trusteeship Council for the first time, wishing to contribute to the undertakings of the United Nations trusteeship system and promote the advancement of the Trust Territories. It is with the same wish that we are here to participate in the work of the fifty-seventh session of the Trusteeship Council, during which we look forward to close co-operation with the other member countries.

In compliance with the relevant resolutions, the Trusteeship Council sent to Palau last February a Visiting Mission to observe a plebiscite on the Compact of Free Association there. It was the first time the Chinese delegation had been involved in any such Visiting Missions. The visit left us deeply impressed and broadened our knowledge of the Territory. During the visit we had audience with the Palauans, whose views and opinions on some issues are reflected in the Visiting Mission's report. We also took note of the results of the plebiscite.

In the past few days the Council has considered the report submitted by the Administering Authority on the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and heard statements by Council members, the Administering Authority and the representative

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of Palau, as well as the petitioners. All this has helped the Council gain a deeper understanding of the facts and the current conditions of the Trust Territory, thus serving to promote correct and comprehensive implementation of the relevant provisions of the Charter by the Council.

The principal task of the international trusteeship system is to further international peace and security and promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the Trust Territories and their progressive development towards self-government and independence. We are very pleased to see that over the years the people in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands have made fairly obvious progress in the political, economic, social and other fields. On the other hand, one also finds from the statements by the relevant representatives and petitioners that there are still some problems and inadequacies which deserve our close attention. We hope that the Administering Authority will give serious consideration to the views of the people in the Trust Territory, meet their demands and fulfil to the letter its obligations towards the Trust Territory, thus creating the necessary conditions for the population of the Trust Territory to achieve self-determination at an early date.

The Charter also provides that the people in the Trust Territories are entitled to choose freely their political future by exercising their right to self-determination. We support the principle of national self-determination and respect the choice made by the people in the Trust Territories, of their own free will, concerning their future political status.

Mr. RICHARDSON (United Kingdom): Our thanks and congratulations first go to you, Madam President, for the way in which you have conducted our work so far. On a personal note, perhaps I might be allowed to express my pleasure at being back in the Council after an absence of some 12 years. The Trusteeship Council has always been an important institution of the United Nations, and I believe that it has always shown itself sympathetic to the needs and aspirations of the inhabitants of the Trust Territories themselves.

The British Government has consistently supported the efforts of the people of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands to achieve whatever form of self-government meets their wishes and their particular circumstances. Over the past 20 years the Micronesians have drawn up their own constitutions, negotiated their respective new status agreements and participated in referendums to endorse those agreements. For all those reasons, my delegation joined other members of the Trusteeship Council in 1986 in adopting resolution 2183 (LIII), by which the Council recognized that the peoples of Micronesia had freely exercised their right to self-determination and had chosen either free association with the United States or Commonwealth status.

It is sometimes argued that the peoples of Micronesia have not been allowed to make a free political choice and that for its own strategic reasons the Administering Authority has divided the Trust Territory into four entities in order to increase their dependency on the United States. My delegation disagrees. The United States tried for a number of years to create a single state of Micronesia. But it became clear in the course of the future-status negotiations and the popular referendums that followed that this was not what was wanted by the inhabitants of the Trust Territory - a vast Territory whose constituent parts are divided by many thousand miles of ocean. The creation of four separate entities - the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the

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Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau - is testimony to the commitment of the Administering Authority to democracy and to the right of the inhabitants of the Trust Territory to self-determination. We have always welcomed and supported that commitment.

The main subject of our discussions this year is, of course, Palau, and, as in the past, we have been provided with a great deal of useful information on the Territory. We have listened with interest to the statements of the representatives of the Administering Authority and of the Republic of Palau. We have studied carefully the latest report of the Administering Authority. We have also been grateful to our petitioners for the additional contributions which they have brought to our work.

The overall picture is an encouraging one. The major question of Palau's future political status remains unresolved, and I shall return to it later. But in general terms we are satisfied to note that the people of Palau continue effectively to govern themselves in accordance with their Constitution and have continued their advancement in the economic, social and educational fields.

