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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF
INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1498th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 11 August 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairman:

Mr. RODRIGUEZ PARRILLA

(Cuba)

CONTENTS

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

SPECIAL COMMITTEE DECISION OF 15 AUGUST 1991 CONCERNING PUERTO RICO

Hearing of petitioners

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to the additional requests for hearings on Puerto Rico circulated in an addendum to aide-mémoire 18/98, as well as to aide-mémoire 19/98 relating to the implementation of the Declaration by the specialized agencies. He proposed that the requests should be granted.

2. It was so decided.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE DECISION OF 15 AUGUST 1991 CONCERNING PUERTO RICO
(A/AC.109/L.1885)

Hearing of petitioners (aide-mémoire)

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Rodriguez (National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States) took a place at the petitioners' table.

4. Ms. RODRIGUEZ (National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States) said that Puerto Rico's independence from the colonial rule of the United States would be in the interests of the overwhelming majority of the people of the United States, especially the working people. Puerto Ricans formed an important part of that sector of the population, as living conditions in their own country had forced four out of every ten Puerto Ricans to emigrate to the United States in search of work.

5. Puerto Ricans were subject to racism in the United States. Racism reinforced divisions among working people and served the interests of employers; furthermore, it fed forces that wished to end bilingual and bicultural education and attack affirmative action and other gains of the working people. The harassment of advocates of Puerto Rican independence had encouraged and reinforced the operations of United States intelligence agencies against labour and other social protest movements.

6. The colonial domination of Puerto Rico had been a keystone of United States foreign policy for the past 100 years and was a reminder of the true character of that country's interests in the hemisphere. Every aspect of that foreign policy was against the interests of working people in the United States.

7. Cuba had consistently championed Puerto Rico's fight for national self-determination, and the socialist course followed by Cuba had proved itself to be the only road to achieve genuine independence. The Committee's condemnation of colonial rule over Puerto Rico would provide encouragement to all those fighting for the right to self-determination.

8. Ms. Rodriguez withdrew.

9. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Rivera Cuadrado (Organizacion Estadistas ante la ONU) took a place at the petitioners' table.

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10. Ms. RIVERA CUADRADO (Organizacion Estadistas ante la ONU) said that, in the past, the United Nations had recognized statehood as an alternative for decolonization. Moreover, in the case of Alaska and Hawaii, General Assembly resolution 1469 (XIV) had acknowledged the procedure of a referendum, followed by a negotiation process and a second vote to ratify the results.

11. The people of Puerto Rico wished to determine their future in a similar manner, and the United Nations had a role to play in the process. It should annul General Assembly resolution 748 (VIII) so that the United States of America would assume total responsibility for the colonial status of Puerto Rico. Any resolution adopted by the United Nations should set out the alternatives for Puerto Rican decolonization through a process of self-determination in accordance with resolution 1541 (XV): that is, independence, free association and statehood and elimination of the colonial status of commonwealth. It should exhort the United States Congress to take action to protect the rights guaranteed in various clauses of the United States Constitution and provide for the decolonization of Puerto Rico as soon as possible. Lastly, the United Nations should offer to be an observer of the decolonization process.

12. Ms. Rivera Cuadrado withdrew.

13. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Santiago-Valiente, (United Statehooders Organization, Inc.) took a place at the petitioners' table.

14. Mr. SANTIAGO-VALIENTE (United Statehooders Organization, Inc.) said that previous United Nations resolutions on Puerto Rico had focused almost exclusively on the issue of self-determination and independence. However, General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) had postulated three options for a territory to attain full self-government - independence, free association and full political integration - and any resolution drafted by the Committee should be adopted on that basis.

15. Furthermore, any resolution recommended and adopted by the Committee should clearly distinguish between the concept of autonomy, or "home rule", and sovereignty. Since 1787, the United States had been a federation of autonomous political entities; therefore, there were only two options available to Puerto Rico: sovereignty as an independent nation State with possible free association with the United States or sovereignty acquired upon full integration as a state of the United States.

16. Lastly, loyalty to the principles and civic aspirations embodied in citizenship might provide the key to resolving the issue of Puerto Rico's political status. Puerto Ricans had been citizens of the United States since 1917; however, they only had non-voting representation in Congress, and they lacked the political and economic rights and responsibilities enjoyed by other United States citizens.

