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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

### Summary record of the 7th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 11 October 2022, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Al Hassan . . . . . (Oman)  
*later:* Mr. Kasselakis (Vice-Chair) . . . . . (Greece)

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\* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

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1. **The Chair** said that, following consultations with the Bureau and concerned delegations, he took it that delegations agreed to speak in the order in which they had been inscribed on the speakers' list, with a view to improving the efficiency of the Committee's work. Delegations speaking both on behalf of a group of States and in their national capacity would have the option to deliver their national statements immediately after their statements on behalf of the group, speaking only once.

2. *It was so decided.*

3. **Mr. Al Baldawi** (Iraq) said that the subjection of peoples to foreign domination contravened the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations. Decolonization must therefore remain a priority on the United Nations agenda until independence was granted to all peoples living under colonial rule or until the administering Powers and the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories reached an agreement on a mutually acceptable form of governance.

4. 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.

5. 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. Iraq encouraged visiting missions as an effective method for examining the conditions in which each population lived and its relationship with the administering Power.

6. The Department of Global Communications and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs had an important role to play in raising awareness of the situations of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United Nations and Decolonization website should be used to disseminate, as widely as possible, updated information concerning actions that the United Nations could take to assist Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Organization should draw on the lessons of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic to ensure that such information was accessible to the most disadvantaged groups, particularly peoples living under colonialism.

7. **Mr. Alwasil** (Saudi Arabia) said that Saudi Arabia supported the efforts of Morocco to find a realistic political solution to the question of Moroccan Sahara based on compromise, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and under the auspices of the Secretary-General. It endorsed the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a solution that preserved the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Morocco, was consistent with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and had been welcomed in Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007. It welcomed the visit made to the region in January 2022 by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, and looked forward to further consultations among the concerned parties. In order to resolve the regional dispute, wisdom, realism and a spirit of compromise would be required from all parties. A solution would contribute to security and stability in the Sahel region.

8. Saudi Arabia denounced the continued Iranian occupation of the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, as those islands were an integral part of the territory of the United Arab Emirates, and the current situation undermined international peace and security. Saudi Arabia supported all peaceful actions taken by the United Arab Emirates to recover its territory.

9. **Ms. Gohiwar Aryal** (Nepal) said that, six decades after the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of

Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, there remained 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories whose people looked to the United Nations for political and moral support. Decolonization would not be possible unless Member States mustered the necessary political will. The international community should continue to support the work of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and the administering Powers and Non-Self-Governing Territories must collaborate intensively for that purpose, including by facilitating visiting missions and transmitting information in a timely fashion.

10. In order to heed the call enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind, all parties must redouble their efforts to end colonialism and to create opportunities for sustained, inclusive and equitable growth for the Non-Self-Governing Territories, whose people were especially vulnerable to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis. The international community should lend consistent support in areas including education, health and employment, and the administering Powers must promote the Territories' political, economic, social and educational advancement. In addition, the natural resources of the Territories must be protected. Nepal urged the administering Powers to unconditionally fulfil their responsibilities under the Charter and relevant resolutions, including by developing time-bound work programmes on a case-by-case basis. The United Nations development system also had a vital role in supporting the inhabitants of those Territories to meet their socioeconomic needs.

11. **Mr. Rai** (Papua New Guinea), speaking on behalf of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, said that it was deplorable that, four decades after the declaration of the First International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, yet another such Decade had been announced; the situation must not be allowed to continue. The Group remained committed to the self-determination and decolonization of New Caledonia. It would continue to lend support to, and engage constructively with, all stakeholders, including the administering Power, to contribute to an enduring and peaceful solution that was acceptable to all New Caledonians. The Group's efforts were also guided by the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Nouméa Accord, the timeline for which had already elapsed.

12. New Caledonia had made remarkable progress towards the future its people wanted: milestones included the transfer of competencies from the administering Power, capacity-building efforts, institution-strengthening and enhanced Pacific regional integration. The most noteworthy achievement was the holding of three referendums on self-determination in November 2018, October 2020 and December 2021. The support of the United Nations, including the visiting missions it had sent in March 2014 and March 2018, had been valuable, especially to address concerns about the electoral process. The Group looked forward to the administering Power's next invitation to the United Nations to conduct a visiting mission, which should help build on the momentum generated thus far. However, the self-determination and decolonization agenda remained incomplete, and all stakeholders must do their part in accordance with the Nouméa Accord. The Group still had concerns about the third self-determination referendum, for the reasons it had explained at the seventy-sixth session (see [A/C.4/76/SR.8](#), paras. 64–66). The ending of the Nouméa Accord process, alongside the manner in which the third referendum had been conducted and its outcome, painted a worrisome picture. Although the administering Power claimed that the referendum had been legitimate, as those who had decided not to participate had done so freely and voluntarily, a sizeable proportion of New Caledonians and outside observers maintained that it had been conducted unjustly and unfairly and therefore lacked credibility. The suggestion that the referendum had been well-organized and conducted was far from the truth.

