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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 2nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 7 October 2019, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq)
later: Ms. Bacher (Vice-Chair) (Austria)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Statement by the Chair

1. **The Chair** said that the Committee considered a wide range of topics. Despite its notable progress in implementing the Declaration on decolonization, which clearly stated that the subjection of peoples to foreign domination and exploitation constituted a denial of fundamental human rights, there remained 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. As the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism drew to a close, the Committee should intensify its efforts to fulfil its decolonization mandate before it came time to declare a fourth or fifth international decade. Administering Powers should, for their part, continue to cooperate with the Committee to facilitate the dispatch of visiting missions and the work of United Nations specialized agencies and other international entities, as such cooperation contributed to improving the political and socioeconomic conditions of the inhabitants of the Territories.

2. Hailing the supreme sacrifice made by peacekeepers, he noted with concern the rise in casualties in their ranks and called for strengthened international cooperation to stem the tide of growing instability worldwide, particularly when transitioning from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

3. The financial shortfall of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) stood at \$120 million for 2019, imperilling the lives of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. Against that backdrop, Member States must push for the Agency's survival and highlight its vital importance to Palestine refugees.

4. The militarization of outer space had a corrosive impact and placed the future of humankind at risk. It was incumbent upon Member States to affirm that international law and the Charter of the United Nations were authoritative in defining international responsibility for harm caused by space objects. In closing, he called on delegations to sponsor the draft resolution on assistance in mine action.

Statement by the President of the General Assembly on the work of the Committee

5. **Mr. Muhammad Bande** (Nigeria), President of the General Assembly, said that in order to achieve consensus on the wide range of issues on its agenda, the Committee must work diligently and in good faith. Decolonization was one of the pending issues at the core of the Charter of the United Nations. While much

progress had been made regarding the right to self-determination, 17 cases still required attention.

6. UNRWA required predictable and sustained funding to ensure stability and security for Palestine refugees. Despite contributions by donor countries and organizations, the Agency's fragile financial situation remained a matter of concern and he therefore called on Member States to continue supporting its vital work.

7. Ensuring the preservation of outer space for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of humankind, without discrimination, was a shared responsibility. The main focus should be on finding ways to reap the benefits of science and technology to invest in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Space-based services and technologies should also help to address key issues relating to the Sustainable Development Goals, such as climate change and natural disasters.

8. Peacekeeping missions must have realistic and achievable mandates and adequate funding to allow them to fulfil their responsibilities on the ground. The Action for Peacekeeping initiative set a clear road map for all stakeholders to renew their collective engagement. Exploring all feasible ways of making the work of the missions more effective was one way to honour the many peacekeepers who had been killed in action.

9. Following consultations earlier that year, Member States had reached agreement on a new report structure and programme of work for the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. During its next session, careful review of proposals must take place in order to enable progress and enhance the capacity of the United Nations in that domain. Furthermore, with regard to special political missions, the role of the Organization in the peaceful settlement of disputes to maintain international peace and security must be improved, including through mediation, conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

10. As the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations drew closer, recommitting to the ideals of its founders was crucial. The Organization should be defined by its actions; by striving together, the objective of delivering for all could be achieved.

The meeting was suspended at 3.20 p.m. and resumed at 3.25 p.m.

Agenda item 55: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (A/74/23 (chaps. V and XIII) and A/74/63)

Agenda item 56: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/74/23 (chaps. VI and XIII))

Agenda item 57: 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 (A/74/23 (chaps. VII and XIII) and A/74/80)

Agenda item 58: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/74/65 and A/74/65/Add.1)

Agenda item 59: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (A/74/23 (chaps. VIII, IX, X, XI, XII and XIII), A/74/80 and A/74/341)

11. **The Chair** said that the decolonization agenda was one of the most important achievements of the United Nations and remained a priority. The Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Special Committee on decolonization) had played a crucial role in upholding the principle of self-determination, which was enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and had continued its tireless efforts to advance the decolonization process in accordance with its mandate. However, its work was not yet complete and 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remained on the United Nations list. As the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism came to an end, he urged all Member States to redouble their efforts to achieve progress in the area of decolonization.

12. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur of the Special Committee on decolonization, introducing the report of the Special Committee on its work in 2019 (A/74/23), said that chapter I provided a general account of the Special Committee's activities during its 2019 session and its plans for future work. Chapters II to XII focused on specific themes and on the individual situations in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, while chapter XIII contained the Special Committee's recommendations to the General Assembly

in the form of draft resolutions. The list of documents of the Special Committee in 2019 could be found in annex I and the report of the 2019 Caribbean regional seminar could be found in annex II.

13. In 2019, the Special Committee had continued to fulfil its mandate and consider developments in the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories and Puerto Rico, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions. There had been a high number of participants from the Territories and members of the Special Committee at the Caribbean regional seminar held in Grand Anse, Grenada, in May 2019. At its June session, all resolutions and decisions had been adopted by consensus.

14. **Ms. McGuire** (Grenada), speaking as the Chair of the Special Committee on decolonization, said that the Special Committee continued to monitor the implementation of the Declaration on decolonization. It had conducted various activities during its 2019 session and had engaged with 12 of the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. The annual regional seminar, held in Grenada, had been attended by an unprecedented number of Special Committee members.

