



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 19th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. OULD SIDI AHMED VALL (Mauritania)

later: Mr. JAMAL (Qatar)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

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Hearing of a petitioner

1. The CHAIRMAN said that he wished to give a second hearing to a petitioner who had already addressed the Committee regarding the question of Western Sahara at its 15th meeting, since he had further information to give the Committee.

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Mokhtar (Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO)) took a place at the petitioners' table.

3. Mr. MOKHTAR (Frente POLISARIO) said that he wished to clarify certain basic issues that had arisen in the debate on Western Sahara. The question was, he reiterated, essentially a problem of decolonization covered by General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). United Nations resolutions in support of independence for Western Sahara, the latest being General Assembly resolution 35/19, were making a substantial contribution to the decolonization of the Territory and hence to the restoration of justice in the region.

4. The concern of the international community was shared by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), whose decisions complemented those of the General Assembly. It was essential for both the United Nations and OAU to continue to act on the question. The Government of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic categorically repudiated any attempt to impede substantive action by the United Nations since such an attempt would necessarily impede the decolonization of the Territory.

5. Negotiations between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco were the means to peace. Both OAU and the United Nations had been very clear on the necessity for negotiations between the two parties to achieve a cease-fire agreement. Until such an agreement was reached, his people had no choice but to continue to fight in self-defence against Moroccan aggression.

6. Mr. Mokhtar withdrew.

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General debate (continued)

7. Mr. OULD HAMODY (Mauritania) said that his country's consistent position since its military disengagement in 1978 from the conflict in Western Sahara had been to maintain absolute neutrality towards its Moroccan and Saharan brothers, while supporting the inalienable right of the Saharan people to self-determination. The President of Mauritania had reiterated that position at the eighteenth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU, held in Nairobi in June 1981, and had renewed Mauritania's commitment to work for peace in the region.

8. Thanks to the immense psychological and geopolitical breakthrough represented by Mauritania's initiative for peace in 1978, the OAU Ad Hoc Committee of Heads of State on Western Sahara had been able to begin its efforts to solve the conflict. Mauritania had subsequently continued to make moves and suggestions to hasten the process. At the meeting in August 1981 of the OAU Implementation Committee on Western Sahara, the Mauritanian President had outlined the two conditions for a realistic approach: only direct contact between the two warring parties could bring about a lasting cease-fire; and the referendum of the Saharan people had to be organized in a climate free from any administrative or military restraints.

9. The two parties concerned had reacted responsibly to African appeals for a solution. The decision of the OAU Implementation Committee on Western Sahara, in particular, called for a general and free referendum in the Territory which it would conduct in collaboration with the United Nations, and for a cease-fire to be established through negotiations under its auspices. In that decision and the unanimous decisions of its eighteenth ordinary session, OAU had assumed its full responsibility for solving the conflict but at the same time had made it clear that it shared that responsibility with the United Nations.

10. It now remained for the United Nations to reaffirm unequivocally the principles enunciated by OAU, which were perfectly consonant with all relevant United Nations resolutions. The Security Council should also make appropriate recommendations for implementing the decision of the OAU Implementation Committee. The requisite conditions for a peaceful solution were contained in draft resolution A/C.4/36/L.3, and Mauritania therefore intended to support it.

11. Peace in the Maghreb, that larger community composed of Moroccans, Saharans, Algerians and Mauritians, could only be the result of political courage, a sincere will to compromise and the triumph of realism. That peace would be the corner-stone upon which to build genuine fraternal co-operation, after six years of destructive hatred, in a unified Maghreb.

12. Mr. SIDDIQUI (Pakistan) said that despite the progress in decolonization the situation remained far from satisfactory. In southern Africa, the Pretoria régime continued to pursue its cruel and inhumane policies of racism and minority rule, denying the fundamental rights of the people of South Africa and Namibia. The time had come for the world community to take firm action to ensure Pretoria's compliance with United Nations resolutions. The Security Council should proceed to impose comprehensive mandatory sanctions against South Africa under Article VII of the

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(Mr. Siddiqui, Pakistan)

Charter. Failure to do so would only prolong the agony of the people of Namibia, struggling for independence under the leadership of SWAPO. Pakistan stood in complete solidarity with them and wished them success.