13. The administering Power, which currently bore responsibility for the future of New Caledonia, must work with all New Caledonians to find a peaceful, inclusive path forward that accounted for the interests of all the Territory's people. The call made by the President of the Government of New Caledonia, at the third meeting of the Committee (see [A/C.4/77/SR.3](#), paras. 51–55), for sensitivity and tact between the administering Power and the people and Government of the Territory must be heeded. It would also be important to provide support in the four priority areas that he had highlighted: the identity of New Caledonia; resilience against the effects of climate change; stronger institutional arrangements for stability and security; and cooperation with external development partners. Accordingly, the Group would further consider those areas to decide how best it could be of assistance.

14. Lastly, the Committee and the United Nations as a whole must reassure the people of New Caledonia that the ending of the Nouméa Accord process did not in any way take away their rights to self-determination and

decolonization. It was incumbent on the United Nations to remain seized of the changing situation in the Territory and to work with the administering Power and all New Caledonians to ensure that its future was shaped fairly by all segments of society; the next visiting mission would be critical in that regard.

15. **Mr. Pérez Ayestarán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations, said that the United Nations had made great strides on decolonization. However, 60 years after the adoption of General Assembly resolution [1514 \(XV\)](#), the task remained incomplete: 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, plus Palestine, remained to be decolonized. The Group of Friends maintained its long-standing position on decolonization issues – it remained committed to the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and to the full realization of the inalienable rights of all the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which had been severely affected by the current global crises, including that resulting from COVID-19. The administering and occupying Powers should proactively initiate dialogue with a view to reaching fair and comprehensive solutions to each of those questions. They must respect the inalienable right of all the Non-Self-Governing Territories to their natural resources, which encompassed the Territories' right to establish and retain control over their current and future use. They must therefore avoid any economic, military or other activities that might adversely affect the interests or well-being of the peoples of the Territories.

16. More than 20 years had passed since the last Non-Self-Governing Territory had become a sovereign and independent State and a fully-fledged State Member of the United Nations. The Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would have run its course in 2030, at which point the international community was also to have achieved the Sustainable Development Goals. Member States would have to hold themselves to account for the progress they had made to remove the obstacles to the full realization of the right of self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation, as called for in General Assembly resolution [70/1](#). In the 2030 Agenda, Member States had promised to leave no one behind, but colonialism adversely affected the social and economic development of peoples, as well as their full enjoyment of their human rights. The Group of Friends would make every effort to promote and uphold the Charter and would continue to participate actively and constructively in all efforts aimed at achieving a world free of colonialism.

17. Speaking in his national capacity, he said that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was deeply concerned by the situation of Puerto Rico, whose people had been denied their rights to self-determination and independence for more than 120 years. His country staunchly supported that Territory's right to choose its own political, economic, social and cultural systems to address the pressing structural challenges it faced, challenges which had been exacerbated by Hurricane Fiona only days before. The Government of the United States should participate constructively in the work of the Special Committee with a view to bringing an end to its colonial tutelage over Puerto Rico.

18. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela also maintained its unwavering solidarity with the Sahrawi people. A peaceful, fair, enduring and mutually acceptable solution was needed to the question of Western Sahara, based on the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. His delegation hoped that the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara would meet with success in his efforts to revive the political process and ensure that the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was able to fulfil its mandate.

19. The last few months had once again revealed the cynicism and double standards of some countries which, even now, saw themselves as empires and maintained neo-colonial interests around the globe. Those countries, which included the United Kingdom, presented themselves as champions of the rule of law and defenders of the Charter of the United Nations, but their actions spoke otherwise. If the United Kingdom was genuinely committed to the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter and to the primacy of the rule of law, its Government should immediately take concrete steps to conclude the pending decolonization processes and restore the sovereign rights to the Territories that it still illegally occupied. Specifically, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterated its unequivocal support for the legitimate rights of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. It called upon the United Kingdom to resume direct negotiations, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution [2065 \(XX\)](#), in order to achieve a peaceful, just and definitive solution. Similarly, it reaffirmed its support for Mauritius in sovereignty dispute over the Chagos Archipelago. It called upon the United Kingdom to bring an end to its administration of the Archipelago as rapidly as possible and without preconditions, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [73/295](#), and thereby complete the decolonization of Mauritius.

20. *Mr. Kasselakis (Greece), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

21. **Ms. Joyini** (South Africa) said that her delegation attached great importance to the issue of decolonization and fully commended the work of the Special Committee. Without the decolonization efforts of the Fourth Committee, South Africa itself would not be represented in the United Nations. South Africa remained gravely concerned by the unrelenting brutal violations of the rights of the Palestinian people and the injustices to which they were subjected on a daily basis. Recent developments, in conjunction with the prevailing instability in the Middle East and geopolitical alignments, did not bode well for their self-determination. The international community must take concrete action in support of their right to an independent and viable State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the relevant international instruments and United Nations resolutions.