15. In June the Special Committee had decided to change its working methods to ensure that the voices of the Territories were heard before the adoption of draft resolutions. To that end, it would propose an adjusted calendar for 2020. Annual informal dialogues between the Bureau of the Committee, the administering Powers and relevant stakeholders would also continue.

16. Visiting missions were a core activity of the Special Committee, as mandated by the General Assembly; accordingly, it had decided to dispatch a visiting mission to Montserrat at the request of that Territory's Government and with the agreement of the administering Power. The cooperation of both parties was welcomed.

17. With only one year left until the conclusion of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, progress on the implementation of the Declaration on decolonization was required as a matter of urgency. Accordingly, the international community must put people first; more regular dialogue must be held with the administering Powers, the Non-Self-Governing Territories and other relevant actors, involving the political will of all.

18. It was vital to remain committed to fulfilling responsibilities towards the peoples of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories until the complete eradication of colonialism was achieved, in accordance with the Charter-mandated role of the United Nations. It was the

sincere hope of the Special Committee that its recommendations would receive the broad support of the Fourth Committee.

19. **Mr. Vieira** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and associated States, said that, since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX) in 1965, the General Assembly and the Special Committee had recognized that the question of the Malvinas Islands involved a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom, and that the way to put an end to that special and particular colonial situation was the peaceful and negotiated settlement of the dispute between the two parties.

20. In the joint communiqué adopted in July 2019, the Presidents of the MERCOSUR member States and associated States had reiterated the terms of the 1996 Declaration of Potrero de los Funes on the Malvinas Islands and had reaffirmed their support for the legitimate rights of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute. Moreover, it would be in the interests of the region if the protracted sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were resolved as soon as possible in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the declarations of the Organization of American States and other regional and multilateral forums. The States members of MERCOSUR and associated States reiterated that unilateral action in the disputed area was incompatible with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Highlighting the complete willingness of the Government of Argentina, the climate of cooperation and the progress made thus far, he said that MERCOSUR called for a further strengthened dialogue between the two parties in order to resume negotiations with a view to reaching a definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute.

21. Speaking in his national capacity, he said that his Government maintained its long-standing support for the legitimate rights of Argentina in relation to the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. As the “special and particular” colonial situation in question was a sovereignty dispute that had lasted for nearly 200 years, the principle of self-determination was not applicable. In that regard, it was important to recall that the British population on the Islands had been implanted during an illegal occupation. Furthermore, since the Malvinas formed part of the territory of Argentina, the principle of territorial integrity was applicable. Brazil therefore called on both parties to resume negotiations. Resolution of the dispute depended

on dialogue between the two parties and the completion of the Secretary-General’s good offices mission as mandated by the General Assembly in resolution 37/9. In that regard, Brazil acknowledged the constructive efforts of Argentina and the United Kingdom to strengthen bilateral relations and reach practical agreements under the formula on sovereignty in relation to the South Atlantic. Improvements in the bilateral relationship would help to establish the conditions necessary to resume negotiations with a view to returning full sovereignty over the Islands to Argentina, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

22. His delegation called on the parties to respect General Assembly resolution 31/49, which called on them to refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation. That included refraining from any exploration or exploitation of natural resources in the disputed area. Furthermore, in a spirit of solidarity with Argentina, and in accordance with that resolution, Brazil did not authorize the use of its ports or airports by vessels or aircraft heading to the Malvinas Islands unless they complied with that resolution.

23. The South Atlantic was a zone of peace and cooperation, free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, and dedicated to the harmony and peaceful settlement of disputes that characterized Latin America, the Caribbean and the African countries of the South Atlantic. The resumption of negotiations between Argentina and the United Kingdom was the only viable way to resolve the question of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

24. **Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) said that the Special Committee played a central role in the decolonization process and his Government fully supported the efforts to complete that process, which had resulted in the independence of more than 80 former colonies and the resolution of other special and particular colonial situations on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

25. Argentina would continue to defend the right to self-determination in all cases in which that right was applicable. However, as the International Court of Justice had confirmed in its advisory opinion on the Chagos Archipelago, in some cases the General Assembly did not consult with the inhabitants of a particular territory, because it did not consider them to

be a people with the right to freedom of determination. Under international law, as recognized by the Assembly in its resolution 1514 (XV), self-determination should not be used as a pretext to disrupt the territorial integrity of existing States. It was in that context that the Committee should understand the special and particular colonial situation referred to as “the question of the Malvinas Islands”, which involved a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas.

26. The dispute dated to 1833, when the United Kingdom had forcibly occupied the Malvinas Islands and expelled the Argentine authorities and population. It had then implanted its settlers and strictly controlled migration policies, with which it continued to determine the composition of the territory’s population in its own interests. At the time of occupation, Argentina had been legitimately exercising its sovereignty over the territory, which it had inherited from Spain in conformity with international law. Since that time, Argentina had continually protested that illegitimate occupation by a foreign power of an integral part of its territory. Recognizing that the population of the Islands was not a people subjected to colonialism, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 2065 (XX), in which it recognized the existence of the sovereignty dispute and pointed out that the only way to resolve it was through negotiations between Argentina and the United Kingdom, taking into account the interests of the inhabitants of the Islands. .

