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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 8th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 13 October 2022, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Al Hassan (Oman)
later: Mr. Sithole (Vice-Chair) (South Africa)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

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1. **Ms. Alammadi** (Bahrain) said that the realization of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East region depended, first and foremost, on finding a settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian people had a right to establish an independent sovereign State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the principles of international law, the Arab peace initiative and the authoritative international resolutions.

2. With regard to the question of the Moroccan Sahara, Bahrain was convinced that Morocco had every right to preserve its security and territorial integrity. Bahrain supported the serious 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, in a manner consistent with the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Morocco. Accordingly, it supported the political process under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

3. Bahrain fully supported the claim of the United Arab Emirates to sovereignty over the three Emirati islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which were occupied by Iran. Iran should endeavour to resolve the matter either by entering into immediate and genuine negotiations with the United Arab Emirates, or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

4. **Ms. Nguyen Phuong Tra** (Viet Nam) said that Viet Nam remained steadfast in its support for decolonization and the exercise the self-determination of peoples of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. Constructive political dialogue, in pursuit of durable peace and in the spirit of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, remained the right path towards fostering sustainable solutions to the current impasses. It was regrettable that, upon entering the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the Non-Self-Governing Territories were still unable to exercise the basic right to self-determination. To that end, the administering Powers should further strengthen cooperation with the United Nations to expedite the decolonization process and the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The United Nations should continue to ensure that activities carried out by the administering Powers advanced, rather than undermining, the legitimate interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Assistance was required in order to address new and emerging challenges and promote economic, cultural and social development.

5. **Ms. Cerrato** (Honduras) said that, in resolution 2065 (XX), the General Assembly had recognized the existence of a sovereignty dispute between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Malvinas Islands. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) had reiterated the commitment of its members to continue working within the framework of international law to make the Latin American and Caribbean region a territory free of colonialism, as well as its firm support for the legitimate rights of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. Her delegation urged Argentina and the United Kingdom to take a constructive position with a view to ensuring that Argentina recovered the full exercise of its sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

6. **Ms. Almehairbi** (United Arab Emirates) said that her delegation supported all actions taken by Morocco to defend its legitimate right to full sovereignty over the Moroccan Sahara. It continued to support the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which the Security Council had described as serious and credible. The initiative was in line with the Charter and United Nations resolutions and preserved the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of

Morocco. Her delegation endorsed the intensive efforts of Morocco to improve the living conditions of the population of Moroccan Sahara, in particular through the new development model launched in 2015. The United Arab Emirates had opened a consulate in the Moroccan Sahara as a reflection of its support for Moroccan sovereignty over the region. It welcomed the round table meetings on the question of Moroccan Sahara held in 2018 and 2019, and the visits to the region made by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, in 2022.

7. The principles set out in the Charter, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, must be applied without double standards, including in situations that did not relate to a Non-Self-Governing Territory. Iran should put an end to its occupation of the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. Both the historical record and international law showed that the United Arab Emirates had sovereignty over those islands. Over the previous five decades, Iran had failed to respond to her country's appeals for a peaceful settlement. Nevertheless, her Government would continue to press for a solution, either through direct negotiations or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

8. **Ms. Martínez** (Paraguay) said that General Assembly resolutions [1540 \(XV\)](#) and [1541 \(XV\)](#) were the most suitable and transparent instruments for progressing towards the full exercise of sovereignty by all peoples. It was often difficult to balance the interests of Indigenous Peoples, populations that had arrived as a result of the actions of the colonial Powers, and administering Powers. In such complex situations, the role of the United Nations was to protect the rights of the Indigenous Peoples over those of populations deriving from colonization. The political will to advance decolonization processes must, in any event, transcend the governments of the day.

9. Paraguay reaffirmed its long-standing support for the legitimate sovereignty rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. Negotiations should resume between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom as soon as possible, with a view to finding a peaceful solution to the dispute. His delegation commended the ongoing political will of the Argentine Government to continue exploring all possible avenues towards a peaceful solution to the dispute, as well as its constructive attitude towards the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands.

10. Paraguay also underscored its support for the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions

related to the situation in Western Sahara, and for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to assist the parties in finding a peaceful, just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution to the conflict, taking into account the efforts undertaken since 2006.

11. 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, including its reports and recommendations, was crucial in advancing the decolonization process. Paraguay hoped that the Committee would be able to define measures to implement the Declaration, pursuant to General Assembly resolution [1514 \(XV\)](#).