22. The situation of the Sahrawi people continued to be of deep concern. South Africa fully endorsed the position of the African Union, namely, that the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence was non-negotiable. The International Court of Justice had lent credence to that position in its advisory opinion of 16 October 1975, in which it had held that there were no links of territorial sovereignty between Morocco and Western Sahara prior to the Spanish colonization of the Territory. The breach of the 1991 ceasefire agreement and the resumption of hostilities were gravely concerning; South Africa urged the parties to respect the ceasefire and avoid acts that might further inflame tensions in the Territory. Her delegation welcomed the efforts of the Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to revive political dialogue, which should pave the way for a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution.

23. The decolonization of Mauritius should be completed through the handover of the Chagos Archipelago; the advisory opinion rendered by the International Court of Justice on 25 February 2019, which had been welcomed in General Assembly resolution [73/295](#), sent a clear message that the Islands belonged to the people in whose land and continent they were located. In addition, South Africa urged the parties to the Malvinas Islands dispute to resume bilateral negotiations with a view to reaching a political solution; refusal to comply with international law opened the door to other serious violations by other States.

24. **Mr. Hmoud** (Jordan) said that the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination continued to be

one of the most pressing items on the agenda of the United Nations. Member States should garner efforts for the resumption of genuine and effective negotiations towards peace in the Middle East on the basis of the two-State solution, leading to the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security. The violations perpetrated by Israel in the Aqsa Mosque/Haram al-Sharif complex, including recent provocations, contravened both international law and the legal and historic status quo. The entire complex was a place of worship exclusively for Muslims, and the Jerusalem Awqaf and Aqsa Mosque Affairs Administration of Jordan was the sole entity legally responsible for managing the Haram al-Sharif and regulating entry thereto. Jordan would continue working to preserve the historical and legal status quo of Jerusalem and its Islamic and Christian holy sites, under Hashemite custodianship.

25. Jordan supported the efforts made by the Secretary-General, his Personal Envoy and the Kingdom of Morocco to find a political solution to the regional dispute concerning the Moroccan Sahara. It called on all parties to maintain security and stability in the region. Jordan welcomed the constructive engagement of Morocco, which had proposed the Moroccan autonomy initiative in its effort to reach a definitive and mutually acceptable political solution to the question of the Sahara. His Government endorsed the initiative as a serious, realistic mechanism that took into account regional specificities and Moroccan sovereignty and territorial integrity. The initiative was in line with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions adopted by the Organization. The measures taken by Morocco to improve the living standards of the Saharan population, enable it to benefit from the region's resources and combat the COVID-19 pandemic were commendable. His Government welcomed the opening of consulates in Laayoune and Dakhla, and had recently opened a consulate in Laayoune.

26. **Mr. Akram** (Pakistan) said that since its independence, Pakistan had extended consistent and active support to the decolonization process promoted by the United Nations, which had resulted in some 80 former colonies gaining independence since 1946. However, there were still peoples who were denied the right to self-determination, notably those of Palestine and of occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Lasting peace in the Middle East could be achieved only through the establishment of a viable, independent and contiguous State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif (Jerusalem) as its capital.



27. The Indian occupation of Jammu and Kashmir was the worst manifestation of modern-day colonialism. The Security Council had explicitly recognized the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir in its resolution 47 (1948) and subsequent resolutions, in which it stated that the final status of the State of Jammu and Kashmir should be decided by its people through a free and fair plebiscite held under the auspices of the United Nations. The resolutions had been accepted by both India and Pakistan and, pursuant to Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations, both parties were obliged to implement them. However, India had avoided doing so, through force and fraud, for more than 70 years. Starting in 1989, it had conducted a brutal campaign of repression in Jammu and Kashmir, killing over 100,000 Kashmiris. Since 5 August 2019, India had taken unilateral and illegal steps to annex occupied Jammu and Kashmir, in what its leaders had ominously termed “the final solution”. Kashmir was the place with the most densely massed occupation force in the world, with 900,000 Indian occupying troops deployed in a region the size of Belgium. The occupying force had carried out a vicious campaign of extra-judicial killings, including in “cordon and search” operations; it was responsible for the abduction and enforced disappearance of some 15,000 Kashmiri boys; and it destroyed and burned entire villages and urban neighbourhoods as a form of collective punishment. India had incarcerated the entire Kashmiri leadership, and several had died in custody, including Altaf Ahmad Shah on 10 October 2022. The brutal oppression was driven by Hindutva, an ideology that advocated the religious and ethnic supremacy of Hindus, as well as hate of Muslims and other minorities. The non-governmental organization Genocide Watch had warned that the oppression in Kashmir could very well lead to genocide. A wall of silence had been imposed on occupied Jammu and Kashmir by means of physical lockdowns, a total information blackout and censorship and surveillance to suppress the voices of the Kashmiri people. Journalists, lawyers and human rights defenders were routinely incarcerated, beaten, humiliated, harassed and even accused of terrorism for reporting on human rights violations.