27. The General Assembly understood that there did not exist in the Malvinas Islands a people subjected to foreign colonial domination, which was a necessary prerequisite under resolution 1514 (XV) for the application of the principle of self-determination. That criterion had been maintained in the more than 40 resolutions adopted by the Assembly and the Special Committee since 1965. The bilateral nature of the dispute did not in any way entail a disregard for the interests of the inhabitants of the Islands. On the contrary, the Constitution of Argentina provided that all Argentines must respect the way of life of the inhabitants of the Islands.

28. The 1982 conflict, which had occurred while Argentina was governed by a military dictatorship, had not changed the legal nature of the dispute, let alone resolved it. That had been understood by the General Assembly, which had adopted resolution 37/9 and subsequent resolutions requesting the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume negotiations. Since then, the United Kingdom had

refused to resume negotiations despite repeated calls by the international community and even though that was contrary to the obligation of all Member States, under Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations, to resolve disputes peacefully. Argentina had expressed its willingness not only to resume negotiations but also to contribute to the good offices mission of the Secretary-General entrusted to him by the General Assembly.

29. Argentina had been pushing for a renewed relationship with the United Kingdom, with a constructive approach to the entire bilateral agenda. That had allowed it to address, under the sovereignty umbrella formula, areas of mutual interest in the South Atlantic. In order to promote greater connectivity between mainland Argentina and the Malvinas Islands, both Governments had agreed on the establishment of a second weekly flight, which would operate from Sao Paulo, Brazil, and stop in Córdoba twice a month. That was in addition to the existing flight from Punta Arenas, which stopped in Río Gallegos.

30. After 14 years, Argentina had resumed scientific cooperation in the area of fishing; two joint research cruises had been undertaken in February and September 2019. With assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross, it had been possible to identify the remains of 114 Argentine soldiers who had been buried in Darwin Cemetery on the Malvinas Islands. Unfortunately, in spite of such progress, it had not been possible to renew negotiations on the sovereignty issue. The United Kingdom had continued its unilateral acts in the disputed area, in particular with regard to renewable and non-renewable natural resources, in disregard of General Assembly resolution 31/49, in which the Assembly called on the two parties to refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the negotiations recommended by the United Nations were still ongoing.

31. Argentina reiterated its firm commitment to a peaceful solution to the dispute and called on the United Kingdom to show the same commitment by meeting its obligations under the relevant resolutions. He emphasized the relevance of the good offices mission of the Secretary-General, a mandate that had been entrusted to him by the General Assembly in 1982 and reaffirmed year after year by the Committee.

32. Argentina reaffirmed its legitimate and imprescriptible sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. It reiterated its support for the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and expressed its complete confidence that the new climate in its relationship with the United Kingdom

would contribute to creating the conditions for the Governments to come to the negotiating table in order to settle the prolonged sovereignty dispute.

33. **Mr. Gutiérrez Plata** (Colombia) said that his country fully supported the rights of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute concerning the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, and recognized that the issue was a special and particular colonial situation. The only way to end the dispute was through a peaceful settlement negotiated by the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom. The two Governments should resume negotiations as soon as possible with a view to finding a peaceful and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. His delegation fully supported the mission of good offices of the Secretary-General to facilitate the parties' compliance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

34. Although more than 50 years had elapsed since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX), the dispute had not been resolved. In that regard, the parties should refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the Islands were going through the process recommended by the General Assembly, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 31/49.

35. Colombia reiterated its support for the peace and security reform proposal by the Secretary-General with the objective of enhancing the efficiency and coherence of peacekeeping operations and special political missions and aligning with other priorities including development and human rights, thereby improving the impact of United Nations actions.

36. **Mr. Al-Mouallimi** (Saudi Arabia) said that his country reaffirmed its full support for the inalienable right to self-determination of peoples living under foreign or colonial occupation. It urged the United Nations to intensify its efforts to end all forms of colonialism and called on administering Powers to comply with their responsibilities under all relevant international resolutions, to promote the socioeconomic, political and educational advancement of the Territories under their control, and to participate in dialogue with all parties with a view to reaching practical, constructive solutions.

37. Saudi Arabia reaffirmed the inalienable right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish an independent State in line with the relevant international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative for a two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders and with Jerusalem as its capital. The United

Nations had a responsibility to compel Israel to implement the international resolutions calling for an end to the Israeli occupation and its withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Arab Golan and the Lebanese territories.

38. On the question of Moroccan Sahara, Saudi Arabia welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to hold resumed political negotiations between the parties in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as the holding of two round-table meetings in Geneva, at which Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) had participated. It also hailed the commitment of the parties to participate in a third round-table meeting, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2468 (2019).

