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SPECIAL POLITICAL AND  
DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE  
(FOURTH COMMITTEE)  
5th meeting  
held on  
Thursday, 10 October 1996  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's  
Democratic Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

Hearing of petitioners

Question of Western Sahara (continued) (A/C.4/51/5/Add.4-8; A/AC.109/2059)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Barazani took a place at the petitioners' table.

2. Mr. BARAZANI explained that, as an early member of the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), he had held many important positions, but after the uprisings of 1988 in the refugee camps, in which he had participated, he had broken away and been imprisoned. He stated that the Frente POLISARIO had failed to adapt to the new world situation and that its leaders had been born and raised in Morocco, not in the provinces then occupied by Spain. The International Court of Justice had clearly recognized the ties of allegiance between the tribes of Western Sahara and the sultans of Morocco, and the sovereignty of Morocco over the Saharan provinces.

3. The Frente POLISARIO was a totalitarian organization responsible for the death and torture of thousands of Saharans, purging all political opposition, even within its own ranks. Refugees had been brought to the camps in the Tindouf area and kept there by force, and they were subjected to a police regime and experiments in radical communism: collectivism and destruction of the family unit.

4. The Frente POLISARIO inflated the numbers of persons living in the camps in order to receive increased international aid, which was then diverted towards neighbouring countries: southern Algeria, northern Mauritania and Mali. Although it claimed that the Saharan population was 750,000 persons, it was demanding a referendum based on the Spanish census listing only 74,000 persons. That would deny many Saharan tribes the right to vote, yet many of the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO had not been included in the 1974 census either. In addition, there was a large Saharan population in Morocco.

5. The leadership of the Frente POLISARIO was in fact trying to avoid a referendum where all Saharans would participate, because they would vote to confirm their ties to Morocco and end the exile imposed by the Frente POLISARIO to serve its own interests. The speaker demanded that those persons kept prisoner in the Tindouf area should be freed and allowed to return to their country, Morocco, as so many of their fellow Saharans had already done.

6. Mr. Barazani withdrew.

7. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mrs. Ebbi took a place at the petitioners' table.

8. Mrs. EBBI said that she had been born in Western Sahara and had lived from 1975 to 1989 in the camps in the Tindouf area, where she had been President of the Organization of Saharan Women and a member of the Political Bureau of the Frente POLISARIO from 1985 to 1989. She had managed to escape from the camps, with great difficulty, in 1990. She wished to condemn the atrocities committed by an organization of criminals which had destroyed the values system of an established and peaceful society. The victims were the Saharan people, especially women, children and the elderly.

9. Women played an important role in the Frente POLISARIO's revolution and, although presented to the world as free and emancipated in order to obtain aid, they were exploited and enjoyed neither respect nor human rights; their children were the property of the organization from birth until the time they were sent away to war. Women in the camps in the Tindouf area were simple reproductive machines to provide soldiers for the war and were subject to detention and torture, the worst atrocities having been committed in October 1988 when the President of the Frente POLISARIO had ordered his armies to surround and occupy the camps and detain and torture the women. Their only crime had been to demand democracy, freedom and the release of those persons condemned to life imprisonment or even death, without a fair trial, often without having committed any offence.

10. No organization which claimed to defend the rights of women and children and the dignity of a people, should act in such an inhumane way. Enforced detention and restricting freedom of movement were attacks against basic human rights. Many Saharan women had been imprisoned for refusing to follow the organization's orders or for having had children illegally.

11. Her own experience in the camps had led her to denounce the tragedy which had befallen the Saharan people in the Tindouf area to international organizations, especially those concerned with refugees. She hoped that those organizations would help Saharans who wished to do so to leave the camps in Tindouf and decide their own destiny.

12. Mrs. Ebbi withdrew.

13. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Boida took a place at the petitioners' table.

14. Mr. BOIDA said that he had been in charge of the Frente POLISARIO's education department but, after becoming disillusioned by the Frente POLISARIO's repressive tactics, had been imprisoned and tortured for more than five years, without ever being charged or judged.