17. Mr. Santiago-Valiente withdrew.

18. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Reveron Collazo (Congreso Nacional Hostosiano) took a place at the petitioners' table.

19. Ms. REVERON COLLAZO (Congreso Nacional Hostosiano) said that in 1953 the General Assembly, by resolution 748 (VIII), had accepted the United States of America's request that it cease transmitting information in the case of Puerto Rico as required under Article 73 (e) of the Charter of the United Nations. The preamble to the resolution suggested that Puerto Rico was recognized as a distinctly Latin American people from a cultural point of view, that the association between the people of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the United States was mutually agreed and that Puerto Rico had been invested with attributes of political sovereignty and achieved self-government as an autonomous political entity.

20. However, according to documents and resolutions, the official position of the United States House of Representatives was that Puerto Rico was a non-incorporated territory whose sovereignty resided in the United States Congress.

21. Moreover, even while it talked about the Puerto Rican people's right to self-determination, the United States violated the requisites for such a process. For example, General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) stated that repressive measures of any kind must cease and the integrity of national territory must be respected, and in 1978, 1979 and 1980 the Committee had approved three resolutions condemning repressive measures against those persons and organizations fighting for the independence of Puerto Rico. But nothing changed; repression and imprisonment of freedom fighters had increased, as had the United States military presence and activities in Puerto Rico. Moreover, there was a certain political incongruity in the fact that, recently, two States that were members of the Committee had taken part in multi-national military manoeuvres in Puerto Rico which violated United Nations and Committee resolutions.

22. The Special Committee had committed itself to eradicating colonialism before the year 2000, but since 1991 it had been silent on the subject of Puerto Rico. Over the years, the United States had approved various initiatives on the status of Puerto Rico, despite the opposition of majority sectors of the Puerto Rican people because they did not represent their aspirations and resulted from a process that violated the most elemental principles of international law. The Committee should be aware that other initiatives were under consideration and be prepared to intervene.

23. Ms. Reveron Collazo withdrew.

24. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Escabi (Students of San Sebastian) took a place at the petitioners' table.

25. Mr. ESCABI (Students of San Sebastian) said that for the past 100 years, Puerto Rico had been subjected to a colonial regime which had contributed greatly to the economic and social development of the island, but had fallen short in the area of its political development. Moreover, the United States had made little effort to find a permanent solution to Puerto Rico's political status. Even when granting citizenship to Puerto Ricans in 1917, it had failed to define the status of the island in international law, giving it the ambiguous title of "commonwealth".

26. Puerto Rico was the last colony in the world. Its 3.8 million people lacked the ability to participate in the fundamental decisions and political processes affecting them and had not been granted the right to self-determination in a referendum supervised by the international community. Yet Puerto Ricans had served in the armed forces in defence of the rights of the people of the United States, the island had hosted scores of American military bases, and prosperous American corporations used its labour while exporting their wealth and gains to the mainland. The United States had forgotten the most important right of all, the right of peoples to decide their future for themselves. The United Nations, as the body created to protect the rights of all people, must send an unequivocal message that the time had come for Puerto Ricans to exercise their right to self-determination and decide their own future.

27. Mr. Escabi withdrew.

28. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Rivera Santos (Cidrerros Pro-Estadidad) took a place at the petitioners' table.

29. Ms. RIVERA SANTOS (Cidrerros Pro-Estadidad) said that the uncertainty surrounding the status of Puerto Rico affected the stability and security of family life. The Special Committee and the United States Congress must find a reasonable, just and equitable solution to the question of the final status of Puerto Rico, because allowing the situation to continue would create another generation of families without a clear vision and hope for the future. It was unacceptable that the Committee, entrusted with the responsibility for the human rights of the peoples of the world, should fail to find a solution to that problem before the dawn of the twenty-first century. In the meantime, her organization would continue to work towards the peaceful union of Puerto Rico with the United States of America.

30. Ms. Rivera Santos withdrew.

31. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Lebron (Puerto Rico, Mi Patria) took a place at the petitioners' table.

