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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 4th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 5 October 1999, at 10 a.m.

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

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## Requests for hearings

1. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to 12 communications containing requests for hearings on agenda items 18 (A/C.4/54/2, A/C.4/54/3 and Add.1 and 2, A/C.4/54/4 and Add.1-3 and A/C.4/54/5), 94 (A/C.4/54/6) and 96 (A/C.4/54/7 and Add.1). He took it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

2. *It was so decided.*

3. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that he had received another request for a hearing on agenda item 96. He suggested that, in accordance with the usual practice, the communication should be circulated as a Committee document.

4. *It was so decided.*

## Agenda item 18: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items)

### *Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories*

5. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Caruana, Chief Minister of Gibraltar, took a place at the table.*

6. **Mr. Caruana** (Chief Minister of Gibraltar) said that the essence of the Gibraltar issue was simple enough: Spain claimed from the administering Power, the United Kingdom, the return of sovereignty over Gibraltar, which Spain had ceded to Great Britain in 1713 under the Treaty of Utrecht. The people of Gibraltar, for their part, asserted their right to self-determination enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations for the benefit of all colonial peoples.

7. Spain's position was based on two fundamental principles which were misconceived or inapplicable. First, Spain contended that, in the matter of the decolonization of Gibraltar, the governing principle should be, not the principle of self-determination, but the principle of territorial integrity which existed in the doctrine of the United Nations in the context of decolonization.

8. The application of the principle of territorial integrity would, according to Spain, require the transfer of sovereignty over Gibraltar by the United Kingdom to Spain, contrary to the unanimous wishes of the people of Gibraltar. That was a curious proposition between three democracies.

9. Spain's references to two or three General Assembly resolutions adopted in the 1960s were also irrelevant and

amounted to an attempt to distort their meaning. In fact, what those resolutions did was assert the indisputable doctrine that the principle of self-determination was not applicable to the people of a territory which formed a constituent part of a Member State to enable them to secede from that State. Gibraltar, however, had not been part of Spain for 295 years and was thus not seeking to secede from Spain. The principle of the non-disruption of territorial integrity was therefore not applicable in the case of Gibraltar.

10. The United Nations doctrine, reaffirmed in the omnibus resolution on decolonization which was adopted every year, was that in the decolonization process there was no alternative to the principle of self-determination. Consequently, the principle of territorial integrity was in no way applicable to the process of the decolonization of Non-Self-Governing Territories. In that connection, it should be emphasized that Gibraltar was a colony since it was on the United Nations list of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. In the case of Namibia, the International Court of Justice had held that international law in regard to Non-Self-Governing Territories as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations made the principle of self-determination applicable to all of them. In calling Gibraltar a "colonial enclave", Spain sought in vain to suggest that there was a special doctrine relating to the decolonization of such enclaves. The general principles of self-determination and decolonization remained unalterable, whatever semantic labels might be used. It was interesting to note that, in the case of its own enclaves, Ceuta and Melilla, to which Morocco laid claim, Spain made unjustified attempts to draw a distinction between their status and the status of Gibraltar.

11. The second of Spain's fundamental propositions was that the right of the people of Gibraltar to self-determination had been denied by the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, under which Spain had the first option to Gibraltar if Great Britain were to alienate sovereignty over it. Even if the Treaty could be interpreted in such a way, given the current principles of international law, there would be no grounds for denying the people of Gibraltar the right to self-determination.

12. In an attempt to discredit the people of Gibraltar, Spain systematically made statements which were untrue or irrelevant. It contended, *inter alia*, that the people of Gibraltar (whom it referred to as "inhabitants") were not indigenous and were therefore not a colonized people. There was, however, no principle that self-determination was available only to "indigenous peoples". If there had been, many former colonies would not now be sovereign

independent States. The Charter of the United Nations granted the right of self-determination to the people of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

13. Gibraltar currently enjoyed a large measure of self-government. It had its own elected parliament and Government and had considerable political and administrative autonomy.

14. Gibraltar was totally self-sufficient economically. Far from being a parasite on Spain, it gave employment to over 2,000 Spanish workers. He once again urged representatives of the United Nations to visit Gibraltar in order to ascertain that what he had said was true.