28. In a classic settler-colonial project, India had begun to convert Jammu and Kashmir from a Muslim-majority State to a Hindu-majority territory. It had issued more than 3.4 million fake domicile certificates to Hindus from all across India to settle in Kashmir, and was confiscating Kashmiris’ land and property for military use. The unilateral measures taken by India since 5 August 2019 were in blatant violation of international law, including the relevant Security Council resolutions. Security Council resolution 122

(1957) provided that unilateral measures to determine the future shape and affiliation of the entire State or any part thereof would not constitute a disposition of the State, meaning that the unilateral actions of India were illegal, and therefore null and void.

29. Pakistan desired peaceful relations with all its neighbours, including India. The resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute through the exercise of self-determination was essential to ensure lasting peace in South Asia. The onus was on India to create the conditions for dialogue: it must cease all human rights violations in the occupied territory and reverse the illegal, unilateral measures imposed on and after 5 August 2019. The Security Council and the Secretary-General must actively promote a peaceful solution in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council and the wishes of the Kashmiri people, fully utilizing the modalities provided for in the Charter, in particular Articles 33, 34 and 99.

30. **Mr. Odida** (Uganda) said that Uganda maintained its principled position in support of the inalienable right of all people to self-determination and independence. His delegation hoped that stakeholders would renew their commitment to the decolonization agenda at the current session and throughout what should be the final International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

31. A just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution was needed to the question of Palestine. Uganda reaffirmed its support for the Palestinian people in their struggle to realize their right to self-determination and independence in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

32. There was also an urgent need for a just, peaceful and enduring solution to the question of Western Sahara that would enable the Sahrawi people to exercise their right to self-determination. The Committee should continue to uphold the primary responsibility of the United Nations towards the people of Western Sahara, and should actively support all the efforts of the African Union aimed at reaching such a solution, in line not only with United Nations mandates, but also with the objectives and principles set out in the Constitutive Act of the African Union and all relevant African Union resolutions. The United Nations should implement the road map for decolonization set out in the settlement plan for Western Sahara with a view to holding the self-determination referendum without delay. In addition, the Special Committee should consider conducting a visiting mission to Western Sahara, as such missions were an essential part of the conflict-resolution toolkit, and the last mission had been many years earlier. Lastly,

Uganda warmly welcomed the appointment of the Secretary-General's new Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, and renewed its call upon all parties to the dispute to negotiate in good faith.

33. **Mr. Zambrana Torrelío** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that, while the United Nations had made significant progress with regard to decolonization, the international community must unite to more effectively support the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in their march towards self-determination. Global solidarity would be needed, in particular, for the continued implementation of the plan of action for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. By peacefully and freely exercising their right to full independence, those peoples would be able to tackle their development challenges, in addition to the health-related and social consequences of the pandemic and the economic crisis. The administering Powers should initiate genuine decolonization processes without delay, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [65/119](#), with a view to finally arriving at fair and mutually acceptable solutions.

34. The Plurinational State of Bolivia would continue to insist that the United States of America facilitate the processes necessary for Puerto Rico to peacefully and freely exercise its right to independence in conformity with General Assembly resolution [1514 \(XV\)](#). It hoped that the parties to the dispute over Western Sahara would manage to reach a fair, lasting and mutually acceptable solution based on the relevant General Assembly resolutions and Security Council resolution [2494 \(2019\)](#). The good offices of the Secretary-General and of his Special Envoy would be critical in supporting the parties in that regard. The parties should respect the ceasefire agreement and resume negotiations, without preconditions, in good faith and in a true spirit of compromise, with a view to upholding the right of the Sahrawi people to decide their own future.

35. The question of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas was a lingering wound on the American continent. Argentina had sovereign rights over those areas, which were part of its national territory. The only solution was for Argentina and the United Kingdom to revive negotiations, taking into account the interests of the population. The parties should return to negotiations in good faith, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, in order to achieve a fair, peaceful and definitive solution that would bring an end to the current colonial situation.