32. Ms. LEBRON (Puerto Rico, Mi Patria) said that she had commanded the 1954 attack against the United States Capitol in protest against the imposition of so-called "commonwealth" status on Puerto Rico, and as a result, had been a political prisoner of the United States for twenty-five years. She had come before the Special Committee with a sense of hope and a firm belief in the noble principles of the United Nations, which had virtually eliminated colonialism from the world, to demand decolonization, full sovereignty and independence for the Puerto Rican nation.

33. In the five centuries since the arrival of colonialism with the Spanish, the Puerto Rican people had evolved into one people with three main ethnic groups: the descendants of indigenous peoples, Spanish and Africans. By the time of the American invasion, they had achieved political, economic and legal autonomy. But since 1898, they had lived under military occupation. And despite appearances, commonwealth status had not placed democratic power in the hands of the people. The United Nations itself had fallen victim to that same

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confusion in adopting General Assembly resolution 748 (VIII), ending the obligation of the United States to report on steps it was taking to promote self-determination in its colony. The bills currently under discussion in the United States Congress and Senate confirmed that Puerto Rico remained subject to the authority of Congress and could not change that relationship without its consent.

34. Just as during the nineteenth century the nations of the world had reached a general consensus that the inhuman practice of slavery should be eradicated, the close of the twentieth century had seen a similar consensus arise around the eradication of colonialism from the face of the earth. But although General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) had been in effect for almost four decades, the United States had refused to fulfil its obligation to respect Puerto Rico's right to self-determination. No Member State of the United Nations could be exempted from the universal mandate of decolonization. Although the United States had shown some recognition since 1989 that the current political status of Puerto Rico was unacceptable, there was no genuine commitment to a process of self-determination in accordance with international law. Her people could not freely choose their own future while 16 patriots remained in United States prisons and the colonial Power retained total control of a referendum process whose results were non-binding.

35. From the point of view of the Puerto Rican people, their nationality had been taken away and United States citizenship imposed by force, a clear case of the strong imposing their will on the weak. The legal basis for that action had been the law of conquest, which had no place in the twentieth century. She called on the Special Committee to ensure the full application of resolution 1514 (XV) to Puerto Rico, thus freeing her people from their century of suffering under colonial domination and bringing the colonial era to an end throughout the world.

36. Ms. Lebron withdrew.

37. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Lopez (National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners) took a place at the petitioners' table.

38. Ms. LOPEZ (National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners) said that the United States Congress had agreed that the current status of Puerto Rico was that of a colony. However, its status could not be resolved until all conditions which impeded or interfered with the decolonization process had been resolved. Among those conditions were the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners in the United States, and the removal of all military bases and police and federal agencies established on Puerto Rican soil.

39. The amnesty campaign for Puerto Rican prisoners of war and political prisoners was at its height, and President Clinton had indicated that a decision, based on the recommendations of the Justice Department, would be made before the end of the year. Also, the sons and daughters of political prisoners had recently met with a representative of the Justice Department to stress the importance of an unconditional release. The amnesty campaign had been endorsed

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by, amongst others, 11 Nobel prize winners, Puerto Rican elected officials at State and Federal levels, and African-American and other members of Congress. Religious leaders in the United States and in Puerto Rico and other international figures had also backed the call. Support for an amnesty was general in Puerto Rico; Carlos Romero Barceló, Partido Nacional Progresista (PNP) Resident Commissioner was alone in his opposition. Over 200,000 petitions had been sent to President Clinton and the United States Attorney-General and committees to organize support for the prisoners' release had been set up all over Puerto Rico and in 13 cities in the United States.

40. That the prisoners were still in jail violated international human rights law because their sentences were disproportionate: they ranged between 35 and 90 years, and most of the prisoners had already served more than 18 years, three times as long as the average sentence for homicide.

41. The conditions in which the prisoners were being kept were inhumane. One prisoner, Oscar López Rivera, had been denied any contact visits for 12 years, which was a form of psychological torture. Mr. Rivera had recently been designated for transfer into the general prison population, but the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners would remain vigilant to ensure that the Bureau of Prisons kept its word.

42. She asked the Committee to acknowledge officially that the continued incarceration of the 15 Puerto Rican fighters against colonialism was illegal and to demand that President Clinton should grant them an unconditional amnesty. She asked also that the Committee should demand that President Clinton should grant the Puerto Rican people their right to self-determination and independence.