15. In his address to the General Assembly, Mr. Matutes, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, had said that Spain had submitted a proposal to the United Kingdom that took into account the interests of the population of Gibraltar. The so-called "Matutes proposals" provided for the inevitable transfer of sovereignty to Spain after a transitional period during which the United Kingdom and Spain would exercise joint sovereignty over the Territory. That was totally unacceptable to Gibraltar. At the present time, Gibraltar was neither Spain's to claim nor the United Kingdom's to give away. Only the people of Gibraltar themselves could determine their own political future. The United Kingdom had rejected those proposals as contrary to the wishes of the people of Gibraltar, and Spain now stated that the proposals should be regarded as a "starting point". That was positive if it meant that Spain was able to seek a solution to the issue which would be in accordance with the wishes of the people of Gibraltar.

16. Gibraltar was not afraid of a dialogue with Spain. The Government of Gibraltar was committed to the principle that a dialogue with an open agenda was the only constructive way to move forward in resolving the existing problems and establishing a basis for a viable relationship between Gibraltar and Spain based on friendship, cooperation and mutual respect. However, any dialogue on the question of Gibraltar must be on the basis of the overriding principle that the people of Gibraltar had the right freely to decide their own future. The question of the decolonization of Gibraltar in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples could not, by definition, be decided on the basis of a bilateral resolution of differences between the administering Power and a third party territorial claimant.

17. For its part, Gibraltar could not stand still. It did not accept that its options were to remain a colony of the United Kingdom or to become part of Spain. Gibraltar

would achieve decolonization through the exercise of its right to self-determination, by a process of reform and the modernization of its current Constitution. To that end, a Select Committee on Constitutional Reform had recently been established to draw up appropriate proposals which would be submitted to the United Kingdom and which could put an end to the colonial status of Gibraltar in a manner acceptable to the people of Gibraltar.

18. The position of the United Nations with regard to Gibraltar was unclear when it spoke of the "eradication of colonialism": he wondered whether it advocated the handing over of Gibraltar to Spain despite the unanimous wishes of its people, or whether it intended to promote the exercise of Gibraltar's right to self-determination. Only the latter was consistent with the mandate of the Special Committee on decolonization.

19. *Mr. Caruana withdrew.*

#### *Hearing of petitioners*

20. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bossano (Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

21. **Mr. Bossano** (Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party), referring to his previous statement to the Committee in October 1995, reaffirmed the continued commitment of the opposition parties in Gibraltar to the eradication of colonialism and the exercise of the right to self-determination. The Socialist Party and the Liberal Party in Gibraltar had a common foreign policy, committed to the rejection of the Brussels negotiating process, a process which was linked chronologically to General Assembly resolution 2353 (XXII). That resolution was unworthy of the United Nations and was a disgrace to the Fourth Committee.

22. The claim by the colonial Power that the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 constrained the right of Gibraltar to self-determination was incorrect from the standpoint of international law. There was no doubt that the United Kingdom knew that and that its continued use of that argument was a smokescreen to cover up its failure to honour its obligations under the Charter. If the Treaty of Utrecht was really the stumbling block, as the United Kingdom claimed, it was essential to obtain independent objective expert advice on the matter.

23. In 1991, the King of Spain had called for a solution to the question of Gibraltar's future that would be in accordance with the spirit of the times. Subsequently, the United Kingdom had begun to explore the possibilities of engaging Spain in a tripartite dialogue on the question of

Gibraltar. Those attempts had, however, led nowhere, since it had soon become obvious that Spain's position was based on what it had achieved by the Brussels Declaration of 1984. The United Kingdom was committed to entering into a bilateral process with the Gibraltarians and it was also committed to a bilateral process with Spain; the latter had resulted in Spanish proposals for the decolonization of Gibraltar. The United Kingdom had, however, failed to reply to Spain. The opposition parties in Gibraltar wanted the United Kingdom to reply to Spain and the reply had to be rejection.

24. Nevertheless, the opposition parties in Gibraltar wished to maintain normal relations with Spain, but on the basis of respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, not at the sacrifice of the inalienable universal right of the Gibraltarians, as a colonial people, to self-determination. The events in East Timor provided strong evidence that, on the eve of the year 2000, the struggle against imperialism and colonialism was as real, and could be as brutal, as it had been 54 years earlier, when the Charter had been written. As the members of the Special Committee on decolonization had rightly pointed out, claims by the colonial Powers that there were no longer any colonial situations were not consistent with reality.

25. In many ways, the current situation in Gibraltar was worse than it had been in 1963, when the question had first been raised in the Committee. The level of self-government achieved de facto in 1963 had, since 1973, been whittled away to such a degree that the colonial Power had begun to determine what rights resulting from its membership in the European Union applied to Gibraltar and what responsibilities Gibraltar had to shoulder. The United Kingdom was using Gibraltar as a bargaining chip in the European Union by making concessions in matters relating to the Gibraltarians. The most recent example of that approach had been the terms of the Amsterdam Treaty relating to Gibraltar.

