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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

### Summary record of the 8th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 10 October 2023, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Woszczek . . . . . (Poland)

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

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*In the absence of Ms. Joyini (South Africa), Mr. Woszczek (Poland), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Agenda item 54: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations**  
(continued) (A/78/23 and A/78/63)

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(A/78/67)

**Agenda item 58: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples** (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/78/23, A/78/65 and A/78/249)

1. **Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) said that colonialism had been the darkest moment in the history of human civilization. Through the introduction of slavery and the slave trade, a handful of Western countries had pursued their own interests at the expense of people of other countries, leaving untold human tragedy in their path. The world had yet to emerge from the long shadow of colonialism; there was a direct link between current social and economic inequalities and centuries of colonial exploitation. The international community should come together to safeguard international equity and justice so that the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was the last of its kind. The administering Powers should promote development, safeguard human rights and protect the environment in Non-Self-Governing Territories. Countries that had once pursued or benefited from the colonial system should shoulder their historical burden of guilt, compensate for the consequences of colonialism and renounce their colonial approach to international relations.

2. China continued to firmly support the legitimate sovereignty claim of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands and was a firm supporter of the peaceful

settlement of territorial disputes, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The United Kingdom should resume dialogue with Argentina as soon as possible with a view to finding a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the dispute, in line with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

3. **Mr. Sibomana** (Burundi) said that his delegation appreciated the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Staffan de Mistura, to relaunch the political process under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General with a view to finding a political, realistic, lasting, mutually acceptable and negotiated solution to the regional dispute over Western Sahara, in line with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council adopted since 2007. His delegation welcomed the success of the Personal Envoy's visit to Morocco in September 2023. Security Council resolutions 2414 (2018), 2440 (2018), 2468 (2019), 2494 (2019) and 2548 (2020) remained relevant, and all the parties to the regional dispute should facilitate the resumption of the round-table discussions held in Geneva on 5 and 6 December 2018 and on 21 and 22 March 2019, in the same format and with the same four participants, namely Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and the Polisario, in line with Security Council resolution 2654 (2022).

4. His delegation welcomed the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which had been characterized as serious and credible by the Security Council and was consistent with the relevant resolutions of the Council and the General Assembly. It congratulated Morocco on its investment in the region, which had contributed enormously to the empowerment of the people of Western Sahara, the improvement of the human development index for the region and the promotion of human rights there.

5. **Mr. Alenezi** (Kuwait) said that his delegation welcomed the round-table meetings held in December 2018 and March 2019 with the participation of Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and the Polisario with a view to finding a political solution to the question of the Sahara that would be acceptable to all concerned parties. It was essential to resume those meetings in the same format and the same four participants. His delegation supported the relevant Security Council resolutions, which underscored the need for a realistic, practicable and enduring solution based on compromise. It commended the Personal Envoy's efforts to relaunch the political process, including his visits in 2022 to Rabat, Algiers, Nouakchott and the Tindouf camps in Algeria; the bilateral consultations held in New York in March 2023 with Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and the Polisario; and his visit to Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania in

September 2023. His delegation 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.

6. The Islamic Republic of Iran continued to occupy the three Emirati islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. Those islands were an integral part of the United Arab Emirates, which had sovereignty over their territorial waters, airspace, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone. Any activities carried out by the Islamic Republic of Iran on the three islands were null and void and did not affect the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates. His delegation called on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to the appeals of the United Arab Emirates for the matter to be settled through direct negotiations or referral to the International Court of Justice.

7. His Government was gravely concerned at the recent escalation in the Gaza Strip and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Those events were a result of the ongoing violations and open acts of aggression perpetrated by the Israeli occupation authorities against the Palestinian people. His Government called on the international community, particularly the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility to stop the cycle of violence, protect the Palestinian people, and put an end to the Israeli occupation authorities' acts of provocation, their violations of the sanctity of the Aqsa Mosque, and their policy of settlement expansion. Kuwait maintained its position in support of the rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish an independent State on the borders of 4 June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital.

8. **Mr. Zoumanigui** (Guinea) said that his delegation welcomed the initiatives of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General aimed at relaunching the political dialogue process, including his recent visits to the region and his convening of bilateral consultations. There could be no solution to the Moroccan Sahara issue without inclusive dialogue; for that reason, Guinea supported the idea of regular round-table talks modelled on the talks held in Geneva, with the participation of all the key actors in the dispute, namely Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and the Polisario.