43. Ms. López withdrew.

44. At the invitation of the President, Ms. Valdés de Lizardi (Liga de Ciudadanos Latinoamericanos Unidos (LULAC)) took a place at the petitioners' table.

45. Ms. VALDÉS DE LIZARDI (Liga de Ciudadanos Latinoamericanos Unidos (LULAC)) recalled that she had been appearing before the Committee to discuss the political situation of Puerto Rico for more than 10 years; however, the difference in 1998 was that for the first time, if the relevant draft legislation was finally approved, Puerto Ricans would be able to exercise the right of self-determination. She noted that the Committee's work to end colonialism worldwide before the beginning of the new millennium would be incomplete without the decolonization of Puerto Rico.

46. Puerto Rico was a colony. However, three main reasons were sometimes advanced to justify saying that it was not: its allegedly new constitutional status since the inception of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952; the majority support for that constitutional status allegedly expressed democratically; and the allegation that its new constitutional status gave Puerto Rico attributes of sovereignty as an autonomous political entity. However, none of those grounds was valid: Puerto Rico was actually governed by the Congress of the United States of America; no substantial extra powers had

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been granted to Puerto Rico; the change in name to Commonwealth was purely cosmetic and a sop to the people; and consent to a colonial condition of inequality and subordination might give a certain legitimacy, but did not alter the colonial condition. Slavery was slavery, whether the slave consented to it or not, and the fact that Puerto Ricans had once been swayed by rhetoric might have delayed a definitive solution to the question of Puerto Rico's political fate but did not mean that Puerto Rico had stopped being a colony. Besides, Puerto Ricans had withdrawn that consent in the 1993 referendum by a ratio of over 51 to 49. The argument that Puerto Rico was not a colony because it was well treated economically also did not hold water: that the United States was economically generous made no difference to Puerto Rico's colonial status.

47. The ways in which Puerto Rico was not self-governing included: about three quarters of the budget was administered in Washington, although Puerto Ricans could not vote for the President and were not represented in Congress; Federal courts overruled local courts; Federal agency regulations had more weight than Puerto Rican legislation or court judgements; nor could Puerto Rico negotiate with foreign countries, have ambassadors or control immigration. Puerto Ricans were not equal in peace, but they could still go to war on the orders of a President that they could not take part in electing: thus, not only was there taxation without representation, but Puerto Ricans sometimes paid that tax in blood.

48. Even the supporters of the Commonwealth admitted that it bore at least traces of colonialism, and even the President of the United States had recognized that Puerto Rico was a dependent territory. However, she believed that putting Puerto Rico back on the list of dependent territories in the immediate future could provoke a backlash by some elements in Washington which did not accept the definition of Puerto Rico as a colony, and such a backlash would hold up the self-determination process, for which Puerto Rico must rely on support in Congress and Senate.

49. She called on the Committee to urge all political groups in Puerto Rico to promote options for the island's political status that were in keeping with General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV).

50. She believed that draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1885 submitted by Cuba was helpful, by keeping the issue open. It was in the Committee's power to help Puerto Rico by influencing the United States to allow the people of Puerto Rico to exercise their right to self-determination.

51. Ms. Valdés de Lizardi withdrew.

52. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Rexach (National Advancement for Puerto Rican Culture) took a place at the petitioners' table.

53. Ms. REXACH (National Advancement for Puerto Rican Culture) said that her organization's position was that Puerto Rico should become a State of the United States of America. The people of Puerto Rico would thereby become fully self-governing with their rights secured under the Constitution of the United States, which would be the supreme law and have the same force as in other States of the United States; Puerto Rico would be in permanent union with the United States

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and powers not delegated to the Federal Government or prohibited to the States under the Constitution would be reserved to the people of Puerto Rico; United States citizenship would be equal to that of United States citizens in the other States; residents of Puerto Rico would have the same rights and benefits as well as the same duties and responsibilities, including payment of Federal taxes, as residents in the other States; Puerto Rico would be represented by two members in the Senate and proportionately in the House of Representatives; United States citizens in Puerto Rico would be enfranchised to vote in presidential elections; and English would be the official language of the State government, courts and agencies.