13. The principal agencies of the United Nations system could and must make substantive contributions to eliminating colonialism by providing assistance and support to struggling peoples and by refraining from co-operation with colonial Powers. The International Monetary Fund, in particular, must expand its assistance, which had so far not been adequate, to the people of colonial Territories and refrain from assisting the South African régime.

14. With the aim of providing economic, technical and educational assistance to colonial peoples, Pakistan had co-sponsored draft resolution A/C.4/36/L.5 on the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa, and had increased its own scholarships to students from colonial Territories for professional training in Pakistan.

15. Unfortunately, certain Powers were still reluctant to restrain transnational corporations based in their countries from shamelessly plundering colonial Territories and exploiting colonial peoples. Their reluctance belied their avowed adherence to the goals of independence and self-determination for subjugated peoples.

16. Pakistan's unequivocal commitment to the principle of self-determination had been a fundamental element of its foreign policy. The people of Pakistan, who themselves had had to make great sacrifices to achieve their own independence, would not relent in their support for the just struggle of the people in colonial Territories against foreign domination, racism and imperialism.

17. Mrs. MHINA (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on agenda item 96, said that the Committee should not lose sight of the basic problem that had led to the establishment of the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa. One of the most effective methods devised by the racists of South Africa to perpetuate apartheid so as to keep the non-white population of the country in a state of permanent bondage was to limit its educational opportunities, thereby to keep it unqualified for all but low-paid employment and at the same time undermining the fierce liberation struggle, in the course of which so many had been forced to become refugees. It was for those refugees that the Programme had been established.

18. Her country, which had followed the activities of the Programme very closely and had participated constructively in its work, was pleased to note from the Secretary-General's report (A/36/147) that it had been a great success and had been able to train many students who were now playing an important role in a number of independent African countries. Because of that success, her country had favoured voluntary funding for it and was grateful to those who had contributed so generously.

(Mrs. Mhina, United Republic of Tanzania)

19. Unfortunately, the intensification of the liberation struggle in southern Africa had increased the number of refugees so that the demand for education and for scholarships had outstripped the financial resources available to the Programme. Some countries had stopped contributing to the Trust Fund or had not honoured their pledges, just when scholarship costs had soared and inflation had impeded the operation of the Programme. The Programme was therefore unable to honour some of its commitments, thereby creating a serious situation which required urgent attention. The Advisory Committee on the Programme, after a careful evaluation of the matter, had appealed to Member States to increase their contributions and had adopted a number of administrative and financial guidelines. It was now up to the Secretariat to implement those measures if the Programme was to continue to be successful.

20. She wished, however, to stress certain measures which her delegation was convinced would be very beneficial. The Programme should henceforth use all scholarships offered by Member States and, without lowering educational standards, should place students wherever possible in low-cost countries. In view of the limited funds, priority should be given to first degrees or diplomas rather than post-graduate studies. The Programme should also work as closely as possible with other United Nations bodies and with OAU, which played an extremely important role in helping students. Finally, it was extremely important that scholarships should be given only to genuine refugees. Her delegation would co-operate with the Advisory Committee in order to facilitate the work of the Secretary-General in that regard.

21. Mr. SHERMAN (United States of America) said that his delegation deeply regretted the distorted, polemical and misleading statements which had been made in the Committee to denigrate his country's proud record as the administering Power in Guam and the United States Virgin Islands. The United States not only was true to its obligations under Chapters XI, XII and XIII of the Charter but was a firm and consistent champion of self-determination and had therefore pursued policies designed to promote the orderly political, economic and social development of those Territories. Only those familiar with free and fair popular elections and plebiscites would understand that self-determination meant that a people could choose its political status and leaders in free and popular elections and under institutions allowing for mutually beneficial relationships.