26. The opposition parties in Gibraltar had agreed to participate in the work of the Select Committee with a view to drawing up, under the auspices of the United Nations, proposals for decolonization which would lead to a change in the international status of Gibraltar. The opposition would oppose any so-called "modernization" of the Constitution that would leave the international status of the Territory unchanged. It fully supported the statement by the Special Committee on decolonization when it had pledged to continue its efforts to bring a speedy end to all forms of colonialism. The opposition in Gibraltar urged the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee to take a

fresh look at the question of Gibraltar and abandon its support of the convenient *modus vivendi* between the colonial Power and the claimant State. The opposition parties in Gibraltar were prepared to offer any assistance to achieve decolonization by the year 2000. In exchange, they urged the Committee to listen to the voice of the people of Gibraltar. The opposition parties in Gibraltar reiterated what they had said in 1963: "The soil of Gibraltar belongs to the Gibraltarians and no one else, and the Gibraltarians do not want to be a part of Spain".

27. *Mr. Bossano withdrew.*

**Agenda item 94: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations**

*Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories*

28. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Corbin (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) took a place at the table.*

29. **Mr. Corbin** (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) said that his address in the General Assembly Hall to the participants in the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the sustainable development of small island developing States had been a defining moment in the successful implementation of the spirit of the resolutions emanating from the Fourth Committee which had historically made a link between the process of self-determination and the participation of the Territories in the work of the United Nations system.

30. Reference to participation in United Nations programmes and measures had been included in the reports of the regional seminars organized by the Special Committee on decolonization during the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Most recently, participants in the highly successful seminar held in Saint Lucia had stressed the importance of involving the Territories in the implementation of the programmes of action adopted at various United Nations world conferences and of other socio-economic and technical programmes and activities of the United Nations. At the United Nations Donors Conference for Small Island Developing States, the Government of the United States Virgin Islands had submitted a regional project with a view to assisting the small island Non-Self-Governing Territories in their implementation of the United Nations plans of action on sustainable development. The endorsement of that project

by the Fourth Committee would assist the Territories in their search for the necessary external resources for its implementation.

31. At the Regional Seminar held in Saint Lucia, emphasis had been placed on the need for increased membership or observer status for the Territories in international organizations, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The Government of the United States Virgin Islands expressed its gratitude to the States members of the Special Committee on decolonization for having adopted the recommendations of the Seminar, instead of simply taking note of them, as had occurred in the past, and for having referred them to the Fourth Committee. The report contained in the annex to chapter II of document A/54/23 merited close attention, as did the recommendations of other seminars, as the ideas set out therein provided a blueprint for the consideration of decolonization issues in the coming years.

32. The agenda item under consideration was a critical one for the socio-economic development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It was gratifying to note that information on specific assistance provided by the United Nations system was included in the sections on the 11 small island Territories.

33. There were currently some Territories which were participating as associate members or observers in the work of United Nations specialized agencies and regional economic commissions and in the world conferences and the subsequent special sessions of the General Assembly. Since over the years requests for participation had been approved by consensus, it was not clear why the specialized agency resolution submitted to the Fourth Committee and the companion resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council did not achieve the same unanimity. The United States Virgin Islands urged the Fourth Committee and the Council to adopt such resolutions by consensus. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, in its resolution 574 (XXVII) of 1998 had expressed support for the granting of observer status in the Economic and Social Council to Territories which were associate members of the United Nations regional commissions. In accordance with the principle of universality proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, observer status should also be granted to such Territories in the General Assembly.

34. There was some concern that only a small number of United Nations organs had responded to the appeal in the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/119). The Chairman

of the Fourth Committee should reiterate that appeal for information on the implementation of the Declaration on decolonization. In connection with the resolution on the activities of the specialized agencies with regard to the implementation of the Declaration, it should be noted that, despite the recommendations and the appeals contained therein, no specific proposals concerning assistance to the Territories had been received from the competent organs of the United Nations; there was no evidence that a review of progress in the fulfilment of mandates relating to the Non-Self-Governing Territories had been included in the agenda of meetings of the relevant governing bodies; and no reports had been submitted on the question of the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. It was essential to follow more closely the implementation of General Assembly resolutions relating to the small Territories, especially when specific measures by the United Nations system were involved.