12. **Ms. Narváez Ojeda** (Chile) said that the international community should continue its efforts to complete the decolonization process within the framework of the United Nations and international law. The Government and people of Chile reiterated their long-standing support for the legitimate sovereignty rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom should resume negotiations in order to find a peaceful and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute as soon as possible, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and other multilateral forums, including General Assembly resolution [31/49](#). The definitive resolution of the question of the Malvinas Islands was a subject of fundamental importance and sensitivity for the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. Chile hoped that the matter would be fully resolved within the framework of the resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the principle of territorial integrity.

13. **Mr. Akakpo** (Togo) said that delegation was particularly concerned by the status quo that had characterized the issue of decolonization for many years. It reiterated its unwavering support for all the political processes under way aimed at reaching peaceful, lasting solutions for the benefit of all parties, and welcomed the efforts of the Special Committee on decolonization in that connection.

14. His delegation commended the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara to facilitate the relaunching of the political process under the auspices of the Secretary-General. For that purpose, the round-table process should be resumed in accordance with Security Council resolution [2602 \(2021\)](#) and all parties should remain committed to

reaching a pragmatic political solution, based on compromise, to the dispute over Western Sahara. His Government commended the work of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and called upon all parties to fully cooperate with MINURSO in line with the abovementioned resolution. It was crucial for all parties to respect the ceasefire and contribute to the establishment of an atmosphere conducive to the recommended peaceful solution.

15. Togo welcomed the socioeconomic development made possible by the new development model for the Moroccan Sahara, which had helped empower the population. The opening of several consulates in Laayoune and Dakhla, including that of Togo, would help to foster socioeconomic opportunities and promote a peaceful approach to resolving the crisis.

16. **Mr. Ilichev** (Russian Federation) said that Russia had been at the forefront of the process of decolonization; the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had been adopted on the initiative of the delegation of the Soviet Union in 1960. In recent decades, however, the decolonization process had lost its earlier momentum, and there remained 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. Without political independence, the affected peoples were unable to coexist peacefully, foster sustainable economic and social development, or uphold human rights.

17. A just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution should be found to the question of Western Sahara, providing for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. His delegation supported the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara to facilitate direct negotiations between the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) and Morocco with a view to holding a referendum for the Sahrawi people.

18. A swift solution should be found to the question of Palestine. His delegation supported the intention expressed by both sides during the recent high-level week of the General Assembly to work towards reaching a settlement on the basis of a two-State solution. It hoped that such a solution could be found, in accordance with the agreed parameters, and stood prepared to contribute to that process.

19. His delegation called for the urgent resumption of direct negotiations between Argentina and the United Kingdom with a view to finding a peaceful and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute over the

Falkland (Malvinas) Islands, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. It was a matter of concern that the United Kingdom continued to refuse to enter into such negotiations and had been militarizing and engaging in economic activities in the Islands and the surrounding maritime areas.

20. Pending the decolonization of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, his delegation would continue to participate actively in the vital work of the Special Committee. It urged the administering Powers to engage in constructive dialogue on the basis of the principle of self-determination.

21. **Mr. Chanfi** (Comoros) said that his delegation fully supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative for Western Sahara, which had been described as serious and credible by the Security Council in the resolutions adopted on the issue since 2007. It was a solution based on compromise and was consistent with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General had spared no effort in relaunching the political process under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General. The round-table negotiations should be resumed, in the original format with all stakeholders, in accordance with Security Council resolution [2602 \(2021\)](#).

22. More than 90 countries now supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which had enabled significant progress on the issue. In addition, the Sahara development model launched in 2015 had boosted the autonomy and human development of the Moroccan Sahara. The increasing number of consulates in Laayoune and Dakhla, including that of the Comoros, were another welcome development, as was the significant number of regional organizations established in the region. Their presence had enhanced socioeconomic opportunities in the Moroccan Sahara and had created a hub for development and outreach in the region. Moreover, the Kingdom of Morocco had made substantial achievements in the field of human rights, as attested to in the relevant Security Council resolutions. In particular, Security Council resolution [2602 \(2021\)](#) noted the enhanced role of the regional commissions of the National Council of Human Rights in Laayoune and Dakhla, and the resumption of bilateral cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). His delegation welcomed the respect shown by Morocco for the ceasefire in the Moroccan Sahara and its full and ongoing cooperation with MINURSO. It called upon the other parties to quickly return to the ceasefire, for the security and stability of the entire region.