22. He wished to set the record straight with respect to specific charges. One representative had claimed that United States military bases in the Turks and Caicos Islands and in Bermuda constituted an attempt to prevent the peoples concerned from exercising their inalienable right of self-determination. The facts were that in the Turks and Caicos Islands, the United States, by mutual agreement with the host Government, operated an air force base and telemetry station with a complement of just one air force officer. The facility was operated primarily by civilian personnel, was regarded by local leaders as a source of employment and revenue, and had never been subject to criticism. In Bermuda, the United States maintained two small naval air stations on approximately 10 hectares of land leased from the Government of Bermuda and made a major annual contribution to the local economy in the form of payments for services, jobs for local civilian employees and improvements in the local airfield, which was also used for commercial flights.

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(Mr. Sherman, United States)

23. None of those facilities threatened the host Governments or the peoples concerned, nor did they jeopardize their rights. They were not extraterritorial. All sovereign rights over them were in the hands of the local Governments and the use of the land on which they were located was determined entirely by agreement between the Governments concerned. Such facilities did not impede self-determination. They contributed to mutual security.

24. With regard to Guam, he noted that the Special Committee of 24 had consistently ignored the fact that the freely elected leaders of that island had clearly stated their desire for additional home-porting of United States navy vessels. That same Committee had also studied the status of military installations in the United States Virgin Islands and could find nothing more than one minor facility, an underwater radar calibration station, hardly a worth-while target for criticism.

25. Several delegations had also made unfounded charges regarding United States relationships with Puerto Rico and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and although it was clear that neither fell within the Committee's mandate, his delegation wished to set the record straight. Puerto Rico's status as a self-governing commonwealth had been recognized by the General Assembly more than 28 years previously and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, which fell within the mandate of the Trusteeship Council rather than the Fourth Committee, was in the process of determining its own future through free and fair political processes.

26. Only the peoples of dependent Territories themselves had the right to choose whether their self-determination would take the form of self-government, independence or some other form of association. Politically motivated statements, efforts to exceed the Committee's proper mandate and immoderate action and language could only divert the Committee from its serious task.

27. Mr. Jamal (Qatar) took the Chair.

28. Mr. BEDJAOU (Algeria) said that the United Nations had every right to be proud of the rapid pace of decolonization since the adoption of the Declaration, but the vestiges of colonialism were still being combatted by oppressed peoples, particularly the people of Western Sahara. The true cause of the conflict in Western Sahara was Morocco's refusal to grant the legitimate right of self-determination to the people concerned, under the direction of the Frente POLISARIO, their only true representative. The history of the conflict was less important than finding a just solution in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and that of OAU.

29. He commended OAU for its continuing efforts to find a solution. As indicated in document A/36/602, annex I, the OAU Implementation Committee on Western Sahara had decided to conduct a general and free referendum in the Territory and to set up an interim administration there. It had also urged the parties in conflict to agree on a cease-fire.

(Mr. Bedjaoui, Algeria)

30. Unfortunately, the proposed settlement had been frustrated by an absence of political will, failure to meet commitments, ambiguous statements and unilateral interpretations. To propose a referendum organized by the occupying Power made a mockery of popular consultation and was an offence to the honour of Africa. Recent clashes in the area between Moroccan troops and Saharan forces merely confirmed the need for a cease-fire between the two belligerents, namely, Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO. It was the duty of the international community to help the Implementation Committee bring the two belligerents together to negotiate. Any other course would be tantamount to sabotaging the promising efforts of OAU. The recent attempts to cloud the issue by placing it within the context of the East-West conflict had to be seen in that light.

31. The conflict in Western Sahara threatened all the countries of the region with ultimate involvement in a larger one involving interests contrary to their own. There was no alternative but negotiation of a cease-fire between the two parties. United Nations efforts to solve the conflict would be useful only if they could guarantee the people of Western Sahara their right to self-determination and if the United Nations collaborated with OAU in organizing and conducting the referendum.