54. Independence would mean that Puerto Rico would lose all its current advantages; any assistance from the United States would become foreign assistance, and any trade between the United States and Puerto Rico would be foreign trade. No committee could change those realities, and no one should believe that Puerto Ricans were naive enough to vote for independence: the island was not self-sufficient in food and had no natural resources, and under independence would become a third-world nation. Puerto Rico therefore needed to be recognized de jure as the fifty-first State of the United States, as it had been de facto for half a century.

55. Ms. Rexach withdrew.

56. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Rivera-Arvelo (US Statehood for Puerto Rico) took a place at the petitioners' table.

57. Mr. RIVERA-ARVELO (US Statehood for Puerto Rico) said that Puerto Rico should become a state of the United States of America because of the large numbers of mainland Americans resident in Puerto Rico, the huge numbers of Puerto Ricans residing on the mainland and the huge numbers of people moving between the two. There were more Puerto Ricans in New York than there were in San Juan, and the Puerto Rican population of Chicago, Newark and Hartford exceeded that of most cities in Puerto Rico. Also, Puerto Rico was subject to the Constitution of the United States of America and most Federal laws applied there; although its per capita income was only one third of the United States average, it was in a customs union that meant free movement of goods and people, and Puerto Rico relied for investment capital on the United States.

58. He stressed that the people of Puerto Rico, not the Committee, must decide the island's political status. His organization believed that United States statehood would be the best solution and would maximize the benefits of the island's association with the United States. Almost all Puerto Ricans found the notion of independent statehood laughable, and that meant that almost all Puerto Ricans wanted either United States statehood or to maintain the status quo; thus, almost all Puerto Ricans, whether pro-statehood or pro-Commonwealth, wanted to keep their United States citizenship.

59. Mr. Rivera-Arvelo withdrew.

60. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Valentín-Castañón (General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church) took a place at the petitioners' table.

61. Mr. VALENTÍN-CASTAÑÓN (General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church) said that his Church believed that Puerto Rico's status was colonial because control over it lay with the Congress of the United States of America. In a recent case, a United States circuit court of appeals had concluded that Puerto Rico remained a territory of the United States of America and that Congress could unilaterally revoke the Constitution of Puerto Rico, which was modelled on the Constitution of the United States, and could derogate from statutes regulating the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico. Also recently, the appropriate subcommittee of the House of Representatives had rejected including maintenance of the status quo in any new referendum because it too believed that Puerto Rico's current status was clearly colonial.

62. Despite that belated recognition and despite the status of colonialism under the Charter of the United Nations, those who advocated Puerto Rican independence had over the years been censored, criminalized, harassed, placed under surveillance, imprisoned and even executed. The Committee should therefore strengthen its position in favour of the decolonization of Puerto Rico, whose people, in accordance with his Church's policy, should be accorded full opportunity for self-determination of their future political status under conditions that assured a genuinely free choice, with generous provisions for any new status chosen. He urged the Committee to bring the case of Puerto Rico to the General Assembly and urged also that the United Nations should serve as the international monitoring agency for Puerto Rico's decolonization process; Puerto Ricans must be accorded their human rights, if not now, at least for the next generation.

63. Mr. Valentín-Castañón withdrew.

64. The CHAIRMAN said that the Special Committee had concluded the hearings on the item, and was grateful to the representatives of the organizations concerned for their statements and the information they had furnished to the Committee.

Draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1885

65. Mr. DAUSA (Cuba) said that Cuba's commitment to encouraging and assisting the independence of Puerto Rico dated back to the establishment of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in 1892. Many Puerto Ricans had shed their blood for the independence of Cuba. Indeed, Cuba and Puerto Rico had always been united in their struggle for independence, first from Spain and then from the United States of America. By virtue of its history, traditions and the will of its people, Puerto Rico was a Latin American and Caribbean country; it had managed to maintain its own national identity despite its colonial status.

66. The year 1998 marked the hundredth anniversary of the American military intervention in Puerto Rico, which had stifled its independence and radically altered its destiny. The Special Committee had been hearing requests for the independence of Puerto Rico ever since its establishment in 1963. In the 27 years that it had been considering the colonial situation of Puerto Rico, it had adopted 16 resolutions on the subject. The independence of Puerto Rico was supported by the international community and by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, most recently at its Ministerial Meeting held in Cartagena, Colombia.