9. The Government of Morocco had shown good faith by promoting socioeconomic development in the Sahara and organizing parliamentary, local and regional elections throughout the country, including in the Moroccan Sahara. Guinea thus staunchly supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which was not only in conformity with international law, the Charter of the

United Nations and the resolutions of the Security Council, but also provided for the protection of human rights in the Sahara region. The Government of Morocco cooperated closely with humanitarian agencies, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations treaty bodies and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. Certain parties to the conflict frequently violated the rights of children and women in the Tindouf camps. Such violations contravened the values of the United Nations and would only encourage terrorism and undermine the peace efforts of Morocco.

10. His Government had opened a consulate in Dakhla, which would allow it to strengthen relations with Morocco and contribute more to the peaceful settlement of question.

11. **Mr. Buanaahagi** (Mozambique) said that his delegation urged Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) to embrace genuine negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations with a view to bringing the long-lasting conflict over the occupied Western Sahara to an end. The international community had become complacent about the conflict, but it could degenerate into a war. The Security Council must act immediately to prevent such an escalation, including by renewing the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which had not yet organized the long-awaited referendum. In line with Security Council resolution [2654 \(2022\)](#), Mozambique would continue to support efforts to achieve a sustainable solution, under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union.

12. The deplorable situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had been marked by armed clashes, killings and displacements involving Israeli forces and Palestinian civilians and armed groups. His delegation unequivocally condemned the recent violence against civilians in Israel and the Palestinian territories, in which hundreds of innocent people had been killed or injured. The bloodshed of 7 October 2023 could not be seen in isolation; it was symptomatic of the escalation of violence in the region. The international community should take action to put an end to the suffering, and both parties to the conflict should immediately cease their provocations and attacks. The relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly continued to provide the only acceptable framework for a political and negotiated solution to the question of Palestine.

13. More than five decades after the adoption of General Assembly resolution [2065 \(XX\)](#) on the question

of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), no progress had been made on the matter. Mozambique encouraged the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume negotiations in order to find a fair and lasting solution to the dispute as soon as possible.

14. **Mr. Tommo Monthe** (Cameroon) said that his delegation expressed its sympathy to Morocco following the earthquake of 8 September 2023. It reaffirmed its support for the political process for Western Sahara under the auspices of the Secretary-General, including the efforts made by the Personal Envoy to find a solution that would be acceptable to all parties. Dialogue should continue in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including resolution 2654 (2022). A solution based on compromise would result in greater unity in the Maghreb region and on the African continent as a whole.

15. **Mr. Yoseph** (Ethiopia) said that Ethiopia maintained its principled position on the cause of decolonization and would continue to support mutually acceptable political solutions for all decolonization questions.

16. All the parties should resume negotiations and work towards an African solution to the question of Western Sahara, which should be a realistic, enduring political solution based on the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

17. Ethiopia paid tribute to the Blue Helmets, who made immense sacrifices for international peace and security. There was a need for peacekeeping solutions that addressed current challenges to peacekeeping as a result of a new political and security landscape, including the use of high-level technology and improvised devices by armed actors and the weakening of national security institutions.

18. The special political missions played an important role in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Those missions should continue to foster partnerships with their respective host Governments and regional and subregional organizations, in line with their mandates. It was also important to support States to build their national capacity to address multidimensional challenges to peace and security.

19. Outer space must remain accessible to all nations on a non-discriminatory basis, irrespective of their levels of scientific, technical or economic development. The role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space should be strengthened in order to facilitate the exchange of information on national and international activities in the exploration of outer space for peaceful uses.

20. Ethiopia firmly supported the use of information and communications technology for peaceful purposes, including the betterment of society. It remained fully committed to freedom of the press and of information. There was a great need for cooperation to combat disinformation and misinformation and their destructive impacts on societies. Global communication should not be used to foment hostility towards any State or community.

21. **Mr. Kwoba** (Uganda) said that decolonization was an ongoing process which entailed not only supporting Non-Self-Governing Territories to achieve independence, but also removing all vestiges of colonialism. A more dynamic approach was needed to the decolonization agenda. The Committee should continue to examine each case with a view to developing proactive, focused tactics. All parties must be open to new policy approaches and practical ways to promote real dialogue. His delegation welcomed the presence and views of petitioners and other stakeholders, whose testimonies could serve to spur the Committee to take action.

