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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 8 October 2020, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Kelapile (Botswana)

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* Reissued for technical reasons on 12 April 2021.

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 5: Election of the officers of the Main Committees

1. **The Chair** said that the Group of Eastern European States, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of Western European and other States had endorsed the candidacies of Mr. Hussar (Romania), Mr. Sanabria Rivarola (Paraguay) and Mr. Camilleri (Malta) respectively for the office of Vice-Chair.

2. *Mr. Hussar (Romania), Mr. Sanabria Rivarola (Paraguay) and Mr. Camilleri (Malta) were elected Vice-Chairs by acclamation.*

3. **The Chair** said that the Group of Asia-Pacific States had nominated Mr. Al-Maawda (Qatar) for the office of Rapporteur.

4. *Mr. Al-Maawda was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

5. **The Chair** said that he took it that, in order to establish a predictable and transparent procedure for the election of the Rapporteur, the Committee wished to adopt the following oral draft decision: “The Committee decides, in accordance with paragraph 4 of the annex to General Assembly resolution [68/307](#), that the Rapporteur of the Fourth Committee shall be elected from the regional group that held the chairmanship of the Committee at the previous session, and requests that the regional group concerned nominate a candidate for the post of Rapporteur of the Committee accordingly”.

6. *It was so decided.*

Organization of work ([A/75/250](#); [A/C.4/75/1](#); [A/C.4/75/INF/1](#) and [A/C.4/75/INF/4](#); [A/C.4/75/L.1](#))

7. **The Chair**, drawing attention to the documents relevant to the organization of work of the Committee, and in particular to its proposed programme of work ([A/C.4/75/L.1](#)), noted that, as a result of physical distancing guidelines and constraints related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Committee would not be able to hold a full-fledged session. For example, officers of subsidiary bodies and senior Secretariat officials would deliver introductory statements and engage in interactive dialogue with members of the Committee on a virtual platform. The modalities proposed constituted a temporary one-time measure applied during the extraordinary situation resulting from the pandemic and would in no way set a precedent for the work of the Committee at future sessions.

8. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking also on behalf of Cuba, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), said that the legitimate right of all States Members of the United Nations to participate in its work on an equal footing and without discrimination should be upheld. The increasingly systematic application by the host country of the Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations in a discriminatory fashion was undermining the independent exercise of the sovereign rights and privileges of certain Member States. By imposing travel and movement restrictions on representatives of Member States, insisting on the relocation of personnel of a mission amid the COVID-19 pandemic, breaching the inviolability of diplomatic property, engaging in the illegal and arbitrary expulsion of members of permanent missions and making it difficult to honour financial commitments to the United Nations, the host country aimed to prevent Member States from fully exercising their rights, including to vote.

9. The United States of America was abusing its status as host country, in particular by delaying or even denying the issuance of visas, thereby preventing delegates from gaining access to United Nations Headquarters. The failure to issue visas to the 18 delegates of a Member State was unacceptable, as was the unprecedented decision to deny a visa to a foreign minister. Equally unacceptable was the issuance of visas that prevented delegates from travelling in the course of their mission in New York.

10. The practices of the host country were in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, the United Nations Headquarters Agreement, in particular sections 11, 12, 13 and 27, related norms of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. The affected Member States had repeatedly raised their concerns, including through General Assembly resolution [74/195](#), but to no avail. The United Nations Legal Counsel had recently noted the lack of progress in talks with representatives of the host country. Member States must ensure that the work of the United Nations was not held hostage to political agendas. The Secretary-General should use his powers to ensure that the principle of the sovereign equality of States was respected and to guarantee the equal and non-discriminatory participation of Member States in the work of the Organization. To that end, section 21 of the United Nations Headquarters Agreement should be triggered. The Chair of the Committee should also

follow up on the issue in conjunction with the relevant United Nations authorities.

11. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Committee wished to approve the proposed programme of work (A/C.4/75/L.1).

12. *It was so decided.*

13. **The Chair** noted that, in approving its programme of work, the Committee had decided to hold one general debate covering agenda items 50 to 61.

14. As at previous sessions, the Committee would set up a working group of the whole to prepare draft resolutions for submission under agenda item 51, entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space". He took it that the Committee wished to establish the group.

15. *It was so decided.*

16. **The Chair** said that the Working Group was traditionally chaired by the Chair of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. It was his understanding that, in the light of the extraordinary circumstances brought about by the pandemic, the members of the Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space were in the process of adopting a number of decisions, including the election of the Chair of that Committee, through the no-objection procedure. Accordingly, he suggested that the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole be elected at a later date, once that procedure had been completed.

17. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.