36. **Mr. Segura Aragon** (El Salvador) said that, in the second year of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, Member States should make an ongoing and proactive commitment to accelerating the decolonization processes, with the support of the United Nations. The Organization must continue to prioritize ensuring the right to self-determination and focus on the multiple challenges faced by the Non-Self-Governing Territories, including recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and responses to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

37. El Salvador supported the legitimate sovereignty rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which it recognized as a special and particular situation, one in which the principle of self-determination did not apply and the principle of territorial integrity must be upheld. His delegation acknowledged the ongoing willingness of the Government of Argentina to resume bilateral negotiations with a view to resolving the dispute. The parties should resume negotiations with a view to finding a just, peaceful and definitive solution as soon as possible, in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. The good offices of the Secretary-General were of the utmost importance to finding such a solution. The illegal unilateral actions taken in the disputed area, including the exploration and exploitation of natural resources, were deeply concerning and seriously contravened the relevant General Assembly resolutions, notably resolution [31/49](#).

38. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to relaunch the political process under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General. It supported the efforts of the Kingdom of Morocco to find a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution to the regional dispute and considered that the autonomy initiative advanced by Morocco in 2007 constituted a viable solution that respected the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Morocco.

39. **Ms. Andrews** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) said that her delegation remained indisputably anti-colonialist and firmly supported all multilateral decolonization efforts under the auspices of the United Nations, particularly the right to self-determination of colonized peoples. As the General Assembly had repeatedly underscored, the question of the Malvinas Islands revolved not around the will of a colonized people under alien control, but rather around competing claims of sovereignty over islands that lay a short distance off the Argentine coast. The dispute could be

resolved only through bilateral negotiations, which must take into consideration the interests and well-being of the Islands' inhabitants. Her delegation remained dismayed at the lack of meaningful progress in that regard, and it urged the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to recommit to constructive bilateral negotiations. Both Governments should refrain from unilaterally modifying the situation of the Islands, which could erode goodwill. The parties were to be commended on their efforts to find common ground on various issues in recent years. Her delegation hoped that those efforts would help to re-energize constructive dialogue and create a path towards a lasting solution. It urged the Secretary-General to use his good offices to facilitate that process.

40. **Mr. Pedrosa Cuesta** (Cuba) said that the decolonization process had given rise to one of the most significant transformations of the twentieth century. Over six decades after the adoption of the historic Declaration on decolonization, Cuba joined the international call to eradicate the scourge of colonialism, which persisted in the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

41. The people of occupied and besieged Palestine had the inalienable right to self-determination and to an independent and viable State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The nightmare of foreign occupation suffered by the Palestinian people must be addressed by the United Nations, particularly the Security Council. The necessary steps should be taken to enable Palestine to become a full Member State of the Organization as soon as possible.

42. The people of Western Sahara had the right to self-determination, in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant resolutions. His delegation reiterated its support for a mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Cuba did not support unilateral decisions that went against the interests of the Sahrawi people, who required the support of international community.

43. Cuba supported the legitimate rights of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute relating to the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which were part of Argentine territory. A negotiated, just and definitive solution to that dispute should be found as soon as possible, taking into account respect for the territorial integrity of Argentina and recognition of the interests of the inhabitants of the Islands. Until a

definitive solution was reached, the parties should refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation.

44. It had been 124 years since the intervention of the United States in Puerto Rico. However, all those years of colonial domination had not been enough to eradicate the culture, identity and national sentiment of the Puerto Rican people. Despite the efforts of the Special Committee, the people of Puerto Rico remained unable to exercise their legitimate right to self-determination, while the colonial Power continued in its efforts to strengthen its economic, political and social domination. The Special Committee had adopted 39 resolutions and decisions on Puerto Rico, in which it had reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). The Free Associated State imposed on Puerto Rico was a farce, enabling the United States Government to disguise what was a clear act of colonial domination. The United States Supreme Court, Congress and even the Administration itself had clearly confirmed that Puerto Rico did not enjoy sovereignty and was a colonial territory entirely subject to the rule of Washington, D.C.

45. Cooperation with the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories was essential for their collective well-being and socioeconomic development. For example, despite the brutal economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the Government of the United States, compounded by the global health and economic crises, hundreds of young people from Western Sahara had been welcomed into Cuban schools and universities.

46. **Ms. Kimani** (Kenya) said that Kenya reaffirmed its consistent and unequivocal commitment to the principles of self-determination and sovereignty, and hoped that the recommendations of the Special Committee would be implemented with a view to expediting the decolonization process. The United Nations should urgently make a renewed commitment to work for the emancipation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and establish multilateral mechanisms to that end.

47. Kenya supported the decisions of the African Union and the Organization of African Unity on the self-determination of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, including the people of Western Sahara. Despite the establishment of MINURSO by virtue of Security Council resolution 690 (1991), the Sahrawi people had yet to be afforded the opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination by way of a referendum. Kenya supported efforts to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, which should focus on a



solution that was aligned with the principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and regional efforts on the issue, taking into account the important role of the African Union.

48. The work undertaken by UNRWA was commendable, particularly given the scarcity of its financial resources. Kenya reiterated its support for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, on the basis of two States, to allow the Palestinian people the right to self-determination; the right to establish a free, independent and sovereign State within the pre-1967 borders; the right to return for refugees; and resolution of the remaining final status issues.

