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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE UNIONS

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THIRD MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 18 March 1959, at 11 a.m.

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under British administration: consideration of the Committee's draft
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PRESENT

Chairman:

U KYAW MIN

Burma

Members:

Mr. DAVIN

New Zealand

Mr. MUFTI

United Arab Republic

Mr. PRESTON

United States of America

Secretariat:

Mr. STERNBACH

Secretary of the Committee

ADMINISTRATIVE UNION AFFECTING THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE CAMEROONS UNDER
BRITISH ADMINISTRATION: CONSIDERATION OF THE COMMITTEE'S DRAFT REPORT
(CONFERENCE ROOM PAPER NO.78)

The CHAIRMAN recalled that at its 121st meeting the Committee had decided, as a result of the proposal made by the delegation of the United Arab Republic, to leave open the question whether to present a report on the administrative union affecting the Cameroons under British administration. He called the Committee's attention to Conference Room Paper No.78.

Mr. MUFTI (United Arab Republic) said that his delegation could not agree to the views and conclusions appearing in the draft report of the Standing Committee on Administrative Unions with regard to the Cameroons under British administration (Conference Room Paper No.78). His delegation considered that the Committee should take account of events which had occurred and which closely affected the administrative union. The future of the Territory had always been one of the concerns of the General Assembly, and the decision which the Assembly had recently taken in no way relieved the Committee of its obligation to examine the administrative union affecting the Territory. Furthermore, the Assembly had recently laid down that the question of the future of the Territory and of its possible integration into the Federation of Nigeria should be decided by the inhabitants of the Territory through plebiscites organized under United Nations supervision. The delegation of the United Arab Republic, therefore, considered that the Administering Authority was not entitled to take any steps in the Territory designed to strengthen the administrative union between the Territory and Nigeria or to achieve the integration of the Territory into Nigeria. The Committee would do well to review the situation with regard to the relations between the Territory and Nigeria and to propose such safeguards as would at least ensure the maintenance of the status quo in the Territory.

In that connexion the United Arab Republic wished to submit two formal proposals:

Firstly, that the Committee should decide to keep the item relating to the administrative union between the Cameroons under British administration

(Mr. Mufti, United Arab Republic)

and the Federation of Nigeria on its agenda until such time as further events required the Committee to meet to consider that item.

Secondly, that, as a safeguard, the Committee should recommend to the Administering Authority that no further steps should be taken to strengthen the administrative union between the Trust Territory and the Federation of Nigeria, thereby prejudging the results of the plebiscite which was to be organised in the Territory under United Nations supervision pursuant to General Assembly resolution 1350 (XIII).

Mr. PRESTON (United States of America) considered that in view of the decisions which the General Assembly had taken with regard to the Territory in its resolution 1350 (XIII), it was pointless for the Committee to consider the substance of the administrative union between the Cameroons under British administration and Nigeria. The United States delegation would vote in favour of the conclusions set forth in paragraph 3 of the draft report.

Mr. DAVIN (New Zealand) shared the views of the United States representative. The Visiting Mission's report clearly showed that the interests of the Southern Cameroons had in no way been adversely affected by the administrative union with the Federation of Nigeria. Where the Northern Cameroons was concerned, it appeared from the Visiting Mission's conclusions that the population wished to become permanently a part of the Federation of Nigeria when the latter attained independence. He considered the Committee's draft report acceptable as it stood.

The CHAIRMAN speaking as the representative of Burma, said that administrative unions might have certain advantages provided they related only to administrative questions. The delegation of Burma, however, had had occasion to express fears in connexion with arrangements which tended to favour the integration of the Cameroons under British administration into the Federation of Nigeria, thus prejudging the future of the Territory.

Without yielding on questions of principle a practical attitude must be adopted. Clearly, any policy which tended to strengthen the administrative union and limit the freedom of choice of the Cameroonian people regarding its future should be avoided; the Committee was, however, faced with a situation

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(The Chairman)

which it was powerless to change, and any controversy about the administrative union between the Cameroons under British administration and Nigeria now seemed pointless.

It was for those reasons that the delegation of Burma supported the draft report contained in Conference Room Paper No.78. That in no way meant that it was abandoning its position regarding administrative unions in general and the case of the Cameroons under British administration in particular. His delegation continued to believe that it was undesirable for administrative unions to be extended to cover more than their original purposes.

Mr. MUFTI (United Arab Republic) considered that the conclusion reached in Conference Room Paper No.78 to the effect that the Committee considered it unnecessary to present a report on the operation of the administrative union affecting the Cameroons under British administration, was a facile solution which was not in keeping with the Committee's obligations. It must be stressed that the measures taken within the framework of the administrative union concerned were not of a purely administrative nature but were frequently political in character. The proof of that was that in the Southern Cameroons the opposition party had, immediately after taking power, requested the discontinuance of the practice of including electors' names on electoral registers drawn up for elections to the Nigerian Federal Chamber of Representatives. Furthermore, a Committee of Nigerian citizenship had been formed and representatives from the Trust Territory were to sit on it, although citizenship was a political and not an administrative question. Indeed the Secretariat had received a petition on that subject.

The delegation of the United Arab Republic therefore formally requested that the two proposals which it had submitted should be put to the vote, and if they were rejected that they should be communicated to the Trusteeship Council together with a summary of minority views, in accordance with the rules of procedure.

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At the request of the CHAIRMAN, Mr. STERNBACH (Secretary of the Committee) read out the following amended proposal of the representative of the United Arab Republic:

1. The Trusteeship Council proposes that the item on the agenda concerning the administrative union affecting the Cameroons under United Kingdom administration should be maintained while the Council awaits the future developments which might make it necessary for the Standing Committee on Administrative Unions to meet again in order to examine this item.
2. The Trusteeship Council recommends to the Administering Authority, as a conservatory measure, that no new steps should be taken which might strengthen further the administrative union between the Trust Territory and the Federation of Nigeria and which might prejudice the results of the plebiscite to be conducted in the Territory under United Nations supervision in accordance with the General Assembly resolution 1350 (XIII) of 13 March 1959.

After an exchange of views between Mr. DAVIN (New Zealand) and Mr. MUFTI (United Arab Republic), the CHAIRMAN proposed that the Committee should invite the Representative of the Administering Authority to comment on the proposals made by the representative of the United Arab Republic.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.