22. Uganda remained committed to complete decolonization in Africa and around the world. It was deeply concerning that most of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were not progressing towards decolonization. The United Nations should establish road maps to guide those processes; it was time to rekindle the revolutionary decolonization fervor of the early 1960s and reshape the world by building truly independent nations.

23. **Mr. Biau** (Benin) said that his delegation supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and the decisions of the Security Council aimed at achieving a consensual political solution to the issue of Western Sahara, which would enhance the long-term stability of the Maghreb region. It appreciated the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General to foster consensus on the basis of the Geneva round-table discussions. It welcomed the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which the Security Council had described as serious and credible, and the opening of consulates in Western Sahara by African and other States. The parties should act in a spirit of realism and compromise to find a fair, consensus-based and definitive solution.

24. **Ms. Mokhawa** (Botswana) said administering Powers had the responsibility to create the conditions conducive to the exercise of the right to self-determination by contributing to the political, economic, social, cultural and educational advancement of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It was a matter of concern that, in some Territories,

administering and occupying Powers had delayed the decolonization process. That was the case in Western Sahara, the last colony in Africa, which had been on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories since 1963. Obstacles to the referendum that had originally been scheduled for 1992 continued to be created deliberately. There could be no substitute for the exercise of the right to self-determination, and all parties should recommit to the political process with a view to making the exercise of that inalienable right a reality. The Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara had a significant role to play in the political process, and her delegation hoped that his visits and outreach to neighbouring countries would result in inclusive negotiations.

25. **Ms. Andrews** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) said that it was important to identify the reasons for the lack of progress on decolonization and the parties responsible for the deadlock. The overarching challenge was to find innovative ways to bring an end to the anachronistic condition of contemporary colonialism, against a backdrop of heightened regional and international tensions.

26. The United Nations continued to provide a good framework for achieving a lasting solution to the question of the Sahara. Her delegation welcomed the recent visit of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General to Morocco to facilitate the political process. Recognizing the autonomy initiative presented by Morocco as a unique solution, her delegation implored the parties involved to remain engaged in the political process and work together towards a realistic and enduring solution based on compromise.

27. 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, in line with the relevant resolutions and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Her delegation commended Argentina and the United Kingdom for their efforts in recent years to find common ground, and urged the Secretary-General to use his good offices to facilitate and reinvigorate the process.

28. **Mr. Nena** (Lesotho) said that his delegation was gravely concerned about the conflict which had erupted a few days earlier in the Middle East, claiming the lives of innocent people and causing extensive damage to property. It sent heartfelt condolences to the families on both sides who had lost loved ones and wished the

injured a speedy recovery. War would never bring about a satisfactory resolution of disputes. The parties to the conflict should exercise restraint in order to avoid further loss of life, and the international community should intensify efforts to contain the situation.

29. The information provided by petitioners showed that the need for decolonization was more urgent than ever. Lesotho recognized the ongoing efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General to finding a lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara. However, it remained concerned by the failure to implement the commitments under the settlement plan for Western Sahara developed by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, which had been welcomed by both parties. That situation undermined the integrity of the United Nations. Lesotho aligned itself with the Declaration of the Southern African Development Community Solidary Conference with Western Sahara, in which the Community had called for the urgent implementation of all General Assembly, Security Council and African Union decisions with the aim of holding a free and fair referendum. More than three decades after the Security Council had approved the settlement plan and established MINURSO, the self-determination referendum had yet to be held, and there had been deliberate attempts to hinder the work of the Council and of United Nations agencies, such as OHCHR, which had been prevented from monitoring the human rights situation in Western Sahara. A free and fair referendum was the only way to resolve the conflict and remove Western Sahara from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

30. **Mr. Tito** (Kiribati) said that competition for wealth, power and influence among the well-organized and militarily strong nations of Europe had largely driven the past several hundred years of human history. Those nations had colonized other regions, turning them into dependent territories and asserting ownership and control over all their resources. The statements made by petitioners over the past few days had made it clear that the people of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories wanted to be free from the control of their colonial rulers. The petitioners from the Pacific had demonstrated that they belonged to distinct cultural groups with traditional customs, languages, beliefs and values vastly different from those of their colonial masters. Having heard the response of the colonial Power, his delegation was convinced that it would not be easy to strike a compromise that was acceptable to both sides. The contrasting positions taken by the two sides constituted a dispute that must be dealt with under Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, and that

dispute must be resolved as soon as possible to prevent it from escalating.