23. His delegation remained concerned at the situation of the residents of the Tindouf camps, who should be registered in line with international humanitarian law, the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Secretary-General's recommendations and all the relevant Security Council resolutions adopted since 2011, including resolution [2602 \(2021\)](#).

24. **Ms. Benn** (Guyana) said that as a former colony, Guyana understood the yearning for freedom and self-determination expressed by the petitioners from the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. The ongoing global pandemic and eruptions of military conflict around the world had exacerbated poverty, food shortages and access to affordable energy, causing further setbacks to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Concerted efforts were required to restore and accelerate progress in all countries by strengthening administrative capacity, good governance and economic sustainability. Such progress could not be made without effectively addressing the right to self-determination of the inhabitants of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. The administering Powers should fully cooperate with the United Nations with a view to expediting the eradication of colonialism for all peoples. Her delegation welcomed the decision to dispatch visiting and special political missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, acknowledged the progress made by the Special Committee in its quest to complete the decolonization process, and reaffirmed its support for special political missions in responding to peace and security challenges worldwide.

25. All parties should respect and uphold the provisions of the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on Western Sahara, and should recognize that a solution to the long-standing dispute would contribute to stability and security in the Sahel region.

26. The severe impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the Palestinian people, the deterioration of human rights in the occupied territories and the increasing displacement of individuals were deeply concerning. Her delegation supported the efforts of the international community to address the plight of the people of Palestine in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

27. **Mr. Dibba** (Gambia) said that his delegation welcomed recent developments aimed at strengthening dialogue between the relevant stakeholders in the dispute on Western Sahara, and the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General to advance the ongoing political process. All stakeholders should

remain committed to the round-table process and pursue a practical and sustainable solution, based on a spirit of realism and compromise. The Gambia welcomed the participation of representatives of the regions of the Sahara in the Special Committee sessions and regional seminars.

28. The Gambia firmly supported the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Morocco over the Sahara region and recognized the constructive and cooperative approach consistently demonstrated by the Morocco towards resolving the dispute. All relevant stakeholders in the region should work constructively towards that end. His delegation strongly supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which was a viable compromise solution to the dispute and would contribute to the security and stability of the region. The initiative took into account the wish for self-determination among the local population, was in conformity with international law, and had been described as serious and credible in successive Security Council resolutions.

29. The achievements of the Moroccan regional commissions of the National Human Rights Council in Laayoune and Dakhla were encouraging, and efforts by Morocco to maintain full cooperation with OHCHR and the relevant human rights special procedure mandate holders were commendable. The \$8 billion development initiative launched in 2015 demonstrated the long-term investment of Morocco in peace and development for the region and was creating many opportunities for economic growth, while improving the living standards of the populations in the region.

30. **Mr. Bambissa** (Mozambique) said that Mozambique continued to support the pursuit of a solution to the question of Western Sahara that would allow the people of that Territory to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [1514 \(XV\)](#). It continued to defend the unconditional implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions and African Union decisions on Western Sahara aimed at finding a peaceful and durable solution that met the aspirations and will of the people of Western Sahara. Delays to the implementation of approved legal instruments aimed at granting self-determination to the people of Western Sahara were a matter of serious concern, as they negatively impacted the lives of the Sahrawi people.

31. The deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the occupied territories of Palestine was deeply concerning, as was the rising number of displaced persons and refugees in that region. Mozambique continued to support efforts by the international community to put an end to the suffering of the

Palestinian people, who deserved peace and a better life. Israel and Palestine should engage in constructive negotiations in order to achieve a durable, just and peaceful political solution, based on the two-State solution, while complying with all relevant Security Council resolutions on Palestine. Such engagement would help advance common efforts towards lasting peace and stability in Palestine and in the Middle East region as a whole. Implementation of all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions remained the only acceptable framework for a negotiated political solution to the question of Palestine.

32. **Mr. Szczerski** (Poland) said that every State should enjoy the rights to sovereignty and territorial integrity under the same conditions; any attempts to undermine them required a strong international response. The United Nations should provide a forum for all States to gather and conduct fair discussions on equal rights, and must not be a place where the privileges of certain States were used to deprive other States and peoples of their rights. Decolonization was a long-term process which required all stakeholders to engage in sincere dialogue and continuous consultations. The current situation in several parts of the world should serve as a reminder that pursuing dialogue and constructive discussions was the best possible alternative to hate speech and conflict.