49. **Mr. Ipo** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that his Government supported the United Nations-led political process, with a view to finding a realistic, pragmatic and lasting political solution based on compromise, in accordance with the Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007 on the Moroccan Sahara. His delegation welcomed the commitment of the Secretary-General to resolving the issue and the recent visits conducted by his Personal Envoy. It called for a resumption of the round-table process with the participation of Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and the "Polisario", and for the parties to remain engaged in the process. The security and stability of the Maghreb and Sahel regions depended on a solution to the regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara. His delegation therefore commended the ongoing commitment of Morocco to find a political solution that was acceptable to all. It welcomed the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which was consistent with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions, and which would enable the population of the Moroccan Sahara to manage their political, economic and social affairs. For example, the participation of the inhabitants of the Sahara in the general elections in Morocco, notably in September 2021, illustrated their political autonomy.

50. Côte d'Ivoire commended the model for the development of the Sahara launched by Morocco in 2015 and its considerable investments to that end, which boosted the region's human development index and had a notable impact on the well-being of the local populations. It commended the actions taken by Morocco to strengthen the role of the regional human rights commissions in Laayoune and Dakhla and its cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the region. It also commended the role of MINURSO in strengthening security provisions, which were essential in maintaining peace and creating the conditions for a successful political process. Lastly, it welcomed the compliance of

Morocco with the ceasefire and called on the other parties to abide by the existing military agreements.

51. **Mr. Portorreal Brandao** (Dominican Republic) said that his country continued to support decolonization and the right of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to self-determination. The Dominican Republic supported the efforts of Morocco to achieve a credible and mutually acceptable political solution to the question of Western Sahara, acknowledged the efforts of the Secretary-General to reach a realistic and lasting solution, welcomed the efforts of his Personal Envoy to facilitate the relaunching of the political process and called upon the parties concerned to maintain a spirit of cooperation.

52. In its tradition of regional solidarity, the Dominican Republic supported the just claims of Argentina to the exercise of its sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. 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.

53. **Ms. Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that peoples around the world had struggled for decades to exercise their right to self-determination. The peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories continued to live under colonialism in one form or another. The colonizing States had not let go of their colonialist mentality; they continued to prevaricate, seeking out new ways to assert control over the Territories. The international community remained unable to eradicate colonialism or to address its effects, including human rights violations, the plundering of wealth and natural resources, and the use of Territories as places to conduct scientific and medical experiments, bury nuclear and toxic waste, or install military facilities. Non-Self-Governing Territories did not need to be handed gifts or favours by administering Powers; they needed genuine case-by-case work programmes leading to self-determination. Her delegation hoped that the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would be the last, and that the Committee would have no need to continue discussing the issue.

54. **Mr. Nunes** (Timor-Leste) said that Timor-Leste considered colonialism to be a violation of basic human rights and an obstacle to the socioeconomic development and well-being of all peoples. To

accelerate its eradication, it was important to engage in dialogue and understand the aspirations of the peoples concerned in relation to political status and at the social, economic, environmental and cultural levels.

55. On the question of Western Sahara, the rising tension since November 2020 was a matter of concern. The breach of the 1991 ceasefire agreement, which had led to the resumption of hostilities between the parties, could have serious consequences for peace, security and stability in the region. The United Nations should consider strengthening its peacekeeping presence by adding a human rights component to the mandate of MINURSO, and the occupying Power should allow the United Nations visiting missions and the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit the disputed territory.

56. His delegation welcomed the judgement rendered by the General Court of the European Union on 29 September 2021 to cancel the trade deal between Morocco and the European Union, safeguarding the right of the people of Western Sahara to their natural resources, and the judgment rendered on 22 September 2022 by the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights concluding that the occupation by Morocco of Western Sahara was a violation of the rights to self-determination and independence. Only the Sahrawi people had the right to decide their own future, through a free and fair referendum organized by MINURSO.

57. With regard to the situation in Palestine, Timor-Leste supported the two-State solution and continued to urge dialogue and supported all efforts based on the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions. On the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), Timor-Leste urged Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume their dialogue to find a peaceful and permanent solution to the dispute, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. With regard to Gibraltar, his delegation urged the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Spain to continue a constructive dialogue towards a lasting solution, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions.

58. **Mr. Sané** (Guinea-Bissau) said that the best way to achieve a durable solution to the question of Western Sahara was through the continued engagement of the parties concerned, under the guidance of the United Nations, and a realistic approach based on compromise. Member States should come together to support the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General towards building on the round-table process with a view to reaching a lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara.