31. With respect to the Moroccan Sahara, his delegation welcomed the efforts of the Personal Envoy to facilitate the peace process under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General, including his visits to Rabat and to several Tindouf camps in 2022, his convening of informal consultations in March 2023 with Morocco, Algeria and Polisario, and his September 2023 visit to Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania. His delegation supported the resumption of the Geneva round-table discussions, in the same format and with the same four participants as in 2018 and 2019. It also saw great merit in the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which had been recognized by more than 100 countries as a peaceful way to resolve the conflict.

32. **Mr. Mendes** (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 auspices 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 to facilitate the relaunching of the political process, with a view to reaching a lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara. His delegation welcomed the Personal Envoy's successful visit to the region in September 2023.

33. The Moroccan autonomy initiative was a viable, practical and pragmatic compromise solution. It 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. The commitment of Morocco to the well-being of the people of Western Sahara had encouraged many States, including Guinea-Bissau, to open consulates there. Strong international support for the initiative and constructive dialogue among the parties concerned, under the auspices of the United Nations, were critical to achieving long-lasting peace and security in the region.

34. **Mr. Vujačić** (Serbia) said that the issue of decolonization was intrinsically linked to the Organization's fundamental mission to promote a just and peaceful global order. His delegation supported the resolution of all remaining disputes through constructive dialogue, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions. His delegation was concerned about the inclusion of members of the so-called Kosovo Security Force in infantry units of the British armed forces deployed in the

Malvinas Islands, in contravention of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the General Assembly resolutions on the peaceful resolution of the Malvinas Islands dispute. The parties should resume negotiations, which was the only viable path to achieve a peaceful and lasting resolution. Such negotiations would require mutual understanding and respect for international law, including the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States.

35. **Mr. Youssef Aden Moussa** (Djibouti) said that it was important to find a realistic and pragmatic political solution, based on compromise, to the question of Western Sahara, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007. His delegation supported the political process under the auspices of the United Nations. Resolving the long-standing dispute would strengthen regional cooperation and contribute to stability and security in the Sahel region. His delegation encouraged all stakeholders to support the Moroccan autonomy initiative, which was in line with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions and provided a solid and constructive basis for discussions aimed at reaching a peaceful, negotiated and mutually acceptable solution.

36. The cooperation of Morocco with OHCHR had led to improvements in access to justice, gender equality, protection for the rights of minorities and efforts to address discrimination. His delegation also commended Morocco for cooperating with MINURSO and respecting the ceasefire, and urged the other parties to do the same, in the interest of the stability of the entire region.

37. **Ms. Fyneah** (Liberia) said that her delegation welcomed the efforts of the Personal Envoy to relaunch the political process under the exclusive auspices of the Secretary-General, including by undertaking several visits to the region and by holding informal consultations in March 2023 in New York with Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania. In September 2023, during a visit to Dakhla, the Personal Envoy had met with elected officials, who had emphasized the importance of preserving Moroccan sovereignty as the foundation for the implementation of the Moroccan autonomy initiative. The round-table process should resume in the same format and with the same four participants, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2654 (2022). The four participants should remain engaged in the political process with a view to reaching a realistic, pragmatic and lasting solution based on compromise. The Moroccan autonomy initiative, which had the backing of over 100 Member States, was the most serious and credible solution and

was consistent with international law, the relevant resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations.

38. Her delegation welcomed the socioeconomic development of the Moroccan Sahara, including the construction of infrastructure and the creation of a free trade zone, and the presence of over 30 consulates in Dakhla and Laayoune. Morocco had made substantial achievements in the field of human rights, as attested to in the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2654 (2022), in which the Council noted the role of the regional commissions of the National Human Rights Council in Dakhla and Laayoune and the bilateral cooperation with OHCHR.

39. Her delegation commended Morocco for fully respecting the ceasefire and urged the other parties to do the same. Her delegation denounced efforts to obstruct the freedom of movement of MINURSO personnel and supplies, as well as violations of the fundamental rights of the population living in the Tindouf camps, in particular women and children. The refugees must be registered, in accordance with international humanitarian law and the relevant resolutions. Her delegation also condemned the violations committed by the Polisario against refugees, including the denial of humanitarian aid, as detailed in reports issued by the World Food Programme and the European Anti-Fraud Office.