15. He had then been forced to work four years in a jail/school called "Twelfth of October", where some 1,700 students, separated from their families, were being indoctrinated to become fanatical soldiers. Between the ages of 14 to 16 the children were forced to go to other military schools, isolated from their families, with the expectation of having to die before ever having truly lived. The few students studying in other countries were tightly monitored by the Frente POLISARIO's political apparatus, which deprived them of their passports and their fellowships and provided them with a minimal daily allowance.

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Diplomas were collected by the representative of the Frente POLISARIO and the student was obliged to return to the Frente POLISARIO.

16. The leaders of the Frente POLISARIO were serving only their own interests, and he hoped that international public opinion would soon see through their machinations and that the suffering of the Saharans in the camps would come to an end.

17. Mr. Boida withdrew.

18. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bachir took a place at the petitioners' table.

19. Mr. BACHIR said that he had been a founding member of the Frente POLISARIO, in which he had held many important positions up until 1992. In his opinion, the Saharan question continued to exist because it provided the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO with a way of enriching themselves and of furthering their personal interests, which had nothing to do with the future of the Saharans.

20. For more than 20 years, in the Tindouf area in the Algerian desert, the Frente POLISARIO had kept some 20,000 Saharans detained in four camps in the hope of receiving humanitarian aid for them from European non-governmental organizations or other international organizations. The refugees were tortured, abused and exposed to the elements. Since the creation of the Saharan Red Crescent in 1976, the Frente POLISARIO, well-versed in influencing national and international organizations, had been diverting for its own purposes Western aid intended for the refugees. Those organizations had been duped, creating a climate of confusion in international public opinion, which considered the Frente POLISARIO to be the victim rather than the perpetrator of crimes against humanity, such as mass execution of dissidents and even ethnic cleansing of tribes that had offended its leaders.

21. The suffering of the refugees in the camps had been hidden from the international community. Foreign aid was systematically diverted, "lost" en route by the Red Crescent. That aid was then sold in bordering countries. Money for schools and hospitals was deposited in foreign accounts, leading the four refugee camps with only one small clinic. No outside organization had been able to carry out a census of the population in the camps, not even the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who nevertheless indicated every year the financial aid provided to that population, aid which he was not able to monitor. Because the High Commissioner had not yet identified the refugees in Tindouf, the Frente POLISARIO was able to inflate the number of refugees to between 165,000 and 700,000. The figure currently put out was 200,000 although there were fewer than 40,000 persons in the camps, of whom only some 20,000 were Saharan. The extra aid was diverted to the Army, the Ministry of Trade and to the personal projects of the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO.

22. Such was the cruel reality of the Frente POLISARIO, an enterprise that usurped the human rights of refugees detained against their will and sought only to maintain the status quo. It remained intransigent, preventing the repatriation of the Saharans in the Tindouf area, despite the best efforts of the Secretary-General.

23. Mr. Bachir withdrew.

24. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bahi took a place at the petitioners' table.

25. Mr. BAHI, a Moroccan journalist of Western Saharan stock, said that, like so many others, he had been imprisoned unjustly by the Frente POLISARIO enduring 10 years of isolation, malnutrition, suffering and torture before finally escaping. He had been an eyewitness to the torture and mistreatment inflicted by the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO on those forced into the camps, whose only crime was to demand the right to return to their homeland. Thousands of innocent persons had been the victims of such excesses, and hundreds had died or been crippled as a result of torture, mutilation and mistreatment, a fact admitted even by the leadership of the Frente POLISARIO. They were kept isolated in camps some 50 kilometres from Tindouf in inhuman conditions and denied basic care. The women and girls were the victims of insults, forced labour, violence, rape and abortions.

26. The false accusations made by the Frente POLISARIO against him were typical of the shameless lies it had told over the preceding 20 years, some of which had been confirmed by the tribal leaders, members of the MINURSO identification committee, who like thousands of other escapees had fled to Morocco.