39. Saudi Arabia commended the Moroccan Government for its serious and well-intentioned efforts, under United Nations auspices, to find a solution to the dispute. His Government supported the Moroccan proposal for autonomy for the Saharan region, as it provided a constructive, equitable, compromise solution that took into account the specificities of the region's population, gave the region a proactive role in the development of the Moroccan people, satisfied international standards by granting the inhabitants of Moroccan Sahara broader powers, and complied with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Equally laudable was the Moroccan effort to promote socioeconomic development and human rights in the Saharan region, in particular through positive cooperation with international human-rights mechanisms. Rejecting all proposals that would compromise the interests, sovereignty or territorial integrity of Morocco, Saudi Arabia reiterated that a solution would be reached only if all parties participated in dialogue in an atmosphere of calm and cooperation.

40. Saudi Arabia denounced the continued Iranian occupation of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa in the Arabian Gulf, as those islands were an integral part of the territory of the United Arab Emirates. That occupation posed a threat to regional and international stability and security and ran counter to international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. He reaffirmed the full sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over the islands and expressed support for all peaceful efforts to re-establish that sovereignty, whether through direct negotiations or by referring the case to the International Court of Justice.

41. **Mr. Lam Padilla** (Guatemala) said that colonized peoples had the right to decide on their political status

and future freely, but the principle of self-determination was not absolute. As established by General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), that principle must not be used as a pretext to undermine the territorial integrity of existing States. In the case of the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, the territorial integrity of Argentina had been violated in 1833 through the occupation of part of its territory and the displacement of the population and Argentine authorities. Since then, Argentine settlement in the Malvinas Islands and other areas had been prevented. The colonial situation had been recognized as “special and particular” by the United Nations, because of its distinctive characteristics. The case involved a colonized territory, not a colonized people. The international community had repeatedly urged Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume negotiations on the sovereignty dispute as soon as possible.

42. His delegation welcomed the maintenance of commercial, cultural and political links between Argentina and the United Kingdom, which helped to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Furthermore, it commended the ongoing demonstration of political will by Argentina in resolving the dispute, in line with the Charter of the United Nations. However, it was deeply concerned at the continued unilateral action by the United Kingdom, which was delaying resolution of the dispute. He called upon the United Kingdom to engage in negotiations in order to reach a definitive and peaceful solution that benefited both parties. The time had come to use the multilateral system, in particular the means of peaceful dispute resolution provided for under international law.

43. On the question of Western Sahara, his delegation welcomed the holding of two round tables with the participation of Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and Frente POLISARIO, as well as the agreement by all participants to reconvene for a third round table, with a view to continuing the discussion of elements of convergence. Guatemala supported the efforts of Morocco towards finding a political solution and endorsed the Moroccan autonomy initiative presented in 2007, which constituted a realistic, credible and serious basis for reaching a negotiated solution between the parties, while respecting the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Morocco. A solution to the question was necessary, not only for the people of Western Sahara, but also for the stability, security and integration of the Maghreb region.

44. **Mr. Arriola Ramírez** (Paraguay) said that the principle of the self-determination of peoples, as a pillar

of the modern system of international relations, provided the basis for peaceful and friendly ties among States. Paraguay remained committed to the decolonization process, which had allowed a number of countries to join the United Nations. Nonetheless, the international community must continue in its efforts to allow the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories to achieve their objectives.

45. General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV) were the most useful and transparent instruments for guaranteeing the full exercise of sovereignty. In order to achieve progress towards decolonization, the political will to decolonize must transcend the efforts of any particular Government, as such progress came in response to long-standing claims of rights.

46. His delegation reiterated its support for the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom should resume negotiations as soon as possible in order to find a lasting and peaceful solution to the controversy. His delegation commended the continued willingness of the Argentine Government to explore all avenues towards a peaceful solution to the dispute, as well as its constructive attitude in favour of the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands.

47. On the question of Western Sahara, Paraguay supported the political process under way under the auspices of the Secretary-General, on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007, including resolution 2468 (2019).

Requests for hearing (A/C.4/74/2, A/C.4/74/3, A/C.4/74/4, A/C.4/74/5 and A/C.4/74/6)

48. **The Chair** drew attention to 178 requests for hearing under agenda item 59, 32 relating to French Polynesia (A/C.4/74/2), one relating to Gibraltar (A/C.4/74/3), 13 relating to Guam (A/C.4/74/4), three relating to New Caledonia (A/C.4/74/5) and 129 relating to Western Sahara (A/C.4/74/6). The Chair took it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

49. *It was so decided.*

50. **Mr. Alrowaiei** (Bahrain) said that the remarkable efforts of the United Nations to end colonialism had spanned several decades. In that context, Bahrain reaffirmed its steadfast support for the Palestinian people’s aspiration to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the 1967 borders, in line with the relevant United Nations

resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, providing for a two-State solution.

51. With regard to Moroccan Sahara, Bahrain supported the serious and credible efforts of the Moroccan Government to find a political solution to the dispute on the basis of its autonomy plan and the relevant Security Council resolutions, which endorsed a political process under the auspices of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy. That process must be pursued in a manner that recognized the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Morocco.

52. The rightful sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over the three Emirati islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa occupied by Iran must be restored. Moreover, Iran should engage with the earnest efforts of the United Arab Emirates to resolve the matter, either through negotiations or through the International Court of Justice.