35. The progress which had been achieved in drawing the attention of the United Nations system to socio-economic problems and constitutional processes in the Non-Self-Governing Territories had largely been possible through the efforts of the Territories themselves, although their potential was limited without assistance from the United Nations. Participation by the Non-Self-Governing Territories in programmes and activities of the United Nations system would promote the process of decolonization.

36. *Mr. Corbin withdrew.*

**Agenda item 18: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples** (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*) (A/54/23 (chap. VI, IX-XI and XIII.D-F and H), A/54/58-S/1999/7, A/54/151-S/1999/718, A/54/219 and A/54/337; A/AC.109/1999/1, 3-9, 11 and 13-18)

**Agenda item 92: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations** (*continued*) (A/54/23 (chap. VIII and XIII.A) and A/54/343)

**Agenda item 93: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories** (*continued*) (A/54/23 (chap. V and XIII.B))

**Agenda item 94: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the**

**United Nations** (*continued*) (A/54/3 (chap. VII.D), A/54/23 (chap. VIII and XII.C) and A/54/119; E/1999/69)

**Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council** (*continued*) (A/54/3 (chap. VII.D))

**Agenda item 95: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories** (*continued*) (A/54/267)

37. **Mr. Macedo** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Rio Group, expressed regret that, as the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was drawing to a close, there were still a number of unresolved problems in that area. The Rio Group believed that it was essential for all the parties concerned to redouble their efforts to ensure that the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories completed the process of decolonization and that the world entered the twenty-first century free of the vestiges of colonialism.

38. There was no doubt that the successes achieved in the process of decolonization could be attributed above all to the Special Committee on decolonization. As the Secretary-General stated in his report, in the past few years the Committee had endeavoured to develop cooperation between Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system and other parties to achieve the aims of the Decade and afford all necessary assistance to the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Rio Group hoped that, in its work, the Special Committee would enjoy the support of all the administering Powers, which bore the responsibility for the establishment of appropriate conditions for the free exercise by the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories of their right to self-determination in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and in that connection he called upon the administering Powers to make it their obligation to ensure that the Non-Self-Governing Territories could look to the future with confidence.

39. The Rio Group also called upon the administering Powers to take measures to guarantee the inalienable right of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to their natural resources, as well as their right to control the future exploitation of those resources. It was no less important to refrain from placing nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in those Territories and in adjacent areas.

40. On the other hand, it was essential to continue the practice of sending missions to some of the Territories at the request of their inhabitants, since such missions were

helpful in the search for ways leading to self-determination. The indispensable source of current information on the Territories continued to be seminars which were useful in making known the measures taken in the Territories in the context of the decolonization process and in promoting those measures.

41. The Rio Group noted the importance of the signing by Indonesia and Portugal of the agreements on East Timor and welcomed the decision taken by the Government of Indonesia to hold a national referendum on 30 August concerning the granting of independent status to that Territory. In that connection, it regretted the outbreak of violence that had occurred recently in East Timor and appealed to all the parties concerned to continue their efforts with a view to guaranteeing respect for the wishes of the people of East Timor and implementing the results of the referendum.

42. With regard to Western Sahara, the Group noted with satisfaction the cooperation of the Government of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) with the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), the Identification Commission and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and also the successes achieved in the repatriation of Saharan refugees and members of their families.

43. The Rio Group welcomed the progress made in the identification of those entitled to vote in the referendum in Western Sahara, as well as the start that had been made in the process of reviewing the appeals of the representatives of the tribal groupings which had been refused the right to vote. It was to be hoped that the review of the appeals would not turn into yet another identification process which would further delay the holding of the planned referendum. In that connection, he appealed to the parties concerned to respect the decisions of the Identification Commission on those appeals.

44. The Rio Group regretted the recent outbreak of violence at Laayoune, which had resulted in casualties among the civilian population, and called upon all the parties to refrain from any actions which could create an obstacle to the decolonization of the last colonial Territory in the African continent.

45. Turning to the situation in his own region, he expressed confidence that the strengthening of bilateral relations between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom and the recent signing by both countries of a joint statement would establish a solid basis for future

negotiations which would once and for all lead to a settlement of the dispute concerning sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on decolonization.

46. The Rio Group noted with satisfaction the successes achieved in the process of the critical review of the work of the Special Committee, in particular the informal agreements reached with the administering Powers to work out specific plans of action to study the constitutional status of 12 small Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Rio Group was fully committed to decolonization, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter, resolution 1514 (XV) and the other relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee. It strongly supported the work of the Committee and called upon it to work tirelessly to bring the process of decolonization to a logical end.