27. He called on the Committee and the international community, in the name of humanity, to apply the relevant international instruments and conventions, put an end to the conditions in the camps and restore to the detainees their right of movement and their right to return to their homeland and families.

28. Mr. Bahi withdrew.

29. Mr. BAALI (Algeria) said that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had concluded from its consultations with the Saharan Red Crescent, that there were nearly 140,000 persons living in the refugee camps. That figure did not include the 8,000 Saharans studying abroad, the nomadic populations estimated at some 25,000 persons, or the Saharan army.

30. UNHCR had also found, following a mission to Algeria in June 1996, that the Saharan refugee camps were open and accessible. Its officials had been able to move around the camps without impediment, and refugees had answered their questions without hesitation or fear. Algerian and Saharan authorities had reiterated their full support for UNHCR, whose officials had been informed during informal contacts with the refugees that the latter wanted to repatriate within the context of an overall settlement, rather than as individuals in a spontaneous manner. With respect to the question of monitoring assistance programmes for Saharan refugees, the UNHCR mission had concluded from its observations, that assistance was indeed reaching the intended beneficiaries.

AGENDA ITEM 19: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/51/23 (Part V, chap. IX, Part VI, chap. X and Part VII, chap. X) and A/51/428; A/AC.109/2041 and Corr.1, 2043, 2044 and Add.1, 2045, 2046, 2047 and Add.1, 2050-2053, 2054 and Add.1, 2055-2057 and 2059; S/1996/43 and Corr.1, 343 and 674)

AGENDA ITEM 88: INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VIII) and A/51/316 and Add.1)

AGENDA ITEM 89: ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION (continued) (A/51/23 (Part III, chaps. V and VI))

AGENDA ITEM 90: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/51/23 (Part IV, chap. VII) and A/51/212; A/AC.109/L.1853; E/1996/85)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/51/3, chap. V, sect. A)

AGENDA ITEM 91: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (continued) (A/51/373)

31. Ms. KHAN-CUMMINGS (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that in 1996 there were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, mainly in the Caribbean and Pacific regions, at different levels of economic, political and social development. If the goals established in the plan of action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism by the year 2000 were to be attained, several issues must be addressed, including the strategies of the Special Committee on decolonization, the Committee's membership and its relationship with the administering Powers, and the role of regional and international governmental and non-governmental organizations in the decolonization process. The Special Committee had used the mechanism of regional seminars in the Caribbean and the Pacific to ensure interaction with representatives of the peoples, experts in the field and relevant regional and international organizations. Such interaction could serve to widen the discussions and the approaches needed to address the situation in the remaining Territories. However, the lack of attendance by elected territorial representatives in the seminars continued to limit further progress. The CARICOM countries were of the view that the visiting mission remained a valuable mechanism for evaluating the situation in a Territory. In view of the decline in the Special Committee's membership, and given the fact that the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was well past its mid-point, it might be worth exploring the possibility of filling the vacant seats.

32. A new compact was needed between the United Nations, the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the administering Powers. The CARICOM countries believed that

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the cooperation of all administering Powers was essential if the Committee was to effectively fulfil its mandate and the Decade's goals were to be achieved. In that regard they congratulated New Zealand for its exemplary performance as an administering Power in Tokelau. The role of regional organizations and United Nations agencies was also crucial in addressing the needs of Non-Self-Governing Territories, many of which were small islands. In that regard, the CARICOM countries wished to commend the continuing support given by the South Pacific Forum to the Territories in the Pacific and the role of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in several technical projects in the Caribbean. The CARICOM countries had recently pledged their continuing support to the Non-Self-Governing Territories in need of special assistance, in particular to the Government and people of Montserrat.

33. After commending the role being played by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Western Sahara, she expressed the CARICOM countries' concern about the deadlock in the identification process and urged all parties concerned to resume dialogue in order to enable that process to be completed, the United Nations settlement plan to be fully implemented and, ultimately, an acceptable referendum to be held.