33. As an advocate for the rule of law, international peace and stability, Poland remained engaged in the many peacekeeping activities worldwide, including through its ongoing engagement in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Peacekeeping remained one of the most efficient and effective United Nations tools in the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security. Moreover, the peace and security landscape was increasingly influenced by climate change and environmental degradation. United Nations missions and operations contributed significantly to assessing and managing climate-related security risks. One example was the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, which had appointed its first environmental security advisor. That practice should be followed in other United Nations missions and operations, where relevant, while also ensuring that climate and security considerations were mainstreamed into risk assessment, conflict analysis, early warning and strategic foresight.

34. **Mr. Alajmi** (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.

35. As the granting of independence and United Nations membership to colonial countries were among the Organization's crowning achievements, his delegation called on the Special Committee to find new ways to strengthen its capacity to interact with administering Powers, taking into consideration the specificities of each case. For their part, administering Powers should provide accurate information concerning the situation in the Territories under their control and work to promote the advancement of their peoples.

36. His Government supported the work of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for the Sahara and hoped that the parties concerned would build on the momentum generated by the round tables, which were the only way to reach a realistic, practical and lasting solution based on consensus. It also supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which provided a constructive way to find a solution acceptable to all parties while respecting the unity and sovereignty of Morocco.

37. **Mr. Muhith** (Bangladesh) said that Bangladesh had always supported the aspiration of peoples occupied by foreign powers and under colonial domination to exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions. The administering Powers should fully cooperate with the Special Committee, including by facilitating its visiting missions in the Non-Self-Governing Territories under their administration. Constructive, case-specific work programmes were essential tools to facilitate decolonization. Concerted efforts and cooperation were needed to address the challenges facing the Territories, support the pandemic recovery efforts and continue implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The administering Powers had a responsibility to promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the Territories. Cooperation between the Special Committee and the Economic and Social Council should be intensified in order to coordinate the policies and activities of the specialized agencies.

38. The illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and the ongoing encroachment on Palestinian land and natural resources were matters of concern. An

independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian State should be established, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as part of a two-State solution based on pre-1967 borders. Peace could not be achieved around the world without completing the decolonization process, including the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

39. **Mr. Henry** (Saint Lucia) said that given the role of the United Nations in its self-determination process, Saint Lucia attached great importance to the issues of self-determination and decolonization and was particularly concerned that the promise of decolonization for Non-Self-Governing small island Territories in the Caribbean and Pacific remained unfulfilled. His delegation endorsed the position of the Caribbean Community Heads of State and Government expressing concern at an order in council, currently held in reserve, that would suspend the elected government of the British Virgin Islands and impose direct rule. Saint Lucia would continue to support a genuine decolonization process for the British Virgin Islands.

40. Genuine decolonization could be achieved only through implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions. A case-by-case work programme and independent self-governance assessments for the small territories would significantly contribute to that process. As a small island developing State, Saint Lucia continued to grapple with the adverse effects of climate change, as did many Non-Self-Governing Territories. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the specialized agencies had a mandate to provide assistance to the Territories. Cooperation between the administering Powers and the Special Committee had been insufficient and should be strengthened.

41. Saint Lucia reiterated its consistent position with regard to the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. It called on the Secretary-General to extend his good offices to facilitate dialogue between the parties, with the aim of resuming negotiations to achieve a just and lasting solution pursuant to General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX).

42. On the question of Western Sahara, his delegation supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to facilitate the political process and welcomed the efforts of his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara. Saint Lucia continued to support the round-table discussions held between Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and the Polisario, and hoped that a just and mutually acceptable solution could be reached through dialogue in

accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The Moroccan autonomy initiative, which had been described as serious and credible by the Security Council, should serve as the way forward in resolving the issue. Morocco had demonstrated its commitment to finding solutions through various initiatives, including the provision of assistance to combat COVID-19.

43. **Ms. Pereira** (Colombia) said that her 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. Her delegation called for the resumption of negotiations, dialogue and cooperation between the two parties with a view to finding a solution in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. It was also important to comply with General Assembly resolution 31/49, which called upon the two parties to 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.