47. **Mrs. Nuanthasing** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that, as a member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), her country fully supported the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of ASEAN, but that she would like to highlight some points which she considered of particular importance.

48. One of the main achievements of the United Nations since its inception had been that the peoples of many countries which had formerly been under colonial rule had exercised their right to self-determination and had attained their independence. The process of decolonization had been greatly accelerated by the adoption in 1960 of the historic Declaration on decolonization. Despite that success, however, the process of decolonization had not been completed, but had entered a more complex phase: near the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, some 2 million people in 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories had not yet exercised their right to choose their own destiny. It was therefore essential to intensify international cooperation so that the peoples of those Territories could exercise that right, and it was to be hoped that the administering Powers would cooperate closely with the United Nations and the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories so as to create the necessary conditions for them to exercise their right to self-determination and choose their future political status freely, in accordance with the Charter and the relevant resolutions and decisions of the United Nations.

49. Her delegation reaffirmed that the principles of self-determination emanating from the Charter of the United

Nations and General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV) were still relevant and remained applicable guidelines for the exercise of self-determination in all Territories regardless of their size, geographical location, population and natural resources.

50. Most of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were small and their economies were very vulnerable. The necessary assistance should therefore be given to them and the administering Powers had the responsibility, under the Charter, to promote the political, economic and social progress of the people of those Territories so that they could achieve a certain level of self-sufficiency. At the same time, the United Nations and the specialized agencies should expand their development assistance programmes and help them to establish the sound economic foundation and political education necessary for self-government. Foreign interest groups working in the Territories should take into full account the needs of the local population and take steps to protect their natural and cultural heritage.

51. With regard to Western Sahara, her delegation noted with satisfaction the progress achieved by the United Nations through MINURSO in the process of the identification of those eligible to vote in the referendum planned for July 2000. It hoped that the parties concerned would do everything in their power to ensure that the referendum was held at the appointed time.

52. Her delegation shared the view that the dissemination of information on decolonization in accordance with Article 73 *e* of the Charter and the holding of regional seminars were among the effective means of ascertaining the wishes of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and their situation. The United Nations must, however, send visiting missions to the Territories in order to facilitate the full and effective implementation of the Declaration and she called on the administering Powers to cooperate with such missions in every way possible.

53. On the threshold of the new millennium, all the people of the world should rededicate themselves to the complete eradication of colonialism. Her country would continue to lend its support to the Special Committee in its endeavours to put an end, once and for all, to colonialism in all its forms and manifestations and to cooperate with other delegations to ensure the attainment of that noble goal.

54. **Mr. Bouah-Kamon** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the current year would see the end of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the Plan of Action of which was "aimed at ushering in the twenty-first century,

a world free from colonialism". That plan had allowed the United Nations to wage an effective struggle for the elimination of colonialism. Unfortunately, it had to be noted that, on the threshold of the year 2000, there were still 17 Territories which had not exercised their right to self-determination.

55. With regard to East Timor, the process of obtaining independence, which had begun with the holding of a referendum on 30 August, had not yet been completed, in spite of the wish expressed by the overwhelming majority of the Timorese to take their destiny into their own hands. Despite the complications which had arisen after the announcement of the results of the referendum, the Government of Indonesia was to be commended for having agreed to hold it. The United Nations, too, had played an exceptionally important role in the settlement of the question.

56. The goal of freeing the world from colonialism, set by the General Assembly in resolution 43/47 of 22 November 1988, should be made one of the priorities of the United Nations and the international community in the first decades of the coming century. It was essential to do everything possible to ensure that in the twenty-first century not a single country nor a single people, however powerful it might be, could consider itself entitled to decide the destiny of any other country or people, however small and vulnerable it might be, except in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of that country or people.

57. His delegation, recognizing that there were other alternatives to independence open to the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories in their exercise of self-determination, believed that the most effective way to self-determination was through the establishment of a genuine direct dialogue between the administering Powers and the legitimate representatives of the peoples of those Territories, under the auspices of the United Nations. The cases of New Caledonia, Tokelau and East Timor should be studied in that connection.

58. The work of MINURSO, which was carried out in very complex conditions, should also be highly commended since it had allowed a dynamic dialogue to be established which in the end would lead to the removal of the differences underlying that conflict.

59. His delegation also noted with satisfaction the establishment of a direct dialogue between the administering Powers and the Special Committee on decolonization, following a long period of mutual misunderstanding and suspicion, and their willingness to reach a compromise and show flexibility in the search for

ways of resolving the question of decolonization. It was essential to maintain and strengthen that cooperation and to involve the legitimate representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in it. In the context of that new partnership, some thought might be given to moving from informal to formal contacts between the Special Committee on decolonization and the administering Powers. It was for the latter to seek ways and means of accelerating the process of decolonization, as had occurred in the 1960s.