We are encouraged by the rapid increase in tourism in Palau, a beautiful country both above and below the water. There is much in Palau to attract a growing number of visitors and, if developed wisely, to provide Palau with a lasting source of income. We are glad to see that tourism is already helping to boost the private sector of the economy and to decrease the dependency of Palauans on government employment. We hope that as it encourages the growth of this important industry, the Government of Palau will take steps to ensure that Palau's natural beauty, the very thing tourists come to discover, will not suffer as a consequence.

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We are also encouraged by the progress reported in the field of fisheries. We know from the experience of some of the remaining British dependent territories that revenue from licensing arrangements and the establishment of appropriate fishery-related enterprises can provide valuable income and employment. We welcome the training and assistance being provided to Palau by the Administering Authority in the field of fisheries enforcement.

Fisheries are only one example of the contribution of the Administering Authority to Palau's continuing advancement. We are glad to see that additional funds have been provided under the Capital Improvement Programme to allow for construction of a new hospital to go ahead. We also particularly welcome the Administering Authority's decision, in response to concerns expressed by the Government and people of Palau, to carry out a long-term project to improve the operation and maintenance of various public-works facilities and to rectify certain deficiencies in facilities provided under the Capital Improvement Programme.

The representatives of Palau have spoken of their desire for economic self-reliance. There is a difficult balance to be struck here. It is certainly the case that the economy of Palau remains excessively dependent on annual infusions of funds from the Administering Authority. Much of the money goes towards vital improvements in the Territory's infrastructure. But capital projects are not cost-free. The running costs and maintenance of new roads or hospitals can be heavy, and Palau's own tax base is inadequate to finance these continuing costs - although we welcome the improvement in tax collections reported this year. If a self-sustaining economy is to be achieved, two approaches will be necessary: a hard look at new spending projects, to ensure that they can be serviced after completion, and a growth in the local economy and therefore its tax base. In this

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connection, therefore, the development of activities like tourism and fishing assumes additional significance, as does an expansion of the private sector's share of the economy more generally.

We are encouraged also by developments in the social field. The recent campaign mounted by the Administering Authority, in co-operation with the Government of Palau, against a number of those involved in drug trafficking has been a notable success. We are glad to note the continuation of other Federal programmes, for example in the areas of health and education, which are helping to improve standards of living throughout Palau.

I would now like to return to the question of Palau's future political status. My Government was privileged to be represented on the United Nations Visiting Mission which observed the recent plebiscite in Palau. It is not for us to comment on the result. Whether the fact that the Compact of Free Association was again not approved is good or bad for Palau - this is really a question for Palauans themselves. I would only like to make two points: first, that the plebiscite was conducted in a free, fair and democratic manner and that its result therefore represents the freely expressed wish of the Palauan people and, secondly, that whatever their views on the precise terms of the Compact and its subsidiary agreements, the majority of Palauans clearly favour the continuation of a close relationship, such as free association, with the United States, the nation which, as their Administering Authority, has given them generous assistance and guidance for over 40 years.

We hope that the current difficulties over Palau's future political status will soon be resolved. Palau is ready for self-government, as the Palauans themselves have amply demonstrated. The Trusteeship Agreement was never designed to last forever. It is certainly not in the best interests of the people of the

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Trust Territory that it should. We note that the Palauan leadership and people are now reviewing their options. We wish them all success and promise them our support in their efforts to determine, at the earliest possible date, a future political status that accords with their wishes.

In conclusion, as regards the Northern Mariana Islands, we listened with attention to the petitions delivered by their representatives last week. It is clear that certain differences remain over the interpretation of the new status agreement between the United States and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. We continue to believe that such difficulties should be addressed in the context of the procedures mutually agreed under the Commonwealth Covenant.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for the kind words addressed to me.

Mr. MENAT (France) (interpretation from French): I wish first of all, Madam, to congratulate you once again on behalf of the French delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Trusteeship Council and on the manner in which you are carrying out your work.