59. The Moroccan autonomy initiative had great potential to stabilize the region and to improve the economic, social and cultural situation of the people in the region. His delegation commended Morocco for the turnout in the general elections in September 2021 and its investments in the region. Amid the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Morocco had provided invaluable assistance, particularly to the most vulnerable people in the region. The commitment of Morocco to the well-being of the people of Western Sahara and the broader region had encouraged many States, including Guinea-Bissau, to maintain a presence there.

60. **Ms. Diop** (Senegal) said that her delegation supported a definitive, just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the regional dispute in the Moroccan Sahara, through a process led under the exclusive auspices of the United Nations and based on the Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007. The Moroccan autonomy initiative provided a suitable framework to that end, one that was consistent with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions. It also took into account the issue of refugees in the Tindouf camps. The progress made by the Government of Morocco on the promotion of human rights, democracy and economic and social development of the Moroccan Sahara, while empowering its people, was a testament to its will to resolve the dispute. For its part, Senegal had opened a consulate in Dakhla in April 2021, in support of the efforts of Morocco in the region.

61. The parties should build on the momentum of the first two round tables in Geneva in order to complete the United Nations-led political process. Her delegation commended the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahara to resume the political process. It welcomed the participation of the elected representatives of the Moroccan Sahara in the meetings of the Special Committee and regional seminars. Respect for the 1991 ceasefire was crucial in order to advance resolution of the dispute and maintain the stability of the region.

*Statements made in exercise of the right of reply*

62. **Ms. Rastegary** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, in response to the unfounded and baseless claims made against the territorial integrity of his country, his delegation reiterated its consistent and principled position that it did not recognize the existence of any dispute between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates over the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Lesser Tunb and Greater Tunb. Those islands formed an inseparable part of Iranian territory, and his

delegation categorically rejected any claims to the contrary. No matter how many times they were repeated, such claims were irrelevant to the work of the Committee. The territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its sovereignty over the three islands were non-negotiable.

63. **Mr. Brown** (United Kingdom), replying to the comments made by the representatives of Venezuela, South Africa, Bolivia, El Salvador, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Timor-Leste, said that the United Kingdom had a modern relationship with its Overseas Territories, based on partnership, shared values and the right of the people of each Territory to determine their own future. The United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and surrounding maritime areas, or regarding the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in article 1 of the two International Covenants on human rights, by virtue of which they freely determined their political status and freely pursued their economic, social and cultural development. Consequently, no dialogue on sovereignty was possible unless the Falkland Islanders so wished. The United Kingdom had never implanted any civilian population, and the 2013 referendum had sent a clear message that the people of the Islands did not want a dialogue on sovereignty. Those wishes should be respected. Hydrocarbon exploration in the Falkland Islands was a legitimate commercial venture regulated by the legislation of the Falkland Islands Government in strict accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

64. The position of the United Kingdom regarding its sovereignty over Gibraltar and the territorial waters surrounding it was clear. The people of Gibraltar enjoyed the right to self-determination and the 2006 Gibraltar Constitution, which had been endorsed in a referendum by the people of Gibraltar, provided for a modern and mature relationship between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom. His Government reiterated its long-standing commitment to the people of Gibraltar. It would not enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their freely and democratically expressed wishes.

65. His Government also had no doubt about its sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory. As close Commonwealth partners, the United Kingdom and Mauritius should resolve that issue through constructive bilateral dialogue.

66. **Mr. Birdi** (India) said that the desperate attempts by the delegation of Pakistan to spread falsehoods in multilateral forums were contemptible. A country which genuinely sought peace with its neighbours would never sponsor cross-border terrorism, nor protect those who had planned the horrific Mumbai terrorist attacks. Pakistan had made a number of futile and unsubstantiated allegations with regard to the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and of Ladakh, including those areas under illegal Pakistani occupation, all of which were an integral and inalienable part of India. The allegations were related to matters internal to India and did not merit a response. Pakistan should vacate all the areas that it had illegally occupied.

67. Given its established practice of hosting, aiding and actively supporting terrorists, Pakistan could not make any constructive contribution to the Committee's work. That country was encouraging sectarian violence against Muslims and suppressing the rights of its own minorities while working to undermine India and its secular credentials and values. It was time to hold Pakistan to account and prevent it from misusing United Nations platforms to spread disinformation and hate and to incite violence. As the epicentre of global terrorism, Pakistan was the biggest destabilizing force in the world. Its Government glorified terrorists as martyrs and had no regard for the principles of the Organization.

68. The wish for peace, security and progress in the Indian subcontinent was genuine and could be realized. To that end, cross-border terrorism must cease, Governments must be transparent with the international community and their own peoples, minorities must not be persecuted, and the current realities must be acknowledged before the General Assembly.