60. The administering Powers should also provide better information to the population of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and agree to the sending of United Nations visiting missions to those Territories to make an objective appraisal of the existing political, economic and social situation.

61. Most of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were small islands lost in the ocean, subject to natural disasters, with a very small population and a relatively underdeveloped economy. His delegation called upon the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations to continue to provide assistance to the populations of the Non-Self-Governing Territories so as to ensure their economic and social development.

62. Despite the fact that the goal of the International Decade, which was to free the world from colonialism, had not been achieved, the efforts of all those who had participated in the implementation of the programme of the Decade should be highly commended. His delegation believed that the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization should continue and, in that connection, he called for a new plan of action to be drawn up for the year 2000 and beyond. It was essential to build a world in which all peoples, small and large, poor or rich, were on a basis of equality and enjoyed the same rights.

63. **Mr. Perez Otermin** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) and the associated countries Bolivia and Chile, referred to a question which was of continuing interest to his continent — the dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom concerning sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

64. MERCOSUR noted with satisfaction the strengthening of bilateral links and the atmosphere of increasing trust in relations between the two countries, thanks to the exchange of high-level visits in 1998-1999. The MERCOSUR countries also welcomed the recently adopted joint statement which had allowed the renewal of



air and sea communications between the mainland of Argentina and the Malvinas Islands and permitted free access to the islands by Argentine nationals. They regarded the signing of that statement as an important step towards the strengthening of peace and cooperation in the South Atlantic. The MERCOSUR countries hoped that that development of bilateral relations would provide a stimulus to the holding of future talks with a view to the final settlement of the dispute concerning the Malvinas.

65. In conclusion, he quoted from the statement concerning the Malvinas Islands adopted on 15 June 1999 at the tenth meeting of the Presidents of the MERCOSUR countries, Bolivia and Chile, which stated that those countries reaffirmed the legitimate rights of Argentina in the dispute concerning sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands and the interest of the countries of the Western hemisphere in a speedy settlement of that prolonged dispute in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States. In that statement, the Presidents of those countries also took a strong line concerning the normalization of communications and passenger transport between the mainland and the islands in a spirit of friendship and without any discrimination whatsoever, and called officially for the reinforcement of those principles, without which it would be impossible to settle the remaining problem of air transport with the Malvinas Islands.

66. **Mr. Mehta** (India) said that the founding fathers of the United Nations had envisaged an early demise for the pernicious system of colonialism. However, there were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories and their future remained unclear. The eradication of the remnants of colonialism was complicated by the diverse situations in those Territories.

67. It was important to strive to ensure that the people of those Non-Self-Governing Territories had an opportunity freely to determine what was in their best interests. The role of the Special Committee on decolonization, and indeed of the United Nations as a whole, was to ascertain the aspirations of those people and give them an opportunity to choose their own political, economic and social structure. Cooperation and not confrontation should be the guiding principle in such efforts. It was gratifying to note that that spirit had imbued the deliberations of the Special Committee and, to some extent, the ongoing dialogue with the administering Powers.

68. The International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was coming to an end and it was important to

conduct a critical review of the activities undertaken and to draw up a plan of action which would truly reflect the aspirations of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and would be based on a realistic appraisal of the situation obtaining in those Territories. Certain administering Powers had already demonstrated the necessary flexibility and, as a result, there was hope that the problems in some Territories could be resolved in a spirit of cooperation.

69. His country had been a sponsor of the Declaration on decolonization. It would continue to support the goals of freedom, progress, human rights, dignity and peaceful coexistence.

70. **Mr. Osei** (Ghana) said that, despite the progress that had been achieved, the goal of the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had not been achieved. There was a need to speed up the process of decolonization since there was no alternative to the principle of self-determination. His delegation urged that a dialogue should take place between the administering Powers and the people of the Territories, under the auspices of the United Nations, to bring about concerted action to ensure that the people of the Territories received the requisite assistance in such areas as political education, good governance and social and economic development.

71. The Special Committee on decolonization had a special role to play in devising practical and innovative strategies that would accelerate the process and help towards the attainment of the desired goals. It must continue its work until the total eradication of colonialism had been achieved. His delegation welcomed the conclusions and recommendations of the Caribbean Regional Seminar, which had reviewed the status of small island Non-Self-Governing Territories, and the views expressed by the experts who had participated in its work.