Four years ago, at its fifty-third regular session, the Trusteeship Council adopted resolution 2183 (LIII), whose recommendations were intended to enable the four entities of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands to accede fully to the status of their respective choice. On many occasions since then, the French delegation has advocated swift implementation of that resolution.

Accordingly, we welcomed the agreement reached exactly a year ago, on 26 May 1989 in Guam, by the Commission on Future Palau-United States Relations. That agreement opened the way for a seventh plebiscite for Palauans to take a position on the Compact of Free Association with the United States.

At its twentieth special session, in January, the Council was informed that the plebiscite would be held on 6 February 1990. The Trusteeship Council decided to send a Visiting Mission to Palau to observe the vote; we were pleased that, for the first time, a representative of the People's Republic of China participated. In its report the Visiting Mission concluded that the plebiscite had been held under free and proper conditions.

However, while 60 per cent of the population favoured the Compact of Free Association, the vote once again fell short of the constitutional majority of 75 per cent. My delegation hopes that appropriate solutions can be formulated in the near future to facilitate the entry into force of the status chosen by the people of Palau, which would further the emancipation of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Pending attainment of that objective, and so long as the Trusteeship Agreement remains in force, the Administering Authority must, of course, continue to carry

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out its obligations under the Agreement. My delegation notes with satisfaction, this year as before, the assurances given by the United States delegation on this point.

My delegation also welcomes the recent advances made in the Trust Territory in the political, economic and social spheres and in the areas of education and tourism. We have studied carefully the information on this with respect to Palau in the most recent annual report of the Administering Authority. In particular, we welcome the Administering Authority's initiatives, in conformity with recommendations of the Trusteeship Council, to provide assistance in protecting Palau's marine resources.

We also listened with great interest to the very complete statement made by Mr. Uherbelau, Special Representative Adviser of the Administering Authority, who described, inter alia, efforts in the area of public facilities, particularly hospitals.

My delegation is aware, however, of the difficulties that continue to exist and of the concerns felt by the people of Palau about the still uncertain prospects for the future. Those difficulties and concerns have been mentioned by such sources as the petitioners who addressed the Council. Even if some of them seemed excessively pessimistic, the fact remains that the major advances made in the archipelago with respect to the democratic nature of local institutions and to the people's standard of living have not yet totally remedied certain shortcomings, particularly a serious dependence on the outside, which are a source of legitimate concern for the citizens of Palau.

Nevertheless, my delegation reiterates its appreciation of the co-operation that has come about between Palau's leaders and the Administering Authority with a view to solving the remaining problems. We also take this opportunity to express

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our thanks to the representatives of the Trust Territory who have been participating in this session of the Council.

With respect to the Northern Mariana Islands, my delegation has taken due note of the statements made by petitioners and welcomes the commencement of consultations under section 902 of the bilateral agreement between the United States Government and the Northern Marianas. We hope that the negotiations will be successful.

The position of the French delegation is well known. We want the inhabitants of the sole remaining Trust Territory to be able to exercise fully their right of self-determination as soon as possible. Accordingly, I reaffirm our hope that the obstacles still preventing those inhabitants of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands from acceding to the status of their choice will soon be overcome, with full respect for the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

Before concluding, I must thank the representatives of the Secretariat, who are contributing with ability, efficiency and devotion to the smooth working of the Council.

Mr. BYKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): I cannot fail to begin my statement, Madam, by congratulating you once again on your election to the presidency of the Trusteeship Council and expressing to you our great appreciation of the able way in which you have guided our work.

The Soviet delegation has studied with care the report of the United States on its administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands - Micronesia - for the period 1 October 1988 to 30 September 1989. We also listened carefully to the introductory statement made by the delegation of the United States and to the statements made by petitioners. In addition, we have studied the working paper prepared by the Secretariat and the written petitions and communications sent to

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the Trusteeship Council at the present session. That diversified, although not exhaustive, information gives us a certain picture of the situation in the Trust Territory.

We listened with interest to the statements made today in the general debate. These included some observations which deserve consideration and reflection.