44. **Mr. de Rivière** (France) said that his delegation welcomed the participation of the President of the Government of New Caledonia and that of other speakers from that Territory in the third meeting of the Committee (see [A/C.4/77/SR.3](#), paras. 51–55). New Caledonia had reached an important stage in the process initiated in 1984. The third referendum provided for in the Nouméa Accord had been held on 12 December 2021. For the third time, the people of New Caledonia had voted against full sovereignty and independence. The decision of the pro-independence camp to refrain from taking part in the referendum was a political choice. The responsibility of the French State had been to ensure proper organization of the vote. The administrative court of final instance had confirmed that the referendum had been properly conducted; its legal validity was therefore unquestionable. France encouraged all delegations to support draft resolution XII on the question of New Caledonia, which had been adopted by consensus in the Special Committee in June 2022. The draft resolution took note of the holding of the third referendum and expressed no reservations regarding its validity, while also setting out the next steps in the self-determination process.

45. The third referendum did not mark the end of the process, but rather the start of the transition period. Dialogue must continue, taking into account social, educational and economic issues, in addition to the need for remembrance. Such dialogue would include the

future institutions of New Caledonia in the French Republic, which would be the subject of a new referendum.

46. In September 2022, the French Minister for the Overseas Territories had visited New Caledonia to meet with New Caledonian stakeholders. A meeting of partners was scheduled on 28 October 2022 to assess the situation following the three referendums, in accordance with the Nouméa Accords, and would be preceded by bilateral meetings between the representatives of the French State and all New Caledonian political forces. Those discussions would make it possible to agree on the method, schedule and areas of work. France was grateful to the United Nations for its impartiality and guidance over the years and hoped to continue in that vein during the transition period. His delegation reiterated the invitation to the Special Committee to visit New Caledonia in 2023, and would continue to call upon the Organization for electoral assistance.

47. **Ms. Maria de Jesus dos Reis Ferreira** (Angola) said that Angola supported the efforts of the Special Committee to implement the decolonization of all the Non-Self-Governing Territories and encouraged it to continue its visits to all such Territories. With regard to Palestine, Angola welcomed all initiatives to re-establish peace in the Middle East, as well as the continued efforts to guarantee the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The parties should therefore resume negotiations to achieve a peaceful and lasting solution, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

48. His delegation supported a just, peaceful, lasting and mutually acceptable solution to the conflict in Western Sahara, in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Constitutive Act of the African Union and all relevant General Assembly resolutions. It welcomed the work of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, including efforts to reconvene negotiations between Morocco and Frente POLISARIO. It called on the States concerned to resume negotiations, under the auspices of the United Nations, to achieve a solution that would restore peace and stability in the region. MINURSO should be enabled to fulfil its mandate to facilitate a referendum in accordance with the settlement plan for Western Sahara, in order to ensure that the Sahrawi people could exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, in line with Security Council resolution 690 (1991). The Security Council should respect the commitment set out in resolution 2602 (2021) to assist the parties to achieve a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution, based on compromise, which would provide for the self-determination of the

people of Western Sahara, in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

49. **Mr. Biaou** (Benin) said that his delegation supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and the relevant Security Council decisions in working towards a peaceful, lasting and just solution, based on compromise, to the question of Western Sahara. It commended the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara for that purpose. It welcomed the efforts made by Morocco at the local level, including the autonomy initiative and its investments in the socioeconomic development of Western Sahara, which enhanced the well-being of the populations concerned. The opening of an increasing number of consulates in the region would help strengthen economic opportunities in the region.

50. The round-table process should resume in the same format and with the participation of all parties to the dispute, in line with Security Council resolution 2602 (2021). All actors in that process should remain committed to reaching a realistic, pragmatic and lasting solution to the question, the settlement of which remained a central concern of the international community and of the affected populations, which legitimately aspired to peace, security and prosperity.

51. **Mr. Nasir** (Indonesia) said that, in order to advance the decolonization agenda, the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories must be the sole focus of the Special Committee. Because decolonization was a complex and multidimensional issue, the Special Committee should thoroughly assess the specific situation of each Non-Self-Governing Territory. Continuous dialogue and consultation among all relevant stakeholders was the only way to reach just, lasting and mutually acceptable solutions. Assistance from the United Nations system was also important, including the good offices of the Secretary-General. Such support would ensure that the Special Committee could effectively fulfil its mandates, including that involving the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), while taking due account of the interests of the population. On the question of Western Sahara, cooperation with the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General would help advance the political process. With regard to the situation in New Caledonia, his delegation encouraged all parties to maintain conditions that were conducive to taking the next step in the post-referendum process.