72. His delegation commended New Zealand's cooperation with the Special Committee as exemplary and noted with satisfaction the report presented by the Permanent Representative of New Zealand concerning steps aimed at sustaining the momentum of Tokelau's socio-economic development and preparation for self-determination.

73. The people of East Timor had rejected the proposal for special autonomy and had opted for a process that would allow them to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. The time had come to do everything possible to ensure that the decision taken by the people of

East Timor was respected and that a stable environment was maintained for its implementation.

74. He commended the progress achieved towards the settlement of the question of Western Sahara, in particular the flexibility and spirit of compromise demonstrated by the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco in accepting the Secretary-General's programme for the implementation of the settlement plan for the holding of a referendum in the Territory. The two parties should continue to demonstrate their commitment to the process in order to ensure the completion of the programme.

75. His delegation urged all States to intensify their efforts vis-à-vis the specialized agencies and other structures in the United Nations system concerned with decolonization to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on decolonization.

76. **Mr. Hunte** (Saint Lucia), speaking on behalf of the members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the members of CARICOM reaffirmed that the principles of political equality set forth in General Assembly resolutions 1541 (XV) and 1514 (XV) should continue to be the standards to be applied to the process of the self-determination of the remaining small island Non-Self-Governing Territories. Thus, while the international community should remain flexible in its approach to assisting the small island Territories in the process of decolonization, it was the duty of the General Assembly to ensure that their options for their political status were in conformity with the legitimate choices based on equality defined in resolution 1541 (XV).

77. No substantial basis currently existed for the removal of those Territories from the United Nations list and there was a clear need for the declaration of a second decade for the eradication of colonialism so that efforts would be redoubled in furtherance of the self-determination of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

78. If the decolonization of the small island Territories was to succeed in the new millennium, a sufficient level of resources was required. CARICOM was therefore understandably concerned that, with a little over a year remaining in the current Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the Special Committee on decolonization had not yet been provided with the necessary resources or specialized experts to undertake many of the activities provided for in the Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly in 1991. It was not difficult to understand, therefore, why, at such a late stage, Member States were still unclear on the details of the individual political status arrangements in the remaining small island Territories.

79. In order to facilitate the analysis of the current status of those Territories, CARICOM offered its own experts, who would be in the best position to articulate the peculiarities of the various arrangements in the Territories from a regional perspective.

80. One of the few highlights of the Decade had been the convening of a series of regional seminars, alternating between the Caribbean and the Pacific regions, to assess the situation from a regional perspective by hearing the widest possible range of views on the various political alternatives available to the Territories. The countries of the Caribbean region were of the view that that regional approach remained the best way of assessing the unique self-determination needs of the small island Territories.

81. The Caribbean Regional Seminar, held in Saint Lucia in 1999, had been particularly valuable in that representatives of the Governments of the Territories and experts from the Caribbean region had provided great insights on the role envisaged for the United Nations in the decolonization process in the coming century.

82. The momentum generated by the Caribbean Seminar had been critical to the inclusion of updated language in draft resolution VI, on 11 small island Territories, which had been adopted by the Special Committee on decolonization by consensus during the current year. The text of the draft resolution reflected the continued relevance of the principles of political equality and made the necessary linkages between the process of the social and economic development of the Territories and the programmes of action of the United Nations world conferences.

83. CARICOM regarded the issue of the self-determination of the Non-Self-Governing Territories as the unfinished business of the United Nations, requiring new and innovative solutions that would embrace the nuances of the development process of the small island Territories.

84. The United Nations must ensure an orderly, relevant and coherent process of self-determination for the remaining small island Non-Self-Governing Territories. A second decade for the eradication of colonialism would permit it to conclude the unfinished business of decolonization.

85. **Mr. Dausa Cespedes** (Cuba) said that the process of decolonization had been one of the major triumphs of the United Nations, although much still remained to be done in that area and there was an impression the dynamism of the 1960s to 1980s, when dozens of Territories under the colonial yoke had achieved independence, had been lost.

86. His delegation could not agree with the arguments put forward by some that, in considering the question of the granting of independence to a given Territory, the size of the Territory and its population should be taken into account. The inalienable right of peoples under the colonial yoke to self-determination and independence must be universally respected regardless of the size of the Territory, its geographical location, its population and its natural resources.

87. Despite repeated appeals by the Special Committee on decolonization and the General Assembly, some administering Powers still did not provide the necessary information on the Territories under their administration on time, in accordance with Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations.