69. **Ms. Almehairbi** (United Arab Emirates) said that her delegation categorically rejected the Iranian occupation of the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, in the Arabian Gulf, which were an integral part of the United Arab Emirates. It called on Iran to respond constructively to her Government's repeated calls to resolve the matter peacefully through direct negotiations or referral to the International Court of Justice. Her Government was currently working with Iran to strengthen relations and further the interests of both countries. It therefore hoped that the dispute could be resolved in accordance with international law and the principle of neighbourly relations.

70. **Mr. Gutierrez Segú Berdullas** (Spain), referring to the comments made by the representative of Iraq, said that it was important to take into account the specificities of each of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. In certain cases, decolonization could not be

realized through the principle of self-determination of peoples, but rather that of territorial integrity. Similarly, the decision to send visiting missions to those Territories should be made on a case-by-case basis.

71. Responding to the representative of the United Kingdom, he said that, according to the doctrine of the United Nations, it was Spain that had endured the colonization of its territory. Therefore, the decolonization process for Gibraltar should be governed by the principle of territorial integrity, while taking into account the interests of the inhabitants of Gibraltar. Furthermore, Spain did not recognize any rights or situations of the United Kingdom relating to the spaces of Gibraltar other than those included in the list set forth in article 10 of the Treaty of Utrecht, which should be considered exclusive. The attempt to extend sovereignty to the surrounding waters did not have merit under that Treaty or international law. Spain had no doubt about the limits of its territory, which included the waters surrounding Gibraltar. Spanish ships had been operating in those waters since time immemorial. Moreover, upon ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Government of Spain had declared that the signing of the Convention could not be interpreted as recognition of any rights or situations relating to the maritime spaces of Gibraltar that were not included in article 10 of the Treaty of Utrecht.

72. **Mr. Alvarez** (Argentina) said that his delegation reiterated the statements made by the President of Argentina to the General Assembly on 20 September 2022 (A/77/PV.4) and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina at the meeting of the Special Committee on decolonization on 23 June 2022 (A/AC.109/2022/SR.7). 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 and, being illegally occupied by the United Kingdom, they were the subject of a sovereignty dispute between the two parties, which was recognized by a number of international organizations. That illegal occupation had led the General Assembly to adopt 10 resolutions on the issue, all of which recognized the existence of the sovereignty dispute and called on the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume negotiations with a view to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute as soon as possible. For its part, the Special Committee had repeatedly adopted resolutions in the same vein, most recently the resolution adopted on 23 June 2022.

73. In line with the Charter of the United Nations, all Member States had a responsibility to resolve disputes peacefully and negotiate in good faith. The resumption of negotiations was not dependent on the desire of the

population implanted on the Islands by the colonial Power, but rather was an obligation under the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. The principle of self-determination of peoples, 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 in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee. The 2013 vote held in the Malvinas Islands was simply a unilateral action undertaken by the United Kingdom, devoid of any legal value; it in no way changed the essence of the question, it did not resolve the sovereignty dispute and it had no effect on the legitimate rights of Argentina. The solution to the sovereignty dispute was not dependent on the results of a vote in which British citizens 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 there did not exist in the Malvinas 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.

74. In its resolution 31/49, the General Assembly had called upon the two parties to refrain from introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the islands were going through the process recommended by the General Assembly. Argentina reaffirmed its legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which were an integral part of the national territory of Argentina.

75. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) said that raising the issue of the continued Indian colonization of Jammu and Kashmir was a valid use of the Committee's time. Year after year, India presented a position that was factually incorrect. Jammu and Kashmir was not an integral part of India; rather, it was internationally recognized as a disputed territory, as defined by multiple Security Council resolutions and on all official United Nations maps. Security Council resolution 47 (1948) clearly stated that the question of the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan should be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite. India had accepted that decision and was bound to comply with it in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

76. Since 1947, India had been flouting international law by illegally occupying the State of Jammu and Kashmir, whose population had been unable to exercise their right to self-determination. Since August 2019,



India had sought to transform Kashmir demographically from a Muslim majority State into a Hindu majority territory. India had long tried to sell the false narrative that the just struggle of the people of Jammu and Kashmir was terrorism. The real reason for the mass indigenous resistance in the Indian-occupied territory was the intransigence shown by India and its mass atrocities against innocent Kashmiris, who had been subjected to a long list of well-documented crimes that included massacre, rape, blinding and forced disappearances.

77. The racist and radical ideology underlying such discrimination against minorities had seeped into all the organs of the Indian State: the legislature, the executive and even the judiciary. There had also been calls for genocide, which the State had not only ignored but abetted through its actions. The international community and the United Nations should demand that India end its State terrorism and abide by its obligations under international law, including implementation of the Security Council resolutions on Kashmir.

78. **Mr. Alwasil** (Saudi Arabia) said that the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa were an integral part of the territory of the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia supported all peaceful measures taken by that country to restore its sovereignty. By continuing to occupy the islands, in addition to undermining security and stability in the region, Iran stood in violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*