We note that the Administering Authority submitted its annual report in a timely manner, and we wish to convey our appreciation to all who, preceding and during this session of the Trusteeship Council, tried to make a constructive contribution to the work of the Council with a view to helping it to carry out its very important tasks.

Consideration of the information before us and of the statements we have heard enables us to draw two related conclusions. It seems to us - and members have noted this - that during the reporting period representatives of the Administering Authority took certain steps to promote the development of the Trust Territory.

(Mr. Bykov, USSR)

At the same time, we obviously cannot overlook the fact that, proceeding from the basic task of the trusteeship system as defined in the Charter of the United Nations, there are still serious problems in the economic, social, and political fields in the development of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands that require very careful consideration and specific action on the part of the Administering Authority and the Trusteeship Council. At this stage we hardly need to go into detail concerning those problems. Moreover, those points were also made at earlier meetings of the Council, by the delegation of Soviet Union among others. It would now seem that our task is to find the proper solution for those problems in the higher interests of the people of Micronesia. The international obligations assumed by the Administering Authority in this connection are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in the Trusteeship Agreement and in a number of other basic documents of the Organization.

Although the report of the Administering Authority deals with all parts of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, specific information on the situation in the Territory, the problems that arise and the action taken by the Administering Authority is limited to one part of the Territory, namely, Palau. We hope that that omission will be remedied in the next report. We must also take into account that the problems facing the people of Palau - if we look at the essence of those problems - can in a sense be regarded as characteristic of the Trust Territory as a whole. That can be seen, inter alia, from statements made at the preceding session by representatives of the local authorities from the Northern Mariana islands, who expressed serious concern over the situation that has evolved there.

In the Soviet delegation's view, the obligation of the Administering Authority to provide the United Nations with information about the entire Trust Territory is

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still in force and will remain so until the Security Council, which has responsibility under the Charter for the Trust Territory, takes a decision to terminate the Trusteeship Agreement. There would seem to be no doubt that that is fully consistent with the vital interests of the people of Micronesia, who clearly must be able to enjoy the support of the Trusteeship Council in order to promote their own political, economic and social development and the attainment of their inalienable right to self-determination.

In exercising its functions, the Trusteeship Council must carefully monitor the implementation of the task of safeguarding the rights and interests of the people in the Territory under United Nations trusteeship. That is provided for in the Charter of the United Nations, the Trusteeship Agreement and other relevant United Nations documents. It would seem that there is a general understanding of the importance in that respect of a responsible and carefully weighed approach, free from prejudice and ideological bias.

We are convinced that the foundation for such an approach can and must be respect for the priorities of universal human values, recognition of the primacy of the principles and norms of international law and efforts to bring about dialogue, co-operation and a joint search for mutually acceptable solutions. The key significance of these factors, we believe, is convincingly demonstrated by the entire process of the establishment of new international relationships during the present watershed period for mankind, a stage in global development which opens the post-confrontation period of the international community's activities.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I thank the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for his kind words addressed to me.

We have now concluded the general debate for this morning.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE INTERNATIONAL TRUSTEESHIP SYSTEM IN THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS (continued)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): As members will recall, at the 1678th meeting, the representative of the Soviet Union raised a question regarding the contents of paragraph 3 of the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document T/1947.

If members have no objection, I now call on the Secretary of the Council to answer the question posed by the representative of the Soviet Union.

Mr. DE SOUZA (Secretary of the Council) (interpretation from French): As you reminded us a moment ago, Madam President, at the 1678th meeting of the Council, on Thursday, 24 May 1990, the representative of the Soviet Union asked us to whom the documents of the Trusteeship Council were sent. He was referring in particular to the 33 recipients mentioned in paragraph 3 of the Secretary-General's report, contained in document T/1947. I should like to inform members of the Council that the 33 recipients in question are libraries, schools and political institutions throughout the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The distribution services of the Department of Conference Services sends the documents of the Council to them regularly and on a quasi-automatic basis.

However, throughout the year the Council secretariat also sends documents to non-governmental organizations, individuals and other recipients in the Territory or elsewhere in the world.