52. The Committee and the Special Committee should intensify their constructive engagement with all relevant stakeholders and, as the pandemic neared its end,

convene more in-person meetings and visiting missions. International support and cooperation should be strengthened in order to assist the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in facing global challenges, including crises relating to food, energy, finance, the pandemic and climate change. As the 2022 President of the Group of 20, Indonesia was committed to promoting inclusiveness and intensified engagement with developing countries, with a view to better understanding their needs. To that end, it had invited the heads of the Pacific Islands Forum, the Caribbean Community, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the African Union to attend the Group of 20 summit in November 2022. His Government would invite representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Pacific to participate in the Indonesia-Pacific Forum for Development in December 2022.

Mr. Sithole (South Africa), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

53. **Ms. Kuzee** (Namibia) said that the experience of Namibia, whose quest for self-determination had been realized after many years on the decolonization agenda, was often cited as a beacon of hope for the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. However, four decades after the adoption of General Assembly resolution [1514 \(XV\)](#), it was difficult to avoid the impression that its words had become hollow and meaningless, and that it was not able to offer solace or hope.

54. Namibia welcomed the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara to engage with the parties to the conflict. It was regrettable that, as was stated in paragraph 18 of the report of the Secretary-General ([A/77/506](#)), the Personal Envoy had been informed that he would not have full access to stakeholders in Morocco, and had therefore cancelled his visit to the country. The continued disregard for the United Nations-brokered referendum and the lack of implementation of Security Council resolution [658 \(1990\)](#) offered no hope for generations of Sahrawis who had been born into a situation of colonial occupation. The people of Western Sahara should be enabled to exercise the right to self-determination in line with the Charter of the United Nations, and a United Nations-led visiting mission should be deployed to Western Sahara with a view to gaining more accurate information on the situation on the ground.

55. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was integral to the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine. Adequate additional support was needed for United Nations agencies such as UNRWA, to enable them to provide development and humanitarian services

in the occupied territories. The Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law must be applied consistently, as they were the tools to facilitate decolonization and find lasting solutions to long-standing global conflicts.

56. **Mr. Mohammed** (Ethiopia) said that self-determination, including independence, was the only acceptable political solution for the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. To that end, immediate action must be taken to implement the Declaration on decolonization. The international community, including the United Nations development system, should enhance its support for the Territories to enable them to overcome existing and emerging challenges. The work of the Special Committee should be further strengthened to allow the effective implementation of its mandates, and administering Powers should take the necessary measures to promote the socioeconomic advancement of the Territories and to fulfil their responsibilities without conditions.

57. Ethiopia supported the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination, in line with General Assembly resolutions. It called on the parties to resume direct negotiations and pursue an African solution to the matter.

58. A just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was a matter of urgency. All parties must therefore resume talks on achieving the two-State solution, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

59. **Mr. Ziyera** (Zimbabwe) said that the Committee should be guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and seek to defend weaker countries against their more powerful neighbours. His country was deeply concerned about the continued denial of the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. Both Morocco and Frente POLISARIO must implement the commitments made under the settlement plan for Western Sahara, and the General Assembly and Security Council must take concrete steps towards resolving the matter, in line with the settlement plan for Western Sahara and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and Organization of African Unity.

60. According to the European Court of Justice, Western Sahara had clearly defined territory, which should remain one and indivisible. Moreover, in its judgement of 22 September 2022, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights had deemed the occupation by Morocco to be a violation of the right to self-determination, including independence, of Western Sahara, and that all States must assist the Sahrawi

people in the full realization of their right to self-determination and independence. The people of Western Sahara must be afforded the opportunity to freely choose their future, under the auspices of the already agreed referendum. To that end, Zimbabwe urged the parties, the Security Council, the General Assembly and the rest of the international community to support the efforts of the Secretary-General to relaunch the peace process.

61. **Mr. Al-thani** (Qatar) said that colonialism and foreign occupation violated fundamental human rights and dignity. Qatar encouraged the just settlement of territorial disputes in accordance with international law, considering each situation on a case-by-case basis. On the question of the Moroccan Sahara, his delegation emphasized the importance of dialogue and negotiation in achieving a lasting solution. It supported the Secretary-General's efforts to facilitate a lasting and mutually agreed solution through a political process under the auspices of the United Nations. Accordingly, it welcomed the Personal Envoy's recent visit to the region. In that connection, the autonomy initiative proposed by Morocco was a constructive basis for any realistic settlement of the dispute. His delegation hoped that, in its draft resolution on the question, the Committee would express its support for the political process and a definitive and sustainable solution that would protect the interests of all parties, strengthen stability and cooperation in the region, and maintain international peace and security.