53. Lastly, his delegation urged the international community to take all necessary steps to implement the Declaration on decolonization and the relevant Security Council resolutions to enable all peoples to live in safety and stability, which was key to achieving sustainable development.

54. **Ms. Al Memari** (United Arab Emirates) said that her delegation hoped that more would be done to achieve progress towards resolving disputes in a manner consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, particularly in the turbulent Middle East and North Africa region. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the recent meetings on the question of Moroccan Sahara and the overall renewed momentum spurred by the Secretary-General's efforts. The Moroccan autonomy initiative constituted a compromise solution that was in line with the Charter and United Nations resolutions and preserved the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Morocco. Her Government endorsed the manifold efforts of Morocco to improve the living conditions of the population of the Sahara.

55. A just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian question in line with United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative was a prerequisite for regional stability. The violations perpetrated by the occupying Power against Palestinians and its creation of new facts on the ground would enable extremist groups to exploit Palestinian suffering in order to undermine regional and international peace and security. The United Arab Emirates therefore called on the Committee to intensify its efforts to end the current stalemate in the peace process and thereby to alleviate Palestinian suffering.

56. Member States had an obligation to abide by the Charter of the United Nations, including the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. Turning to an issue that did not relate to a Non-Self-Governing Territory per se but that did involve a violation of those fundamental principles, she condemned the continued occupation by Iran of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, in flagrant violation of international law and the Charter, and despite the many historical documents that attested to the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over the three islands and to the centuries of Arab rule over them. The United Arab Emirates had a legitimate right to sovereignty over the three islands, which were an integral part of the country's territory. Her Government called on Iran to return the islands and to resolve the matter peacefully, either through direct negotiations or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

57. **Ms. Arias Orlowska** (Dominican Republic) said that her delegation supported Argentine sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The Dominican Republic had maintained its solidarity with the people and Government of Argentina and recognized that a peaceful and negotiated solution to the dispute was the right course of action, as established in numerous General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 31/49, and acknowledged during the Fifth Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), held in her country in 2017.

58. In light of the just claims and willingness of Argentina to resolve the dispute, the only way to end the current situation was through a negotiated agreement between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom. Her delegation fully supported the mission of good offices of the Secretary-General and called for all resources from the repeated General Assembly resolutions to be drawn upon so that negotiations could be resumed and a peaceful and definitive settlement reached.

59. **Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez** (Uruguay) said that the right to self-determination was a basic principle of international human rights law and should be exercised democratically, with full adherence to human rights, respect for the territorial integrity of States and within a context of peace.

60. His Government strongly supported the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination and hoped that the long-awaited referendum on the future of their Territory would be held, in accordance with international law and in response to the legitimate

expectations of the Sahrawi people. Talks between Morocco and Frente POLISARIO should resume in good faith and with a view to achieving a just and lasting solution that provided for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

61. Uruguay supported the role of the African Union and that of the Secretary-General and considered the prompt appointment of a new Personal Envoy was essential to enable the parties to progress towards a mutually acceptable resolution to the conflict. It also supported the work of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) in fulfilling its mandate. His delegation hoped that the draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara would be adopted by consensus as it would demonstrate the firm support of the international community for a timely, peaceful resolution to the dispute.

62. Uruguay fully supported the legitimate sovereignty rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. Such claims were geographically, historically and legally justified. Countless studies had demonstrated the direct link between the situation and the territorial integrity of Argentina, which had clearly inherited Spain's rights over the Islands. In contrast to other cases, the peoples that inhabited those territories were not under subjugation as established by General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV); rather, they had been transplanted by the administering Power, rendering the principle of self-determination inapplicable. The "special and particular" colonial situation constituted a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom, as recognized in General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX) and subsequent resolutions. Uruguay recognized the constructive attitude of the Government of Argentina towards resuming dialogue and congratulated both parties for the recent initiatives in the areas of cultural and scientific cooperation, and particularly in terms of humanitarian action in the identification of unknown Argentine soldiers buried in Darwin cemetery. He hoped that the growing ties between the two parties would contribute to building an atmosphere of trust, allowing the negotiation of a definitive solution to the dispute.

63. **Mr. Rasool** (Iraq) said that the Declaration on decolonization was a source of inspiration for all advocates of freedom. Iraq supported the elimination of colonialism and racial discrimination and the implementation of human rights under the Declaration; indeed, decolonization should remain a priority of the

United Nations until a resolution had been found for all Non-Self-Governing Territories.