32. Mr. HERMIDA (Nicaragua) said that he took particular pleasure in welcoming as Members of the Organization the new State of Vanuatu and the fellow Central American nation of Belize, which had come to independence in a region convulsed by genocidal threats and interventions whose increasing openness was countered by the irreversible historical will of the Central American people towards victory over those who would keep them in misery.

33. His delegation, as in the past, underscored the supreme responsibility of the United Nations for decolonization. The inalienable right of peoples to free themselves from colonialism and to decide their own future superseded any other supposed prerogative claimed by the colonialists. Nicaragua expressed its solidarity with the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic and the sole legitimate representative of the Saharan people, the Frente POLISARIO, and with that people's inalienable right to self-determination and independence in accordance with the United Nations Charter and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). It welcomed the efforts of OAU to promote a just solution to the conflict in Western Sahara, and endorsed the OAU recommendations on the problem. For there to be peace in the region, Morocco would have to withdraw from the areas it had occupied illegally. As more and more countries recognized the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic, the Saharan people would come closer to achieving their historical objectives.

34. Nicaragua reiterated its support for the people of South Africa, its solidarity with the people of Namibia and their sole legitimate representative, the South West Africa People's Organization, as well as its support for the people of Palestine, Puerto Rico and East Timor.

35. It congratulated the Special Committee of 24 on its excellent work and its enormous contribution to peace in those regions where colonial enclaves subsisted and colonialist forces sought to hold back the march towards freedom, justice and human dignity.

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(Mr. Hermida, Nicaragua)

36. With regard to East Timor, his delegation hoped that Indonesia would comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions in the search for a just solution.

37. On the question of Puerto Rico, his delegation considered that General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) should be fully implemented and that the inalienable right of the people to independence and self-determination should take precedence over any interest which the colonial Power might have. In that connexion, his delegation welcomed the Special Committee's recommendation that the General Assembly should consider the question of Puerto Rico as a separate item on the agenda of its thirty-seventh session and that the United States should be asked to co-operate in sending a fact-finding mission to the Territory. That decision had been supported by the recent Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegations of the Non-Aligned Countries (A/36/566, annex).

38. Mr. MRANI ZENTAR (Morocco) said that the current session of the General Assembly would be the last at which the question of Western Sahara was considered, if the Moroccan initiative for the organization of a self-determination referendum in the Territory, together with the decisions recently adopted by OAU and by its Implementation Committee on Western Sahara, were successful in establishing real co-operation among all the States of the region. The decolonization of Western Sahara and its return to its mother country had required more than a quarter century of action by Morocco because of the procrastination of the colonial Power. Once decolonization had been achieved, neighbouring countries had shown their unrestrained dissatisfaction, which had led to a state of artificial tension accompanied by covert activity that had risked developing into direct confrontation.

39. The position of Morocco in regard to Western Sahara had been sustained by the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice which, on 16 October 1975, had recognized the existence of permanent ties of allegiance binding the population and the Moroccan sovereign. The full participation of the population in national life had been demonstrated in general and local elections which had taken place on three occasions over a period of five years.

40. In taking the initiative for the organization of a self-determination referendum in a Moroccan territory, Morocco wished to leave no doubt regarding its conviction as to the legitimacy of its rights and the validity of the process which had already been completed in the Sahara in conformity with the international rules on decolonization recognized by the United Nations. Morocco had been prompted by certain strong, African concerns. It wished to shield OAU from the consequences of a dispute which had on several occasions threatened disunity. It had also wished to meet the wishes of a number of friendly countries that shared its desire to avoid conflict and to resume fraternal co-operation in the region, which would benefit the peoples of the region and Africa as a whole.

41. Following the Moroccan initiative, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU had decided to establish an Implementation Committee on Western Sahara. As indicated in document A/36/602, annex I, that Committee had decided that it would itself organize and conduct the referendum in collaboration with the

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(Mr. Mrani Zentar, Morocco)

United Nations. To that end the current Chairman of OAU was to consult the United Nations in order to determine the latter's involvement in the implementation of the decision, including its financing. Thus, OAU and its Implementation Committee had established a plan of action which was consistent with United Nations rules and modalities. The Implementation Committee had been given wide authority to fulfil its mandate without unnecessary delay or external interference.