62. **Mr. Al-barati** (Yemen) said that Yemen had always condemned all forms of colonialism and supported the inalienable right to self-determination and freedom. It was convinced of the need to respect the human rights principles and refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of States. Any violation of that principle undermined the sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity and socioeconomic development of States, not to mention posing a threat to international peace and security.

63. The Palestinian people had an inalienable right to exercise self-determination and establish an independent sovereign State. Stability in the Middle East, comprehensive peace with Israel and the normalization of relations would remain elusive until the occupation of the Palestinian and Arab lands was brought to an end and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people were guaranteed. Those rights included the right to self-determination, the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and to receive compensation and a just settlement, in line with General Assembly resolution 194 (III), and the right to establish an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State within the 4 June 1967 borders, with

East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

64. His Government condemned all Israeli efforts to alter the legal status, demographics and environment of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan. Any such measures were null and void and without international legal effect. His Government therefore supported the Syrian claim over the whole of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan within the 4 June 1967 borders.

65. His Government recognized the sovereignty of Morocco over the Moroccan Sahara. It commended the efforts of Morocco to agree on a pragmatic, enduring and compromise-based political solution to the question of the Sahara, and welcomed the efforts of the Personal Envoy to relaunch negotiations for that purpose. Lastly, his delegation supported all peaceful measures taken by the United Arab Emirates to restore its rightful sovereignty over the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa.

66. **Mr. Birdi** (India) said that India had always been at the forefront of the struggle against colonialism and apartheid. As the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was under way, the international community must step up its efforts to conclude the decolonization process. It was important to recall that the United Nations had established the principle of self-determination as a vehicle for promoting decolonization, not as a justification for undermining the territorial integrity of any Member State. A pragmatic approach would allow the legitimate wishes of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to be fulfilled. Cooperation with international agencies and actors should be enhanced with a view to channelling resources for building the capacities of the Territories.

67. **Mr. Tommo Monthe** (Cameroon) said that, while his delegation welcomed the information provided by the administering Powers, the actions taken by those Powers varied from one Territory to another, and increased efforts were needed in order to yield tangible results. On the question of Western Sahara, his Government supported the political process promoted by the Secretary-General and the efforts made by his Personal Envoy since the start of his mandate with a view to reaching a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution for all parties. Those efforts had led to constructive dialogue between the parties concerned in 2018 and 2019. Cameroon called on all the parties to continue working towards a consensual, realistic and definitive solution to the issue through a pragmatic and open approach based on compromise. Cameroon called

for the adoption by consensus, as in previous years, of the draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara. A solution to the dispute would lead to greater solidarity, which was an essential pillar in the construction of a prosperous Maghreb region, and would contribute more generally towards unity and prosperity in Africa.

68. **Mr. Darroux** (Dominica) said that his delegation remained committed to the work of the Committee, particularly in the light of the numerous socioeconomic, environmental and cultural challenges facing the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It fully supported the political process with regard to the Moroccan Sahara and the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to achieve a realistic, pragmatic and sustainable solution based on compromise, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution [2602 \(2021\)](#). It hoped for the relaunching of the political process, which provided a platform for political parties and elected officials to exchange views on how best to find a solution. For that purpose, all parties should commit to resuming the round-table process.

69. The Moroccan autonomy initiative provided a serious and credible solution to the conflict. His delegation welcomed the commitment of the Kingdom of Morocco to respect the ceasefire and military agreements, and commended its efforts to develop the Sahara, which had enhanced quality of life and increased opportunities for the inhabitants of the southern provinces; improved the infrastructure, health care, education and housing; and boosted the foreign presence in the region, including the consulate of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. All parties concerned should continue to uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the use of diplomacy as a tool for conflict resolution.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

70. **Mr. Ghelich** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, in response to the false and baseless claims made against the territorial integrity of his country by the representatives of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain at the current meeting, and by the representative of Saudi Arabia at the previous meeting (see [A/C.4/77/SR.7](#), para. 79), it was abundantly clear that the Iranian nation had continuously been one of the pioneers in combating both colonialism and extremism. Such irrelevant, baseless and repetitive allegations not only helped destabilize the region; they also violated international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran had always pursued a policy of friendship and good neighbourliness towards all of its neighbouring countries, and it prioritized strengthening such bilateral

relations. At the same time, his delegation strongly rejected any claim made against the country's territorial integrity. The three islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf had been, and continued to be, part of Iranian territory. In addition, the term "Persian Gulf" had been the correct appellation for the body of water situated between the Arabian peninsula and the Iranian plateau for at least 2,500 years and would always be so.