40. **Mr. Mawire** (Zimbabwe) said that the people of Zimbabwe understood the pain of being denied the right to self-determination and stood in solidarity with the Sahrawi people in their legitimate struggle for independence. For over three decades, the commitments made under the settlement plan for Western Sahara, which provided for the holding of referendum on self-determination, had been deliberately undermined. With some actors now manoeuvring to have the question of Western Sahara removed from the agenda, his delegation urged the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples to uphold its long-standing and unequivocal position that Western Sahara remained a Non-Self-Governing Territory whose people had the inalienable right to self-determination, which must be exercised through a free and fair referendum. Zimbabwe would respect the outcome of such a referendum.

41. The breakdown of the 1991 ceasefire was concerning, as the continued military confrontations undermined the relaunch of the peace process. His delegation called for a return to direct dialogue between Morocco and Frente POLISARIO, without preconditions. The Security Council must shoulder its

responsibility and take steps to resolve the matter, in line with the relevant United Nations and African Union resolutions. His delegation acknowledged the efforts and resources expended by the United Nations and called for MINURSO to be allowed to implement its mandate fully.

42. **Mr. Nyarku** (Ghana) said that the guiding principles set forth in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) continued to be relevant to populations in all Non-Self-Governing Territories. Four decades after the declaration of the first International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, and with 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories still under various forms of occupation, the Committee must evolve from being a mere spectator and post office for petitions and become an active guarantor of the human and economic rights of the peoples of the Territories. It was not possible to continue reaffirming support for the Committee's mandates without seeking accountability or taking practical steps for their implementation. Negotiation processes towards self-determination and relations between Non-Self-Governing Territories and administering Powers must be enhanced.

43. While administering Powers must protect the populations and resources of occupied Territories, and pursue policies that promoted their economic, social and cultural advancement, the important role of the United Nations in providing vital development assistance could not be diminished. The administering Powers and the Non-Self-Governing Territories should continue to support the work of the Special Committee, including by facilitating missions to the Territories and by reporting on progress in the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

44. **Ms. Fernández Palacios** (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in response to the comments made by the representative of the United States of America concerning Puerto Rico at the seventh meeting of the Committee (see A/C.4/78/SR.7), said that it was technically and politically incorrect to say that Puerto Rico was an integral part of the United States. Such a statement was an attempt to normalize the colonial domination of Puerto Rico and make it seem fair, acceptable and consistent with international law. The United States had previously sought to have Puerto Rico removed from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories in order to reduce international support for the inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence.

45. It had been 125 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. The United States Supreme Court, Congress and even the Administration itself had confirmed that Puerto Rico did not enjoy sovereignty and was a colonial territory entirely subject to the rule of Washington, D.C. The Supreme Court had missed numerous opportunities to overturn the racist Insular Cases, which had established that Puerto Rico belonged to, but was not part of, the United States. The euphemistic expression “unincorporated Territory”, as the United States referred to the colony, was incompatible with its being an integral part of the United States.

46. The Special Committee had adopted 41 resolutions 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). In recent years, United States federal power over Puerto Rico had increased, including as a result of the establishment of the Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico, whose members were appointed by the President of the United States. Her delegation urged the United States to allow the Puerto Rican people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence and to make sovereign decisions to address their urgent economic and social needs.

47. **Ms. Meyrick** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in response to the comments made by the representatives of China, Mozambique, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Serbia, said that the United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and surrounding maritime areas, or about the right of Falkland Islanders to self-determination, a principle that was enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in article 1 of the two International Covenants on human rights. The Falkland Islanders had as much right to determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development as any other people.

48. The armed forces of the United Kingdom routinely had exchange arrangements with partner armed forces. A small number of liaison officers from the Kosovo Security Force had been deployed to Falkland Islands alongside a British Army unit that had coincidentally been due to deploy to the Falkland Islands. The arrangement was part of a broader defence agreement that formed part of the continuing partnership of the United Kingdom with the Kosovo Security Force to promote interoperability.

49. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, notwithstanding the false and baseless allegations made against the territorial integrity of his country by the representative of Kuwait, 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. The Islamic Republic of Iran reaffirmed its sovereignty over those islands and strongly rejected any claims to the contrary. The main priority of his Government was to strengthen bilateral relations with its neighbours. However, the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its sovereignty over those islands were non-negotiable.

