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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 1500th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 12 August 1998, at 11 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. RODRÍGUEZ PARRILLA (Cuba)
(Acting Chairman)

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CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

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 (A/53/130 and Corr.1; A/AC.109/L.1880 and L.1881 and E/1998/76)

2. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on 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 (A/53/130 and Corr.1), the report of the President of the Economic and Social Council on consultations held with the Chairman of the Special Committee on the situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (E/1998/76), the report of the Acting Chairman on 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 (A/AC.109/L.1880) and the draft resolution on 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 submitted by the Acting Chairman (A/AC.109/L.1881).

Draft resolution, submitted by the Acting Chairman, on 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 (A/AC.109/L.1880 and 1881)

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Corbin (United States Virgin Islands) took a place at the petitioners' table.

4. Mr. CORBIN (United States Virgin Islands) said that as far back as 1950, General Assembly resolutions on the current agenda item had provided an historic mandate for United Nations assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories and had stood as the legislative authority for participation of those Territories as members or observers in the work of United Nations specialized agencies and world conferences on issues such as the environment, small island developing countries, population, social development, women, natural disaster reduction and human settlements. Many small island Territories of the Caribbean and Pacific sought to increase their participation in such activities, while others wished to be included for the first time. It was, therefore, disturbing that although in 1997, for the first time, no vote against the draft resolution had been cast in the General Assembly, the draft had not achieved consensus in the Assembly or the Economic and Social Council.

5. His Government continued to endorse the draft resolution because of the latter's focus on development in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, most of

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which were small island developing countries, and on the importance of assistance from the United Nations system. Since 1990, the Special Committee's regional seminars had consistently endorsed such engagement by the United Nations system and, in 1991, the General Assembly had adopted by consensus a resolution entitled "Cooperation and coordination of specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations in their assistance to Non-Self-Governing Territories" (A/RES/46/70 (1991)), which focused on the vulnerabilities of those Territories and on the key role that participation in United Nations programmes could play in their development. He suggested that that resolution, in updated form, might be adopted by the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly at its current session in order to complement, rather than replace, the more complex resolution currently before the Special Committee, particularly in view of the fact that the Council had again failed to achieve consensus on the matter at its 1998 session.

6. Resolution 46/70 (1991) referred to the initiatives undertaken by the Working Group on Non-Independent Caribbean Countries of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). That Working Group focused on the identification of areas within the United Nations system which could provide technical and other development assistance to the Territories, and had initiated the approval of the participation by those Territories in United Nations world conferences. It was, therefore, unfortunate that the Special Committee had not responded to the Working Group's proposals for potential cooperation with a view to more coordinated implementation of Assembly and Council resolutions on assistance to the Territories.

7. In that regard, it appeared that ECLAC and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) had not been asked to provide the Special Committee with information on their assistance to the Territories. With the exception of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the regional commissions had been the most active elements of the United Nations system, granting the Territories the status of associate members and including them in their work. He therefore suggested that a request for information should be sent to the Executive Secretaries of ECLAC and ESCAP and to the Pacific Community, a ministerial body which included Pacific Non-Self-Governing Territories as full members, so that their replies could be made available to member States prior to the Fourth Committee's consideration of the current agenda item.

8. However, resolutions concerning the Territories were useful only if implemented. In that connection, he drew attention to ECLAC resolution 574 (XXVII), entitled "Participation of ECLAC associate member countries in the follow-up to the United Nations world conferences", which supported granting the Territories observer status at special sessions of the United Nations and consultative status in the Council. That resolution had been endorsed by three administering Powers, the United Kingdom, France and the United States, and he suggested that the Special Committee should endorse that consensus initiative through the addition of updated language to its own draft resolution.

9. Mr. Corbin withdrew.

10. Mr. OVIA (Papua New Guinea) asked whether there was time for the Committee to incorporate new language into the current draft resolution; it might be better to take note of the proposed amendments and to consider them at a later date.

11. The CHAIRMAN said that in his opinion, it would be better for the Committee to take the latter course.

12. Mr. BENITEZ VERSON (Cuba) suggested that the Committee should include in its report (A/AC.109/L.1886) a brief paragraph taking note of the suggested amendments and postpone discussion of the matter; however, he did not know whether that was possible, since the report had already been adopted.

13. The CHAIRMAN asked the Acting Secretary of the Committee to comment on the Committee's options.

14. Mr. SATTAR (Acting Secretary of the Committee) said that because Mr. Corbin was not a member of the Committee, he could not propose amendments to the draft resolution, but that any member could make such a proposal. Moreover, since the report had already been adopted, it could not be changed. He suggested that the Committee should take note of the suggestion and consider it at a later date.

15. The CHAIRMAN said that he was reluctant to reopen an agenda item on which discussion had been closed, and suggested that the Committee should follow the suggestion made by the representative of Papua New Guinea.

16. Ms. AKBAR (Antigua and Barbuda) said that her delegation supported the suggestions made by the representatives of Papua New Guinea and Cuba, and asked how soon the Committee would be able to give further consideration to the proposed amendment to the draft resolution. While she sympathized with the Chairman's position regarding the reopening of an agenda item, the issue was, in fact, covered in the report.

17. The CHAIRMAN said that under the circumstances, he had no objection to the Committee's amendment of the report, despite the fact that it had already been adopted, provided that that was done on an exceptional basis and did not constitute a precedent.

18. Mr. HU Zhaoming (China) said that while Mr. Corbin's suggestion was extremely interesting and deserved further study, he agreed with the Secretary of the Committee that it would be unwise to reopen an item on which the Committee had concluded its discussion. The Chairman, or certain Member States, might submit a "non-paper" on the matter for subsequent discussion by the Committee.

19. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should take note of the fact that the delegations which had previously spoken had associated themselves with Mr. Corbin's suggestion and that a "non-paper" should be submitted to the Committee for discussion prior to the upcoming General Assembly.

20. It was so decided.

21. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to take action on draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1881.

22. The draft resolution was adopted.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

23. The CHAIRMAN thanked the members of the Committee for facilitating his work in the post which he had assumed on the departure of Mr. Samana.

24. During the past year, the Committee had continued to work towards the goal of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. On 22 May 1998, it had celebrated the Week of Solidarity with Peoples of All Colonial Territories Fighting for Freedom, Independence and Human Rights in a ceremony in which the Secretary-General and representatives of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, regional groups, Member States, the Observer for Palestine and the Chief Minister of Montserrat had participated. The Pacific Regional Seminar on the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had been held in Fiji on 16-18 June 1998 and had led to recommendations which had been reflected in the Committee's resolutions. Representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the administering Powers, including New Zealand, Portugal and, for the first time, France, had participated in the Committee's work. The Committee had adopted resolutions on the decolonization process in Tokelau, the Noumea Accords in New Caledonia, the legitimate interests of the Chamorro people in Guam and, for the first time in six years, the situation of Puerto Rico. He had engaged in discussions concerning the Territories' participation in the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and in the meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in Cartagena. For the first time, a section on future work had been included in the Committee's annual report; in that regard, he suggested that in future, the Committee should make a regular practice of examining that section of the report and taking note of its content. Lastly, the Committee had decided to assess the effectiveness of its activities and of the areas in which it could effect improvement.

25. Finally, he declared the 1998 session closed.

The meeting rose at noon.