64. As a member of the Special Committee, Iraq was concerned that certain administering Powers did not participate in meetings of the Special Committee as mandated by United Nations resolutions, given that such Powers had a duty to keep the Special Committee abreast of developments in the Territories under their control and to facilitate the conduct of visiting missions. Although the situation of each Non-Self-Governing Territory was unique, all administering Powers had official responsibilities towards the people in the Territories under their control, which included a duty to protect their human and natural resources from misuse and provide humanitarian assistance in response to natural disasters. Specialized agencies and foreign investors made valuable contributions to improving living conditions in Non-Self-Governing Territories, provided that they worked in consultation with local populations. It was essential that all economic assistance provided to such Territories was carried out with the main objective of strengthening their economies and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

65. Iraq encouraged visiting missions as an effective method of examining the conditions in which each population lived and its relationship with the administering Power. Having participated in the visiting mission to New Caledonia, it hailed the constructive cooperation between members of the mission and United Nations staff. Moreover, France, the administering Power, had cooperated commendably with the United Nations in organizing the 4 November 2019 referendum, allowing and facilitating the Special Committee's two visiting missions to New Caledonia and helping to organize meetings with local entities. Lastly, Iraq remained firmly committed to working with other members of the Special Committee with a view to making meaningful progress towards eliminating colonialism in all remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

66. **Ms. Austin** (Guyana) said that, since the founding of the United Nations in 1945, more than 80 former colonies, including her own country, had been able to exercise their right to self-determination. The process of decolonization was still incomplete, however, and work must therefore continue until the peoples of all 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories still under colonial rule were able to exercise their right to self-determination, including independence. She urged the administering Powers to fully cooperate with the United Nations in finalizing a constructive programme of work for the implementation of the relevant resolutions on

decolonization, including those relating to specific Non-Self-Governing Territories. She underscored the importance of continued dialogue involving the administering Powers, which had the obligation to promote the well-being of the inhabitants of those territories; the Special Committee, which was the primary vehicle for fostering the decolonization process; and the colonized peoples of the Territories themselves. Together, the main stakeholders must take all necessary steps to bring about the complete and speedy eradication of colonialism, and the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories must be kept fully aware of the political status options available to them.

67. On the question of Western Sahara, she commended the round-table meeting of Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania held on 5 and 6 December 2018 in Geneva and expressed support for the adopted communiqué. She affirmed the support of Guyana for the resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly on the question of Western Sahara, and urged all parties to respect and uphold the provisions of those resolutions. A solution to that long-standing dispute would contribute to stability and security in the Sahel region. The well-being of the Sahrawi people should be among the primary motivating factors for the achievement of a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political settlement that would provide for their self-determination.

68. *Ms. Bacher (Austria), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

69. **Mr. León Peñaranda** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that his country was fully committed to the implementation of the Declaration on decolonization and rejected any act that sought to silence the liberating voice of the peoples in their struggle for a world free of colonialism. Their freedom must be achieved through multilateral mechanisms with the participation of the international community and through horizontal political dialogue with a view to safeguarding international peace and security. His delegation called on the administering and occupying Powers to initiate the decolonization process with a view to the total elimination of colonialism in accordance with General Assembly resolution 65/119 and in order to reach fair, definitive and consensual solutions for the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories.

70. His delegation supported the aspirations of the people of Puerto Rico to become a free State and demanded immediate implementation of the process leading to its independence from United States colonialism, to ensure the full, effective exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination and

independence, in conformity with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

71. The United Kingdom had complied with none of the more than 40 resolutions relating to the question of the Malvinas Islands adopted since 1965 by the United Nations. That country had the obligation to engage promptly, formally and in good faith in negotiations within the framework of international law in order to return the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas to Argentine sovereignty.

72. In accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 2334 (2016), among others, Israel should withdraw its armed forces from the Occupied Palestinian Territories and put an end to intimidation and terror and its expansionist, colonial policy against the Palestinian people. He reaffirmed the support of his delegation for the self-determination of the Palestinian people and their right to a free, sovereign and independent State with pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

73. Lastly, his delegation was firmly committed to supporting a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that would lead, through a negotiated process, to self-determination for the people of Western Sahara, in accordance with the principles and purposes set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. He reiterated his delegation's support for the proposal by the Secretary-General to continue the negotiation process with a new dynamic and in a new spirit. His delegation was convinced that direct negotiations between the parties should be undertaken in good faith while ensuring a realistic vision and a true spirit of compromise.

74. **Mr. Alduwaisan** (Kuwait) said that peoples must exercise their right to self-determination. Although the State of Palestine was not on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, the Israeli occupation of all Palestinian territories must end, and the Palestinian people must be allowed to exercise its right to self-determination. Only by upholding the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and by compelling Israel to withdraw from all Arab territories occupied since 1967 could a just, lasting and comprehensive peace be attained, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

75. As the granting of independence and United Nations membership to colonial countries were among the Organization's crowning achievements, his

delegation called on the Committee to redouble its efforts to implement the Declaration on decolonization. For their part, administering Powers should cooperate fully with the Committee and work to promote the advancement of the peoples under their control, whose effective participation in deciding their future must be promoted.

76. In that connection, Kuwait reiterated its support for the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, whose efforts to achieve a political solution to the Saharan question had led to the holding of two round-table meetings in December 2018 and March 2019. His delegation welcomed the participation of Morocco, Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania at the meetings as well as their expressed willingness to participate in a third meeting.

77. Lastly, Kuwait valued the constructive engagement of Morocco with international human-rights mechanisms and the efforts of that Government's National Human Rights Council's regional human-rights commissions of Laayoune and Dakhla, and supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a means of settling the dispute constructively. The sovereignty of Morocco must be respected, as outlined in the unified position of the Gulf countries on the Saharan question, articulated at the Riyadh Gulf-Morocco Summit in 2016. The long-awaited solution would benefit the countries of the Arab Maghreb and the Sahel-Saharan region as a whole.