50. **Mr. Alvarez** (Argentina), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in response to the comments made by the representative of the United Kingdom concerning the question of the Malvinas Islands, said that his delegation reiterated the statements made by the President of Argentina to the General Assembly on 19 September 2023 (A/78/PV.5) and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina at the meeting of the Special Committee on 20 June 2023 (A/AC.109/2023/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 on 20 June 2023.

51. In line with the Charter of the United Nations, all Member States had a responsibility to resolve disputes peacefully and negotiate in good faith. Contrary to the position of the United Kingdom, the obligation to resume negotiations did not depend on the wishes of the inhabitants implanted by the colonial Power in the Islands, but, rather, was enshrined in Article 2, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations and in the resolutions on the question of the Malvinas Islands adopted by 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 over the sovereignty of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia



Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, as affirmed in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee. 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. Lastly, 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.

52. **Ms. Matar** (United Arab Emirates), speaking also on behalf of Kuwait in exercise of the right of reply, said that Iran had no legitimate right to the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. It was regrettable that Iran continued to deny the historical fact that the three islands in the Arabian Gulf were an integral part of the United Arab Emirates. Although the issue was not, strictly speaking, part of the agenda of the Committee, the ongoing illegal Iranian occupation of the islands contravened the principle of self-determination, which was at the heart of the Committee's work. Accordingly, Iran should desist from making baseless claims and respond positively to calls for a peaceful solution to be found either through direct negotiations or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

53. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, 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. The islands had been settled at a time when no country bore the name of the United Arab Emirates. Since then, they had been an integral part of Iran, and they would always remain so.

54. **Ms. Matar** (United Arab Emirates), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that there was no need to receive history lessons from the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The three Emirati islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, in the Arabian Gulf, were an integral part of the United Arab Emirates and would remain so. Her delegation hoped that the dispute could be resolved through peaceful means, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, either through good-faith bilateral negotiations or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

55. **Ms. Shapir Ben Naftaly** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that several representatives had commented on recent developments in Israel and their cause, without even mentioning Hamas. For years, some Member States had ignored the fact that Hamas was a brutal and barbaric terrorist organization, despite her country's efforts to highlight the group's hatred of the Jewish people and its calls for the destruction of Israel. By ignoring the facts, those Member States were contributing to the actions of terror groups. For years, people had blamed Israel for conditions in Gaza, turning a blind eye to the diversion of humanitarian aid by Hamas to build its terror arsenal, while Hamas used civilian infrastructure as military command centres to unleash terror on the Israeli people. On 7 October 2023, Hamas had entered Israel, beheaded children and burned people alive. It was currently threatening to post execution videos online of Israeli children held captive in Gaza. Member States that did not condemn Hamas and its unspeakable brutality were legitimizing its actions and supporting terror.

56. **Mr. Woodfield** (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom had a modern relationship with all its Overseas Territories based on partnership, shared values and the right of the people of each Territory to choose to remain British or not. Those Territories had a large measure of internal self-government, subject only to the United Kingdom retaining powers that enabled it to carry out its obligations under international law. The United Kingdom-Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council met annually to monitor and drive forward collective priorities for action. The United Kingdom was committed to supporting the Territories in achieving those priorities, including environmental protection, and to carrying out its constitutional responsibilities, including ensuring security. His Government provided financial and practical support to build local capacity and resilience, and various infrastructure projects were under way.

57. His delegation was pleased that the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, the elected representative of the people of Gibraltar, would address the Committee directly (see [A/C.4/78/SR.13](#)). The long-standing commitment of the United Kingdom to the people of Gibraltar remained unchanged. The United Kingdom would neither enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their freely and democratically expressed wishes, nor participate in a process of sovereignty negotiations with which Gibraltar was not content. Following the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union, the Governments of the United Kingdom, Gibraltar and Spain had agreed a political

framework on future arrangements in respect of Gibraltar that served the interests of all parties. Negotiations between the United Kingdom and the European Union had begun in October 2021. The Governments of the United Kingdom and Gibraltar were working side by side to conclude a United Kingdom-European Union treaty as soon as possible.

58. The United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and surrounding maritime areas, nor about the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination, a principle that was 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. The 2013 referendum, in which 99.8 per cent of voters had chosen to maintain the current status of the Islands as an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom, had sent a clear message that the people of the Islands did not want a dialogue on sovereignty. Those wishes, expressed freely, should be respected.

