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QUESTION OF PEACE, STABILITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA
REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
DECLARATION ON THE STRENGTHENING
OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY
PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES
BETWEEN STATES
DEVELOPMENT AND STRENGTHENING OF
GOOD-NEIGHBOURLINESS BETWEEN STATES

SECURITY COUNCIL

Forty-third year

Letter dated 13 May 1988 from the Permanent Representative of China
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the text of a memorandum on the question of Xisha and Nansha Islands issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China on 12 May 1988 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and the full text of the attached memorandum circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under items 42, 72, 130 and 137 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) LI Luye
Permanent Representative of the
People's Republic of China to
the United Nations

* A/43/50.

ANNEX

Memorandum on the question of Xisha and Nansha Islands issued
on 12 May 1988 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China

Of late, the Vietnamese authorities have issued, one after another, Foreign Ministry statements and other official documents, asserting that China's Xisha and Nansha Islands are Viet Nam's "territory" and that there had never been Chinese presence on the Nansha Islands before 1987. They have accused China of showing no desire to resolve the disputes peacefully and tried hard to defend their inconsistent position on the ownership of the Xisha and Nansha Islands. However, historical facts cannot be fabricated, and the norms of international law brooks no violation. The "materials" wilfully pieced together by the Vietnamese authorities and their slanders against China can in no way alter the fact that China has indisputable sovereignty over the Xisha and Nansha Islands.

Since ancient times, the Xisha and Nansha Islands have been China's territory. This fact is not only substantiated by a large amount of Chinese and foreign historical data, documents, maps and cultural relics, but also recognized by many countries and by world opinion in general. The Chinese Foreign Ministry's document published on 30 January 1980 gave a complete and convincing exposition of this question. As early as Emperor Wu's reign of the Han Dynasty in the 2nd century B.C., Chinese people discovered the Xisha Islands and Nansha Islands successively and went there one after another. They worked hard to open up and develop the Islands. During the Tang and Song Dynasties, Chinese people were already living on the Xisha and Nansha Islands and engaging in fishing and other productive activities. The then Chinese navy went patrolling in the surrounding sea areas. In the Song and Yuan Dynasties, China named these Islands Qianlichangsha and Wanlishitang respectively. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the Chinese Government, in clear terms, put the Xisha and Nansha Islands under the jurisdiction of Qiongzhou Prefecture (now Hainan Province), Guangdong Province.

In 1930s and 1940s, the Xisha and Nansha Islands were once invaded and occupied by foreign powers. But, it is a basic norm of international law that invasion does not entail sovereignty. Upon the Japanese surrender in 1945, the then Chinese Government sent senior officials to the Xisha and Nansha Islands in November and December 1946 respectively to take over the islands. A take-over ceremony was held there, with a tablet erected in commemoration of the occasion and troops were sent to garrison the islands. The Japanese government also formally declared in 1952 that it would "renounce all right, title and claim to Taiwan, Penghu Islands as well as Nansha and Xisha Islands," thus officially returning the Xisha and Nansha Islands to China. China recovered the Xisha and Nansha Islands in the wake of the

victory of the anti-Japanese war, to which no country in the world raised objections. Up to this date, the Taiping Island, the largest among the Nansha Islands, is still garrisoned by troops sent by Taiwan, China. In spite of these basic facts, the Vietnamese authorities wilfully denied Chinese presence in the Nansha Islands prior to 1987. Isn't it an outrageous lie?

It must be pointed out emphatically that in view of the foreign infringement upon China's sovereignty over the Xisha and Nansha Islands, the Government of the People's Republic of China has issued statements on many occasions reiterating its indisputable territorial sovereignty over these two archipelagoes. All maps published by the People's Republic of China clearly mark the Xisha and Nansha Islands as part of Chinese territory. As early as March 1959, China's Hainan Administrative Region established on Yongxing Island of the Xisha Islands an "office of the Xisha, Nansha and Zhongsha Islands", which was renamed the "Revolutionary Committee of the Xisha, Zhongsha and Nansha Islands of Guangdong Province" in 1969. In January 1974, the People's Liberation Army and militiamen of China drove the invading South Vietnamese troops out of the Xisha Islands in defence of China's territorial sovereignty. Over a long period of time, Chinese troops, fishermen and scientific workers have never ceased patrolling, surveying, and fishing and other productive activities on the Xisha and Nansha Islands and their adjacent waters.