78. **Ms. Williams** (Grenada) said that her country recognized the extraordinary significance of the Committee's work, having gone through the decolonization process itself 45 years earlier. Grenada was committed to the ideals and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, with the clear understanding that the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories had a fundamental right to achieve economic well-being, among other rights.

79. While the decolonization of over 80 Territories attested to the effectiveness of the Special Committee on decolonization, the decolonization process had slowed significantly since, becoming more complex. The unfinished work of decolonization must be accomplished in a manner consistent with the relevant mandates, with the Declaration on decolonization and the relevant General Assembly resolutions continuing to guide the process.

80. Most of the remaining Territories were small Caribbean and Pacific islands and, as such, especially vulnerable to natural disasters and to the impact of increasingly violent weather phenomena as a result of climate change. Such phenomena had not spared any of

the affected Territories on the basis of their political or constitutional status. In that connection, her delegation acknowledged the assistance extended to the Non-Self-Governing Territories by special agencies and other United Nations organizations.

81. Grenada would continue to support the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to advance the political process led by the Security Council since 2007 aimed at achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the Western Sahara dispute. The participation of Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and Frente POLISARIO at the recent round-table meetings had been a welcome development. She commended the Moroccan autonomy initiative presented to the Security Council in 2007 as a viable proposal to put an end to the dispute, and noted that the Council had recognized that proposal as serious and credible.

82. Her Government endorsed the Special Committee's decision to send a visiting mission to Montserrat and looked forward to the report of the mission. Such missions, dispatched on a case-by-case basis, enabled the Committee to fulfil its mandate.

83. Sixty years after the adoption of the Declaration on decolonization, it was incumbent upon States to move forward with a sense of urgency, united by the political will to achieve tangible progress towards genuine decolonization.

84. **Mr. Ndong Mba** (Equatorial Guinea) said that his delegation welcomed the holding of the two round tables between Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and Frente POLISARIO aimed at finding a rapid solution to the dispute in Western Sahara in conformity with Security Council resolutions 2414 (2018) and 2440 (2018). He encouraged the four parties to meet for a third round table in the same format as foreseen in Council resolution 2468 (2019), in which the Council emphasized the need to achieve a realistic, pragmatic and irreversible political solution, based on the commitment of all parties. The parties should consider the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a viable option for ending the conflict.

85. He commended the efforts of Morocco over the past four years to implement a new development model so that the peoples of the Sahara could improve their standard of living, as well as the efforts made in the field of human rights – principally the interaction of Morocco with the international human rights mechanisms – and the role of the regional commissions of the National Council on Human Rights in Laayoune and Dakhla, which had been praised repeatedly by the Security Council, most recently in its resolution 2468 (2019). He

urged Morocco to continue on that course and to invite the other parties to join those efforts. Above all, there was a need to improve the human rights situation in the Tindouf camps, as well as for the populations of those camps to be registered and a census taken, in accordance with the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and relevant Security Council resolutions.

86. He praised the efforts of the former Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Horst Kohler, as well as the Secretary-General and MINURSO, for their dedication and the momentum they had given to the process. He urged the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to reach a viable, realistic and satisfactory negotiated solution, and to appoint a new Personal Envoy as soon as possible to continue the work of Mr. Kohler. Lastly, he urged the Committee to adopt decisions and resolutions on Western Sahara by consensus, as had been the case in recent years. Such decisions and resolutions should contribute to deepening the current dialogue using the benchmarks established by the United Nations.

87. **Mr. Odida** (Uganda) said that the United Nations clearly had much work to do in addressing the perennial decolonization agenda. The Special Committee should examine each case with a view to developing proactive and focused approaches and, where possible, to strengthen its mandate. That called for a spirit of openness by all parties involved, including with regard to the consideration of policy approaches and practical ways to ensure real dialogue. Nothing beat the testimonies of persons on the ground, who were intimately affected by the inability to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, and his delegation therefore welcomed the presence of petitioners and all other stakeholders, including representatives of the administering Powers, as part of the work of the Special Committee.

88. Africa was making progress in evolving its norms related to conflict resolution in general, as shown by the positive developments in the past few years. Uganda remained deeply concerned, however, at the continued stalemate and unresolved status of the situation in Western Sahara, the only remaining Non-Self-Governing Territory on the African continent. His delegation encouraged all parties to demonstrate flexibility and resolve in mobilizing the widest possible support for the substance of the negotiations. The lack of a resolution of the question of Western Sahara was one of the impediments to the implementation of the development agenda on the continent, as economic transformation could not take place without peace and security. Uganda therefore remained committed to

supporting the cause of decolonization on the continent, especially as it related to Western Sahara. It supported the broad approaches of pursuing conflict prevention and sustaining peace approaches as advanced by the United Nations family, and in particular as pursued by the Secretary-General. The political status of Western Sahara should be resolved by means of a referendum conducted under the supervision of MINURSO, which was the sole United Nations mechanism on the ground available for the support and resolution of outstanding issues. His delegation supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and called for the appointment of a new high-level Personal Envoy to lend credence to efforts led by the United Nations to achieve a peaceful solution to the question of Western Sahara.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

89. **Ms. Viney** (United Kingdom), in response to the comments made by the representatives of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay and Uruguay, said that her country had no doubt regarding its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas of both Territories, or regarding the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the two International Covenants on human rights, in order freely to determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development. Therefore, no dialogue on sovereignty was possible unless the Falkland Islanders so wished.