59. The Falkland Islanders were an established and diverse community, with families able to trace their South Atlantic ancestry back 10 generations and over 60 nationalities represented. The Falkland Islanders remained resilient in the face of harassment from Argentina and looked forward to a future in which they could travel the world freely without fear of backlash from Argentina, share their knowledge on environmental protection with international partners, and have a peaceful and cooperative relationship with their neighbours. His Government continued to hope for a stronger, more productive relationship with Argentina, including in relation to the Falkland Islands, something that would be in the interests of all. However, that must not come at the expense of the right of the Falkland Islanders to determine their own future. No dialogue on sovereignty was possible unless the Falkland Islanders so wished.

60. **Mr. Alvarez** (Argentina), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation reiterated the statements made by the President of Argentina to the General Assembly on 19 September 2023 (A/78/PV.5) and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina at the meeting of the Special Committee on 20 June 2023 (A/AC.109/2023/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.

61. In line with the Charter of the United Nations, all Member States had a responsibility to resolve disputes peacefully and negotiate in good faith. Contrary to the position of the United Kingdom, the obligation to resume negotiations did not depend on the wishes of the inhabitants implanted by the colonial Power in the Islands, but, rather, was enshrined in Article 2, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations and in the resolutions on the question of the Malvinas Islands adopted by 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 over the sovereignty of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, as affirmed in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee.

62. The vote in the Malvinas Islands was simply a unilateral action undertaken by the United Kingdom, devoid of any legal value; it therefore in no way changed the essence of the question of the Malvinas, 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 subjects 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 those inhabitants were not 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.

63. His Government’s commitment to ensuring that the South Atlantic remained a zone of peace and cooperation included a renewed commitment to safeguarding natural resources, the environment and marine biodiversity, and establishing sustainable fisheries and marine protected areas. Lastly, 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 its national territory.

64. **Ms. Gómez Aoiz** (Spain), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Gibraltar was a colony that destroyed the national unity and territorial integrity of Spain and was incompatible with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). The only way to resolve the question was for Spain and the United

Kingdom to resume bilateral negotiations, as recommended by the United Nations. Only the United Nations could decide when the process of decolonization of Gibraltar was complete.

65. In line with United Nations doctrine, Spain rejected the efforts of the administering Power and the authorities of the colonized Territory to change their political relationship and deny the existence of colonial ties, while at the same time claiming the right to self-determination. The relationship was not a modern one; it was a colonial situation in new garb. Given that Spain was the country whose territory was colonized, Spain was the country with the right to decolonize Gibraltar through the restoration of its national unity and territorial integrity. Spain reiterated its willingness to enter into negotiations with the United Kingdom, as called for by the United Nations.

66. The exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union, and the end of the unique relationship between Gibraltar and the European Union, through the administering Power, provided an opportunity to try to resolve many of the problems arising from the colonial situation. In the context of negotiations to ensure that the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union was as orderly as possible, the two countries had negotiated an international agreement on taxation and the protection of financial interests regarding Gibraltar, which had entered into force in 2021. Spain and the United Kingdom had also signed four memorandums of understanding concerning, respectively, citizens' rights, police and customs cooperation, the environment, and tobacco and other products. At present, only the memorandum on citizens' rights was in force.

67. On 31 December 2020, Spain and the United Kingdom had reached an understanding that should serve as the basis for a future agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom on Gibraltar. As noted by the Prime Minister of Spain in his address to the General Assembly on 20 September 2023 (A/78/PV.7), such an agreement must fully respect United Nations doctrine regarding Gibraltar and the legal position of Spain regarding sovereignty and jurisdiction over the Territory. Regardless of any future agreement on relations between the European Union and the United Kingdom in relation to Gibraltar, her delegation reiterated that the only solution to the dispute over Gibraltar was a decolonization process negotiated between Spain and the United Kingdom under the terms established by the United Nations.

68. **Mr. Al-Fatlawi** (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.

69. 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.

70. 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.

71. The Palestinian people must be enabled to exercise all their inalienable rights and establish an independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The State of Palestine should unconditionally be granted full membership in the United Nations. His delegation condemned in the strongest terms the crimes that had continued for decades, including excessive use of force by the Israeli occupation forces, the destruction of homes and infrastructure, and the killing of civilians.

*The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.*