34. The CARICOM countries were acutely aware of the particular constraints faced by small islands, especially their vulnerability to natural disasters. They had a special interest in the activities of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and shared the view that progress within that framework should be firmly linked with economic and social development and environmental protection.

35. Mr. SAMADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Special Committee on decolonization remained of utmost importance as long as the right to self-determination was denied to the peoples of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. The lack of progress in those Territories was a direct consequence of the reluctance of the administering Powers to fulfil their duties under the Charter and to cooperate with the Special Committee. The Special Committee had shown flexibility by adopting innovative approaches in recent years. However, some administering Powers refused to participate in its meetings and to allow it to send visiting missions to the Territories. In his delegation's view, a United Nations visiting mission was the best means of assessing the situation in a Non-Self-Governing Territory and ascertaining the wishes of its people. It was regrettable that the United Nations Secretariat no longer paid adequate attention to the issue of decolonization and that press releases giving details of the Special Committee's meetings were no longer issued.

36. Mr. ODHIAMBO (Kenya) said he was concerned that, three and a half decades after the adoption of the Declaration, the United Nations still had a list of 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. He urged all the administering Powers to cooperate with the Special Committee. In his view, the inadequacy of political, economic, social and educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying the right to self-determination and independence. In that regard, he praised the Government of New Zealand for its commitment to assist the people of Tokelau to attain a greater degree of self-government and economic self-sufficiency in preparation for their future status.

37. It was disappointing that the parties to the conflict in Western Sahara had not made more progress towards the fulfilment of the settlement plan for the holding of a free, fair and impartial referendum. The lack of political will and flexibility had resulted in the suspension of the identification process and the reduction in the strength of the military component of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). He urged the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to engage in high-level negotiations for the resumption of the identification process. His delegation remained confident that the United Nations, in collaboration with the Organization of African Unity, would soon break the deadlock preventing implementation of the settlement plan and thereby avert a regional crisis of unpredictable proportions.

38. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan) said that decolonization had brought freedom to hundreds of millions of people in what was a striking accomplishment of the United Nations. New forms of colonialism were replacing the old, however, and it was important to bear in mind that the right to self-determination was fundamental for all peoples. Some peoples, unfortunately, were still being denied that right, including the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who had suffered under a harsh occupation for nearly 50 years, despite various Security Council resolutions recognizing their right to self-determination. The claim that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India was false; in fact it was a victim of Indian colonialism. India had emerged as the greatest colonizer State in the world, forcibly annexing areas, trying to convert neighbouring regions into protectorates and sponsoring terrorism. Pakistan, for its part, was firmly committed to the goal of a world free of colonialism, which he was confident would be achieved by the dawn of the twenty-first century.

39. Mr. DE MATOS (Cape Verde) said that international political conditions were currently favourable to the peaceful resolution of conflicts. In Western Sahara, for example, implementation of the United Nations settlement plan, featuring as it did an impartial, free and fair referendum, was the best way out of the current dangerous impasse. Cape Verde wished to encourage the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to pursue their dialogue in that connection.

40. Mr. SNOUSSI (Morocco) expressed his delegation's appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to restart the stalled settlement plan for Western Sahara. Morocco had worked indefatigably for the implementation of the plan. The key to the plan was a referendum in which all Saharans who had been duly identified by the Identification Commission could participate. The current impasse had resulted from the Frente POLISARIO's opposition to the identification of Saharans living outside the Territory. Yet they were undoubtedly Saharans, who had left for political, economic or other reasons.

41. The proposed solution put forward in the Secretary-General's report of 24 November 1995 (S/1995/986) had been opposed by the other side. It was regrettable that the Security Council, which might have adopted the proposal, had yielded to pressure from the Frente POLISARIO and its supporters. The only result had been to prolong the suffering of the Saharans being held in the camps near Tindouf, who for the most part were not refugees and had the right to return home, a right guaranteed by the Charter yet one which was denied them. It was not Morocco that was exerting improper pressure, as numerous journalists

and the members of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) could testify. Morocco hoped to see the settlement plan implemented, so that all Saharans could return and participate in the development of Morocco and the entire Arab Maghreb.