90. The 2013 referendum, in which 99.8 per cent of those who voted wanted to maintain their current status as an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom, had sent a clear message that the people of the Islands did not want a dialogue on sovereignty. Argentina should respect those wishes. Her Government's relationship with the Falkland Islands, as with all of its Overseas Territories, was a modern one based on partnership, shared values and the right of the people of each Territory to determine their own future.

91. In response to the statement made by the representative of Argentina, the United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, which had been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Mauritius had never held sovereignty over the archipelago, and her Government did not recognize its claim. However, the United Kingdom stood by its long-standing commitment, first made in 1965, to cede sovereignty of the territory to Mauritius when it was no longer required for defence purposes.

92. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), responding to the unfounded and false claims against the territorial integrity of his country, made by the representatives of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates with regard to the islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf, said that his Government did not recognize any dispute between Iran and the United Arab Emirates over the islands. Throughout history, they had been an integral and inseparable part of Iranian territory, and any claim to the contrary was categorically rejected. Nonetheless, and in order to show its utmost respect for the principle of good neighbourliness, Iran had always expressed its readiness to engage in bilateral talks with the United Arab Emirates with a view to removing any misunderstanding that that country might have in respect of Abu Musa island.

93. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that his delegation reaffirmed the statements made by the President of Argentina at the current session of the General Assembly in 2019 and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Argentina before the Special Committee in June 2019. The Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were an integral part of the national territory of Argentina. The Islands had been illegally occupied by the United Kingdom and were therefore the subject of a sovereignty dispute that was recognized by a number of international organizations and by successive General Assembly resolutions calling on the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume negotiations in order to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute as soon as possible. That position had also repeatedly been endorsed by the Special Committee and the Organization of American States.

94. The principle of self-determination, which the United Kingdom used as the basis for its refusal to resume negotiations on sovereignty, was inapplicable to the dispute in question, as affirmed by the General Assembly and the Special Committee. The illegitimate vote in the Malvinas Islands was yet another unilateral action undertaken by the United Kingdom with no legal effect and that did not change the essence of the question of the Malvinas or resolve the sovereignty dispute, nor did it affect the legitimate rights of Argentina. According to the advisory opinion recently adopted by the International Court of Justice concerning the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965, it was up to the General Assembly to monitor the means by which the free and genuine will of the people of a non-self-governing territory was expressed, including the

formulation of questions submitted for popular consultation. Consequently, a so-called referendum without General Assembly approval would lack legal validity.

95. Proof of that could be seen in the fact that the so-called referendum had done nothing to change the meetings held in the Special Committee since that date, where resolutions on the question of the Malvinas Islands continued to be approved by consensus in the usual terms. The solution to the sovereignty dispute was not dependent on the results of a so-called referendum in which British subjects had been asked whether they wished to remain British. Allowing the British inhabitants of the Islands to arbitrate in a sovereignty dispute to which their own country was a party distorted the right to self-determination of peoples, given that the people of the Malvinas were not a people within the meaning of international law. The interests and way of life of the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands were adequately addressed by resolutions of the General Assembly and by the Constitution of Argentina. Lastly, Argentina reiterated its legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which formed an integral part of its national territory.

96. **Ms. AlMatrooshi** (United Arab Emirates), responding to the remarks made by the representative of Iran, said that the islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb in the Arabian Gulf were an integral part of the territory of the United Arab Emirates. Her Government decisively rejected the continued Iranian occupation of those Emirati islands as a violation of international law. Any Iranian claims of sovereignty over the islands were null and void. Her delegation rejected the attempt by Iran to impose a *fait accompli* by force and reiterated its call on that country to respond to its sincere calls to resolve the conflict peacefully, either through direct negotiations or by referring the case to the International Court of Justice, in line with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. It was regrettable that Iran had chosen to characterize the conflict over Abu Musa island as a misunderstanding, in a clear attempt to evade its responsibilities.

97. **Mr. Alhakbani** (Saudi Arabia), replying to the remarks made by the representative of Iran, said that Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations accorded an important role to regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security. Regional efforts to that end were sound and appropriate only in so far as they remained in compliance with the principles and purposes of the Charter. The United Arab Emirates had a sovereign right over the islands of Greater Tunb,

Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, as affirmed by League of Arab States resolutions.

98. Saudi Arabia decried the continued occupation by Iran of the islands, as well as that country's failure to participate in direct negotiations to which it had been invited by the United Arab Emirates. If Iran was sincere, it would have responded to calls by the United Arab Emirates for direct negotiations or resorted to the International Court of Justice to demonstrate the strength of its claim to the islands by peaceful means, as called for by the Charter.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.