42. It was clear from the action taken by OAU that that organization had decided to use the right conferred upon it under the United Nations Charter, particularly Article 33, to assume its full responsibilities as a regional organization and subsequently to request the United Nations for such assistance and support as it might require. The second conclusion to be drawn was that Africa no longer needed any further United Nations resolutions dealing with the substance of the problem.

43. Against that background, piecemeal efforts made outside the framework of the African consensus would undermine the authority of the African Heads of State, the credibility of OAU and the prestige of Africa as a whole. Revival of the issue in a United Nations document could only threaten the results already achieved. An attempt to amend draft resolution A/C.4/36/L.2 by introducing changes in the mandate of the Implementation Committee which were clearly unacceptable to Morocco could only imply a lack of desire for an immediate cease-fire and an effort to obstruct the work of the Implementation Committee.

44. He therefore appealed to all members of the Committee, particularly States members of OAU, to support the efforts of OAU, its Chairman and Implementation Committee in implementing the decisions they had taken. For its part, Morocco, fully confident of the justice of its cause, would spare no effort to aid the Implementation Committee in its task.

45. Mr. LESTER (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that a number of speakers had referred to the existence of military facilities in one or two British dependent Territories. Frequent mention had been made of the facility on Grand Turk in the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Special Committee of 24 and the Fourth Committee were fully aware of the size of the facility in question, of the fact that there was precisely one foreign serviceman stationed there, and of the efforts made by the territorial Government, not the administering authority, to retain that facility on Grand Turk. It was there only because of the previously expressed desire of both leading political parties to benefit from the economic and social advantages it brought. It had been demonstrated beyond all possible doubt in the reports of visiting missions to the Turks and Caicos Islands, in working papers of the Secretariat on the Territory and in the Special Committee of 24, that the only obstacle to independence was the will of the people themselves.

46. In British dependent Territories, the Government and people must themselves decide that they wished to be independent and, once they had decided that that was the best course for them and had so informed the United Kingdom Government, it was an easy process for the necessary constitutional changes to be carried out. The pattern of events in the 42 British Territories which had achieved independence had

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(Mr. Lester, United Kingdom)

been markedly similar in that respect and the same considerations would apply in the cases of those dependent Territories which remained. Suggestions that those peoples were being subjected to colonial domination only for military purposes, or that they were innocent victims of some sort of military build-up which was obstructing their own self-determination, were patently ridiculous and were insulting to the peoples concerned.

47. Mr. LOZINSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he had noted with satisfaction that the representative of the United States had referred to the provision of the Charter which stipulated that all functions of the United Nations relating to strategic areas under trusteeship should be exercised by the Security Council with the assistance of the Trusteeship Council. He had noted the willingness of the United States to discuss that problem in those bodies.

48. However, nowhere in the Charter was there a provision which would preclude the General Assembly from discussing such a problem and taking a position on it. The Special Committee of 24 had repeatedly stated that the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was also applicable to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. During the current session of the General Assembly, the General Committee had decided to include in the agenda of the Fourth Committee the report of the Special Committee, chapter XVIII of which dealt with, inter alia, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. His delegation could not agree that the Fourth Committee had no right to discuss a document which had been included in its agenda.

49. In regard to the issue of military installations in certain Territories, particularly small islands, he invited the attention of the Committee to the case of Diego García in the Indian Ocean. When the United Kingdom had handed over the island to the United States, the latter had developed major airfields with the capacity to receive military aircraft and planned further large military installations. In view of that development, any question involving the installation of military bases in colonial Territories required study. The peoples of colonial Territories benefited from the development of independent economies and not through the installation of military bases.

50. The CHAIRMAN announced that Bangladesh had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.4/36/L.5, on the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa, and that Nicaragua had become a sponsor of the amendments in document A/C.4/36/L.6 to draft resolution A/C.4/36/L.2, on Western Sahara.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.