71. **Mr. Brown** (United Kingdom), replying to the comments made by the representatives of Honduras, Paraguay, Chile, the Russian Federation, Guyana, Saint Lucia, Colombia and Indonesia, said that the United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, or regarding the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination. Consequently, no dialogue on sovereignty was possible unless the Falkland Islanders so wished. The 2013 referendum had sent a clear message that the people of the Falkland Islands did not want a dialogue on sovereignty. Those wishes should be respected. The United Kingdom supported the right of the Falkland Islanders to develop natural resources for their own economic benefit as an integral part of their right to self-determination, which was expressly provided for in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. His country was not militarizing the Falkland Islands. The United Kingdom forces in the South Atlantic were entirely defensive and at an appropriate level to ensure the defence of the Falkland Islands against any potential threats.

72. His Government's relationship with all 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. The people of the British Virgin Islands wanted and deserved change. A commission of inquiry had identified serious impropriety and gross failures of governance by elected officials spanning several administrations. The United Kingdom had worked with the National Unity Government of the British Virgin Islands to turn its commitments to reform into a strong implementation plan with a strict set of milestones.

73. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan), replying to the comments made by the representative of India, said that the Declaration stated that all peoples had the right to self-determination and that the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation was contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It was India that had initially brought the question of Kashmir to the

Security Council, which had explicitly and implicitly rejected the claim of India that Kashmir was legally Indian territory. Moreover, the Council had established self-determination as the principle that would govern the resolution of the dispute. The evocation of terrorism by India was merely an attempt to camouflage its own State terrorism and the treatment of its minorities.

74. Over 200 million Muslims, Christians and other minorities faced discrimination in India. His delegation strongly condemned the latest incidents of violence and hostility perpetrated by Hindutva extremists in India during recent Hindu festivals, which were yet another manifestation of the “saffron terror” that had deeply permeated Indian society. Videos were accumulating on social media showing horrific violence against Muslims. Equally disturbing was the razing of houses belonging to Muslim families in Madhya Pradesh. Violence against Muslims had become the norm in India, especially during religious festivals. The rise in Islamophobia was a direct consequence of the pursuit of the Hindutva agenda by the Bharatiya Janata Party-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Government and its support for anti-Muslim rhetoric.

75. The United Nations and the international community should take note of the rapidly deteriorating situation of Islamophobia in India and hold that country accountable for its failure to ensure the security and well-being of its Muslim citizens. The Organization 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.

76. **Mr. Alvarez** (Argentina), replying to the comments made by the representative of the United Kingdom, 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 over the Malvinas Islands 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 on decolonization had repeatedly adopted resolutions in the same vein, most recently the resolution adopted on 23 June 2022.

77. 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 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 in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee. Furthermore, General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) provided that any attempt at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country was incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. 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.

78. 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 for the General Assembly to pronounce on the modalities 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. 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.

79. The United Kingdom justified its military presence in the South Atlantic as being entirely defensive in nature. However, the Argentine Republic had no other way to assert its rights than diplomacy and peace, as was demonstrated by its willingness to resume the bilateral negotiation process in order to find a peaceful and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute. 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.

80. **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 his 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.

81. **Mr. Mohammed** (Saudi Arabia) said that his delegation endorsed the position expressed by the representative of the United Arab Emirates and 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.

82. **Mr. Ghelich** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, no matter how many times the claim made by the representative of the United Arab Emirates was repeated, it could not dent, undermine or refute the claims of his own 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 three islands of Abu Musa, Lesser Tunb and Greater Tunb, which were an integral part of Iranian territory. The United Arab Emirates should observe the principle of good neighbourliness, respect international law and avoid policies that spread hatred and sectarianism in the region and beyond.

83. His Government had always pursued a policy of friendship and good neighbourliness towards all surrounding countries. It remained ready to expand bilateral relations with its neighbours as a matter of priority. However, the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its sovereignty over the three islands were non-negotiable. The Iranian presence on the islands had been established many years before the birth of the United Arab Emirates; the islands had been and would always be Iranian.

84. **Ms. Almehairbi** (United Arab Emirates) said that Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa were Emirati islands located in the Arabian Gulf. Iran had an obligation to seek a solution to the issue in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. For that purpose, it should respond positively to the invitation extended by the United Arab Emirates,

either by engaging in good-faith negotiations or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.