67. Notwithstanding the manoeuvres of the colonial Power, the United States, to confound international public opinion and distort the economic, political and social reality of Puerto Rico, the fact remained that Puerto Rico continued to be deprived of its legitimate right to self-determination and sovereignty, the American military presence on the island was growing and many Puerto Rican patriots were still in prison. Despite vigorous campaigns to assist them, 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners continued to serve sentences of up to 106 years and were daily victims of human rights violations. It was therefore the Committee's duty to denounce the situation faced by Puerto Rico.

68. Mr. ZAEMSKY (Russian Federation) said that the adoption of a draft resolution on Puerto Rico before the 1998 plebiscite would be somewhat untimely, and risked prejudicing its outcome, the more so because in the 1993 referendum only 4.4 per cent of the population had voted in favour of independence. His delegation could not support the draft resolution because it was unnecessarily confrontational. He therefore requested a roll-call vote.

69. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of Special Committee members to the relevant rule of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly concerning roll-call votes.

70. Mr. HU Zhaoming (China) asked whether, in accordance with rule 87 of the rules of procedure, a vote could be taken by mechanical means.

71. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the representative of the Russian Federation had requested a roll-call vote. He asked the Secretary whether it was possible to take a recorded vote by mechanical means in view of the limited membership of the Special Committee.

72. Mr. SAHAR (Secretary of the Special Committee) said that, many years earlier, the First Committee had taken a decision on the question of Antarctica by roll-call vote, thus establishing a procedural precedent. Furthermore, a roll-call vote had been requested by a Member State, namely, the Russian Federation; that request must be honoured.

73. At the request of the representative of the Russian Federation, a vote was taken by roll-call on draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1885.

74. Congo, having been drawn by lot by the Chairman, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Bolivia, China, Cuba, Grenada, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Papua New Guinea, Saint Lucia, Syrian Arab Republic, United Republic of Tanzania.

Against: None.

Abstaining: Antigua and Barbuda, Chile, India, Indonesia, Russian Federation, Venezuela.

75. Draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1885 was adopted by 10 votes to 0, with 6 abstentions.

76. Mr. MANONGI (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation's support for the draft resolution reflected its belief in the inalienable rights of all peoples to self-determination and independence. Over the years, his delegation had given its unqualified support to the independence of the Puerto Rican people, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Although the petitioners before the Committee held differing views, it was clear that none of them was satisfied with the status quo and that the current situation of Puerto Rico was not in conformity with the objectives of resolution 1514 (XV). Since it was not a state of the United States of America, Puerto Rico had no representation in the United States Congress and its people could not vote for the President of the United States. During the previous meeting of the Special Committee, Mr. Crespi Marrero of Agricultores Pro-Estadidad had characterized the situation of Puerto Rico as one of servitude in democracy. His delegation welcomed the concern recently shown by the United States Government with regard to the situation in Puerto Rico. It was encouraged by the measures being discussed in the United States Congress and called for their speedy implementation.

77. Mr. JORDAN PANDO (Bolivia) said that his Government had supported the independence of Puerto Rico throughout the history of the United Nations and even before its creation. The draft resolution provided an opportunity to give fresh impetus to the issue and to reaffirm the Committee's obligations in that regard. His delegation was in favour of establishing a working group to clarify various terms used by the petitioners which seemed to give rise to confusion, such as plebiscite, self-determination and political will. However, it would make no proposal to that end for fear of prejudicing the fate of a balanced resolution to which there was no opposition.

78. Mr. MENDEZ (Venezuela) reaffirmed his delegation's historic commitment to the independence of Latin American countries in general and to the self-determination of the Puerto Rican people in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). It had abstained in the voting in the belief that certain procedural aspects of the draft resolution were not sufficiently developed and that it should have included the views of the major political sectors in Puerto Rico.

79. Mr. OVIA (Papua New Guinea) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because it believed in the fundamental right of all peoples to express their will and to exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). All options should be open to them in reaching a decision concerning their self-determination. Both the international community and the administering Power must respect whatever decision was reached by a majority of the Puerto Rican people and not attempt to influence it.

80. Mr. AL-ANBUGE (Iraq) said that his delegation was convinced that the struggle of peoples to eradicate colonialism and exercise their right to self-determination and independence was a just one. Listening to the statements of the Puerto Rican petitioners had further strengthened that conviction. He expressed his delegation's strong support for their legitimate demands.