42. Mr. AL ZAYANI (Bahrain) paid tribute to the accomplishments of the United Nations in building a world free of colonialism. Its years of unremitting effort on the part of the world body had been crowned with success: most countries were now independent and had taken their rightful places in the international community of States, having shaken off their colonial status and the impediment to social, cultural and economic development which that status represented. It was to be hoped that any residual pockets of colonialism, along with racial discrimination and foreign domination, would shortly be eradicated.

43. Mr. BANDORA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the United Nations had done a remarkable job in overseeing the process of decolonization, yet many peoples had still not been able to exercise their right to self-determination. The Special Committee's role continued to be vital, and it was unfortunate that the administering Powers (with the happy exception of New Zealand) had failed to cooperate with the Committee. The question of Western Sahara was a source of concern. It was regrettable that the Security Council had taken the easy option of gradually abandoning Western Sahara because of the difficulties involved. The Frente POLISARIO and Morocco should be encouraged to work together to organize a referendum under the settlement plan, which was the internationally acceptable framework for the self-determination of the Saharan people.

44. Mr. BYAMUGISHA (Uganda) said that Uganda wholeheartedly supported the just struggle of all colonized people to freely and democratically determine their own future. For most countries, including Uganda, the United Nations had been the principal forum through which they had informed the world about their plight; it remained equally relevant to those still struggling against colonialism. As a former colony, Uganda appreciated the value of self-determination and freedom and knew very well that no amount of brute force could ever crush the will of a people struggling against injustice, oppression and foreign domination.

45. His delegation was deeply concerned about the impasse in the implementation of the settlement plan for Western Sahara and the suspension of the identification process. It appealed to both parties to engage in high-level direct talks to break the deadlock and urged the United Nations and the international community to stand by the Saharan people in their hour of need. Unless the deadlock was broken, the entire subregion could be plunged into unprecedented instability. Africa had had more than its fair share of conflicts. In Uganda, which had witnessed some of the most vicious conflicts, the policy of dialogue and national reconciliation had broken the cycle of violence and self-destruction. Through such a policy, a just, peaceful and lasting political solution could be found to the problem of Western Sahara.

46. Mr. STANISLAUS (Grenada) said that his Government urged Morocco and the Saharan people to resume direct talks to permit the holding of a free, fair and impartial referendum in accordance with the settlement plan. The principles of the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination and independence must

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be applied. The purposes and principles of the Charter had been reaffirmed by many heads of State and Government during the commemorative session of the fiftieth anniversary. The parties must sail with the wind of change that was blowing in their direction.

47. Mr. CHEKENYERE (Zimbabwe) said that Zimbabwe attached great importance to the role played by the United Nations in promoting the exercise by the peoples of colonial Territories of their right to self-determination and independence. It therefore urged the administering Powers to cooperate with and participate in the Special Committee's work so that it would be possible to achieve the objective of eradicating colonialism by the year 2000.

48. Recent actions by the Security Council to reduce the military component of MINURSO, despite the fact that the settlement plan for Western Sahara had not been implemented, suggested that the plight of the Saharan people might not be a priority of the Council. Innovative ways must be found to break the deadlock with regard to the identification process, which must not be held hostage by those who were bent on altering the criteria based on the Spanish census of 1974. The settlement plan remained the best option for pursuing a long-lasting solution in the interests of both parties. His delegation urged the parties to engage in direct dialogue in order to resolve all outstanding issues and give the long-suffering people of Western Sahara the opportunity to exercise their democratic right to determine their destiny through a referendum as stipulated in the settlement plan.

49. Mr. CAMACHO-OMISTE (Bolivia), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group of countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica (representing Central America), Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela), said that, in order to complete its mandate, the Special Committee needed the active participation and cooperation of the administering Powers. The exemplary cooperation of New Zealand with the Special Committee had made it possible to achieve progress in the self-determination of the peoples of the Territories currently or formerly under its administration.