Contrary to China's effective jurisdiction, there had never been Vietnamese presence on the Nansha Islands. Moreover, until 1974 Viet Nam had always officially recognized the Xisha and Nansha Islands as Chinese territory since ancient times in all its government statements and formal notes, and all the maps and textbooks in public circulation. For instance, while meeting with the Charge d'Affaires ad interim of the Chinese Embassy in Viet Nam on 15 June 1956, Vice-Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam stated solemnly: "According to Vietnamese data, the Xisha and Nansha Islands are historically part of Chinese territory". The then Acting Director of the Asian Department of the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry present on the occasion specifically cited Vietnamese data and pointed out: "Judging from history, these Islands were already part of China at the time of the Song Dynasty." In a declaration issued on 4 September 1958 the Government of the People's Republic of China proclaimed the breadth of its territorial sea to be twelve nautical miles and made it clear that "this provision applies to all territories of the People's Republic of China including... Dongsha Islands, Xisha Islands, Zhongsha Islands, Nansha Islands and all other islands belonging to China." On 14 September the same year, Premier Pham Van Dong of the Vietnamese government affirmed in his note to Zhou Enlai, Premier of the Chinese State

Council that "the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam recognizes and supports the declaration of the Government of the People's Republic of China on China's territorial sea made on 4 September 1958." The Map of the World published by Viet Nam in 1960 and 1972 and the textbooks it published in 1974 all recognized the Xisha and Nansha Islands as Chinese territory. All these have been put on record in black and white. It has been noted that even the document published by the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry on 25 April 1988 had to acknowledge these facts. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese side is openly fabricating lies and quibbling over its inconsistent position, alleging that the reason for Viet Nam to act like that in the past was to solicit China's support for its struggle against the United States. Such deceptive explanation is hardly credible even to the Vietnamese authorities themselves. As a matter of fact, the Vietnamese authorities know full well that China supported Viet Nam purely out of upholding justice without asking for anything from the Vietnamese side or attaching any conditions. Anyone with some common knowledge of international relations knows that territorial sovereignty is sacred and inviolable to each and every country and cannot possibly be bartered away. What is more, in 1956 and 1958 when the Vietnamese side confirmed to the Chinese side its recognition of the Xisha Islands and Nansha Islands as part of Chinese territory, the war of resistance to U.S. aggression had not yet occurred in Viet Nam. The Vietnamese authorities' disregard of the facts and perfidiousness on the question of the Xisha and Nansha Islands cannot but further reveal to people how unscrupulous they have been in trying to realize their ambition for territorial expansion.

China has always stood for peaceful settlement of disputes between states, including that over the Nansha Islands. It is in this spirit that China proposes to settle the question of the Nansha Islands through consultation at a later date while leaving it aside for the time being. As for Viet Nam, when it just began to make territorial claim to the Xisha and Nansha Islands, Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping pointed out to the visiting Vietnamese leader Le Duan in September 1975 that the Chinese side had adequate evidence to prove that the Xisha and Nansha Islands have been part of Chinese territory since ancient times. However, in line with the principle of settling differences through friendly consultation, he indicated that "it can be discussed later." It is regrettable that with inflated ambition, the Vietnamese authorities have regarded the Chinese side as being weak and easy to bully on account of its goodwill. In more than a decade after that, they have brazenly sent troops to invade and occupy islands and reefs of China's Nansha Islands and installed all kinds of military facilities there in an attempt to create a fait accompli for perpetuating their armed occupation. Especially since the beginning of this year, they have stepped up their

seizure of islands and reefs of the Nansha Islands, and invaded and occupied nine of them. Meanwhile, Viet Nam has steadily increased the number of its naval vessels sent to the waters around the Nansha Islands to harass the scientific survey being carried out by the Chinese side and wilfully provoked the March 14 armed conflict. The above-mentioned facts fully show that it is none other than the Vietnamese authorities themselves that have been over the years resorting to force to invade and occupy another country's territory illegally and create tension in and around China's Nansha Islands.

China has always pursued a foreign policy of peace and friendship and stood for the development of friendly relations and cooperation with other countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. The Chinese Government solemnly demands that the Vietnamese authorities completely abandon their militaristic policy of aggression and expansion, stop all their activities of invading and occupying Chinese territories and creating tension, and withdraw immediately from the illegally occupied islands and reefs of China's Nansha Islands, so as to restore peace and stability to the region.