(Mr. De Souza)

During the Visiting Missions in 1989 and 1990, a few organizations and individuals, at public meetings and other meetings, expressed a desire to have the reports of the Visiting Missions and to receive Trusteeship Council documents in general. As happens in such cases, the accompanying Secretariat of the Mission took note of the requests and prepared an additional list of 40 additional recipients. This list included outstanding individuals, various organizations, reporters, Palau governmental authorities, members of the national parliament, and the Governors of the various States in Palau.

Thus, since 1989 the secretariat has sent reports and other Council documents to all of those who are on this new list. We are, of course in touch with the distribution service of the Organization, and we are trying to have this additional list made part of their list of recipients of Council documents. Therefore, starting in June of 1990, all those on this updated general list should be able to receive Council documents on a regular and quasi-automatic basis.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I note now that the representative of the Soviet Union has further comments to make. I now call on him.

Mr. BEREZOVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): I would like to express my particular gratification at the additional information which the secretariat of the Council has just provided to us. I consider this a fairly substantial development, if I may call it that, in the activities of the secretariat of the Trusteeship Council in this area of the dissemination of information on the work of the Council itself and on the work of the United Nations as a whole.

I think that the report of the Secretary-General, which is before us, on this question of dissemination of information in the Trust Territory, would benefit from having such information included in it. Therefore, perhaps in future this could be

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borne in mind and such updated information could be included. The present report mentions 33 recipients, but according to the information we have just been given, the correct figure is apparently 70 or more recipients.

We are pleased with the approach taken by the secretariat of the Trusteeship Council in respect of this important aspect of the activities of the Trusteeship Council.

Perhaps in passing I might note that, unfortunately, we did not receive such information from the representatives of the Department of Public Information; unfortunately, they were not able to provide us with information as to recipients of information made available by that Department. But no doubt, with proper efforts, such information could in principle be made available to the Trusteeship Council. As we see it, this approach of record-keeping and monitoring with respect to the fulfilment of their obligations would provide some discipline and help things along.

Once again, Madam President, I thank you and the Secretary of the Council.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I am sure that the Secretary of the Council has taken due note of the points made by the representative of the Soviet Union with a view to the future. I believe that it is good to recall that we should receive information and that the more detailed the information the better it is for us, because that would make the Trusteeship Council's meetings as useful as possible.

If there are no other speakers on this item, I suggest that we decide to take note of the report of the Secretary-General (T/1947) on the dissemination of information on the United Nations in trust territories and conclude our consideration of agenda item 8. If I hear no objection from any delegation, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

APPOINTMENT OF A DRAFTING COMMITTEE

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I believe that there is no other substantive item before the Council for consideration this morning. May I suggest some steps with a view to organizing our work efficiently in the course of this week.

The first suggestion relates to the establishment of the drafting committee for our report. As agreed in our informal consultations this morning, I would suggest that the Council should appoint a drafting committee whose terms of reference will be to prepare draft conclusions and recommendations for inclusion in the forthcoming report of the Trusteeship Council to the Security Council.

I would remind members that this is in keeping with the custom we have followed in the past. Therefore, I suggest that the drafting committee should consist of the representatives of the United Kingdom and France.

If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): In this connection, may I express the hope that the members of the Drafting Committee will be diligent in their work in preparing and circulating the draft text as soon as possible, so that all the delegations will have time to consider it and discuss it among themselves.

(The President)

In this connection, I would expect most of Thursday to be devoted to consultations between delegations, and therefore I trust that a first draft of the document will be available to delegations on Wednesday afternoon, about 6 p.m.

If there are no further comments on this, and if there is no objection, I suggest that we should not meet this afternoon. I believe that the various items still before us could be taken up after we hear the last petitioner tomorrow morning. So if all delegations accept my suggestion, we shall not meet this afternoon. Tomorrow morning we shall consider the report of the Secretary-General on credentials and take up the other substantive items still before us, including the hearing of the last petitioner, the examination of the annual report of the Administering Authority and the report of the Visiting Mission. I believe that is all, because items 7, 8, 9 and 10 have already been concluded.

If there are no further comments, we shall meet again tomorrow morning.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.