50. The Rio Group welcomed all measures designed to provide the Non-Self-Governing Territories with the necessary means for the establishment of a solid and adequate economic base and for the preservation and protection of their environment and culture. At the same time, the Non-Self-Governing Territories and adjacent areas must be free from the deployment and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The continuing presence of military bases and installations in certain Territories ran counter to the efforts for peace and could be an obstacle to the implementation of the principles laid down in the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on decolonization.

51. The Rio Group supported the settlement plan for Western Sahara and called on the parties involved to hold direct talks in order to cooperate with the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative and promote the holding of a just and impartial referendum to enable the people of the Territory to exercise fully their right of self-determination.

52. The Rio Group hoped that the positive evolution of bilateral relations between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom would make it possible to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the question of sovereignty over the Malvinas islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on decolonization.

53. Mr. FELICIO (Brazil) said that his delegation fully endorsed the statement made on behalf of the Rio Group. With only three years remaining in the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the United Nations must reaffirm its commitment to granting all those still living under any form of colonial rule the opportunity to exercise their right of self-determination. The pivotal role of the United Nations in the area of decolonization had been widely recognized. In that connection, the letter from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee concerning the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 (A/C.4/51/2) contained no reference to decolonization. His delegation believed that sufficient resources must be allocated in the budget to every mandate established by the General Assembly, and it was prepared to consider proposals for a prompt reply to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee.

54. The concept of decolonization was broad, but its application was complex, since each particular case was different. Ad hoc solutions must be devised, always bearing in mind the principles enshrined in the Charter and in relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. A comprehensive approach should include the expansion of the political and economic bases of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in order to prepare them to exercise their right to self-determination fully and freely.

55. Where Western Sahara was concerned, his delegation called upon the parties involved to work with the Secretary-General in a genuine spirit of cooperation so that the settlement plan could finally be implemented. The maintenance of the ceasefire was an undeniable achievement; the necessary political will must be shown to achieve a just and lasting solution, in the best interests of the people of Western Sahara.

56. His delegation appreciated the efforts being made by the Secretary-General in striving for a fair and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor in conformity with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. It placed great hopes in the continuing talks between Portugal and Indonesia and in the all-inclusive intra-East Timorese dialogue.

57. The declaration recently issued by the Presidents of the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR) countries, Bolivia and Chile at their Tenth Meeting had reaffirmed support for the legitimate rights of Argentina in the dispute over sovereignty of the Malvinas islands and had reiterated the hemispheric interest in a prompt solution in accordance with United Nations and Organization of American States resolutions.

58. Mr. MASSAMBY (Mozambique) said that the slow pace of negotiations between the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO was disappointing. The withdrawal of the Identification Commission underlined the need for tolerance and mutual accommodation as a prerogative for the final settlement of the issue.

Taking into account the Bolivian experience, his delegation believed that the establishment of peace was facilitated mainly through political will. It was necessary to accommodate the differences between the parties, in the interests of the well-being of their peoples. His delegation encouraged the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to cooperate with a view to achieving a definitive solution which should be acceptable to the parties concerned and to the international community as a whole. Mozambique subscribed to the principle of self-determination of all peoples and supported all initiatives conducted by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity concerning Western Sahara. In that context, and in accordance with Security Council resolution 1056 (1996), it encouraged the two parties to demonstrate the political will, cooperation and flexibility necessary to permit the resumption and early completion of the identification process and the implementation of the settlement plan.

59. Mr. ARKWRIGHT (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, in their statements, the representative of Bolivia, speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, and the representative of Brazil had referred to the sovereignty dispute over the Falkland, South Georgia and South Sandwich islands. His Government's position was well known, and had been set out most recently in his delegation's right of reply to the statement made by the Argentine Minister for Foreign Affairs in the plenary Assembly.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.