88. With regard to visiting missions, the cooperation of some administering Powers in that area was far from satisfactory. Such missions offered an excellent opportunity to gain first-hand information about the real situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

89. The people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had a legitimate right to the use of their own natural resources. His delegation once again called on the administering Powers to take appropriate legal and administrative steps to put an end to the activities of companies under their jurisdiction which exploited irrationally the natural resources of countries under their control.

90. He reaffirmed his country's concern over the military activities carried out by some administering Powers in the Territories under their administration, to the detriment of the rights and interests of the people of those Territories. Military bases and installations in Non-Self-Governing Territories impeded the exercise by the people of their right to self-determination and they should be closed down immediately. His country was strongly opposed to any attempts to use the Non-Self-Governing Territories for the carrying out of nuclear tests, the dumping of radioactive or toxic wastes or the deployment of weapons of mass destruction.

91. The limited opportunities for the development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories required constant cooperation and assistance from the specialized agencies and other institutions in the United Nations system.

92. It was unacceptable that some continued to disregard the right to independence and maintained that one should speak only of self-determination. It was also unacceptable that some should wish to make the right to self-

determination meaningless by introducing new formulas or simply changing the name of the Territory under their control.

93. His delegation fully supported the recommendations and conclusions contained in the report of the Special Committee on decolonization to the General Assembly, above all those concerning each of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and also the recommendations and conclusions of the Caribbean Regional Seminar on decolonization.

94. He welcomed the progress achieved in the process of the decolonization of New Caledonia and Tokelau. It was gratifying to note that the people of East Timor had exercised their right to self-determination in the referendum held on 30 August 1999.

95. His delegation was following with interest the evolution of the situation in Western Sahara and hoped that the agreement reached by the parties concerned would be implemented in practice.

96. He reaffirmed his delegation's strong support for the legitimate right of Argentina in the dispute concerning sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands. A lasting, peaceful and just settlement could be achieved only on the basis of dialogue and cooperation between the parties.

97. His delegation believed that it was essential to respect the genuine rights and interests of the people of Guam. It reaffirmed its commitment to the attainment of independence and self-determination by the people of Puerto Rico.

98. An objective, transparent and calm exchange of views concerning the progress achieved, particularly concerning any difficulties encountered, was the first step towards establishing a world free of colonialism.

99. **Mr. Shen Guofang** (China) said that one of the most important achievements of the United Nations was that it had helped a large number of colonies to cast off the colonial yoke and attain independence. It was, however, important not to lose sight of the fact that the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was drawing to a close and there were still more than a dozen Non-Self-Governing Territories around the world. In order to achieve the goal of decolonization, greater efforts by the administering Powers and by the whole international community were required.

100. The Government and people of China had always sympathized with the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and supported them in their struggle for self-determination and independence. The principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration

on decolonization had not lost their relevance: the people of those Territories enjoyed the inalienable right to the free determination of their future status. It would take the joint efforts of all the parties concerned to ensure that they exercised that right. Adequate attention should continue to be paid to the dissemination of information on decolonization and the holding of regional seminars. His delegation called on the administering Powers to cooperate closely with the United Nations and do everything possible to ensure that the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were fully aware of their rights, and also to provide more assistance in order to help them to establish a sound economic base. Foreign economic interests operating in those Territories should respect the interests of the local population and protect the natural and human resources.

101. In the past year, the work of the Special Committee on decolonization had been more active and pragmatic. The Committee had conducted in-depth discussions on its future work, and some of its members had put forward constructive ideas and proposals in that connection. Those discussions had fully demonstrated the determination of the Special Committee to complete its task of decolonization at an early date.

102. The size, geographical location, population and other special features of the Non-Self-Governing Territories should not be used as an excuse to deny the people of those Territories their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. His delegation would, as always, participate actively in the work of the United Nations in that field. It was confident that, with the concerted efforts of the whole international community, the goal of decolonization would be achieved.

103. **Ms. Smith** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, noted that, in their statements, the representatives of Mexico, Uruguay and Cuba had referred to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. The position of the United Kingdom was well known. Only recently, it had been reiterated by her delegation in the statement made in exercise of the right of reply in connection with the address by the President of Argentina to the General Assembly. The text of that statement was reproduced in document A/54/402.

104. **Mr. Dausa Cespedes** (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation fully supported Argentina in the dispute concerning the Malvinas Islands. It was in favour of a peaceful settlement of the dispute, taking into account the interests of all concerned, but that

did not mean that it would not fight for what it believed was right.

*The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.*