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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 1st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Monday, 22 February 1999, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. ANNAN  
(Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Chairman: Mr. DONIGI (Papua New Guinea)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

1. THE TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN speaking as Secretary-General, said that the decolonization movement had brought about one of the signal transformations of the century. The Special Committee, by helping to bring to life the principle of "equal rights and self-determination of peoples" enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, had made important contributions to that historic change.

2. The General Assembly had established the Special Committee in 1961 to examine the application of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and to make recommendations on the Declaration's implementation. Thirty years later, the General Assembly had adopted a plan of action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism with the aim of achieving complete decolonization by the end of the year 2000.

3. By working closely and constructively with the peoples of the remaining Territories and the administering Powers, the Special Committee continued to play a key role in the Organization's efforts to reach that goal. He and his staff were pleased to assist and work with the Special Committee to that end. He urged the specialized agencies, the offices of the United Nations system and the international financial institutions, each in its respective field, to continue to assist the Special Committee as well.

4. In 1998, in commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations had reaffirmed the centrality of human rights in the struggle for independence and the right of a people to be the master of its own destiny.

5. In that spirit, he encouraged the administering Powers to work closely with the Special Committee and, in particular, with the people of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories in order to help them attain "a full measure of self-government", in the words of the Charter, and to realize their aspirations.

6. More than 80 nations whose peoples had formerly been under colonial rule had joined the United Nations as sovereign independent States since 1945. Many other Territories had achieved self-determination through political association with other independent States or through integration with other States. That development represented great progress. As the century drew to a close, and during the penultimate year of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the United Nations should redouble its efforts to see the process through to its conclusion.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

7. The agenda was adopted.

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#### ELECTION OF OFFICERS

8. Mr. Donigi (Papua New Guinea) was elected Chairman, Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) and Mr. Ovane (Mali) were elected Vice-Chairmen and Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

9. Mr. Donigi (Papua New Guinea) took the chair.

10. The CHAIRMAN commended Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla for effectively discharging his duties as Acting Chairman and for a number of decisions taken under his leadership with a view to improving the effectiveness of the Committee, particularly, with regard to the in-depth critical review of the Committee's work in the light of the goals outlined in the Plan of Action for the eradication of colonialism by the year 2000. The review should be accorded priority during the current year.

11. Since the adoption of the Declaration on decolonization, some 60 Non-Self-Governing Territories, inhabited by more than 80 million people, had attained independence. Nonetheless, there were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories inhabited by 2 million people. Therefore, the work of the Special Committee remained relevant, urgent and necessary. The challenge that lay ahead was to accelerate decolonization through the removal of Territories from the list in the context of Article 73 of the Charter of the United Nations. To that end, it was vital to strengthen the dialogue with the administering Powers and the people of the Territories and to ensure that the latter received the assistance in respect of political education, transparency, good governance and socio-economic development.

12. The General Assembly had recognized that the specific characteristics and sentiments of the peoples of the Territories required flexible, practical and innovative approaches, irrespective of territorial size, geographical location, size of population or natural resources. Inadequate political, economic, social or educational preparedness must never serve as a pretext for delaying the decolonization process. The Special Committee would therefore identify and propose flexible, practical and innovative approaches, taking into account the mandate specified in Article 73 of the Charter, in order to justify its continued existence beyond the year 2000. Dialogue with the administering Powers and their renewed participation in the work of the Committee would be of particular importance to that end.

13. The Committee must formulate new approaches to dealing with such perennial and diverse issues as East Timor, where the past year had witnessed constructive developments; American Samoa, which wished to maintain the status quo; and small Territories, such as the Pitcairn Islands, which would most likely never find it appropriate to exercise the right to self-determination and independence. Failure to tackle those issues would reflect negatively on the Special Committee's ability to fulfil its mandate. Referring to an indictment of the Special Committee's work contained in a recent article in The Economist, he stressed that the Special Committee must not become marginalized or meaningless owing to its reluctance to embrace political change and contemporary realities.

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14. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the Committee would carry out its work in an efficient, transparent and comprehensive manner.

#### ORGANIZATION OF WORK

15. The CHAIRMAN drew the Special Committee's attention to notes by the Secretary-General (A/AC.109/1999/L.1) and by the Chairman (A/AC.109/1999/L.2) on the organization of work.

16. Mr. LEGOWO (Indonesia) said that, since its thirty-eighth session, the General Assembly had deferred the item on the question of East Timor, in recognition of the progress achieved in the ongoing tripartite dialogue and of the need to sustain and promote an atmosphere conducive to reaching a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution. The last round of the tripartite dialogue had been held only a few weeks earlier and had been characterized by the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor as "positive" and "quick but substantive". Headway had been made on major outstanding issues, and remaining questions were to be addressed during the next round of the tripartite dialogue on 9 and 10 March 1999. Indonesia, for its part, was committed to the tripartite dialogue and was satisfied with its progress. Referring to the note by the Chairman on the organization of work (A/AC.109/1999/L.2), he said that his delegation was opposed to the inclusion of an item on East Timor in the Special Committee's agenda, which would not contribute to the creation of an atmosphere conducive to reaching a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution through the tripartite dialogue.

17. Mr. HUGHES (New Zealand) expressed the willingness of his country, an administering Power, to cooperate fully with the Special Committee.

18. Mr. RABUKA (Fiji), Mr. EGUIGUREN (Chile) and Mr. MEKDAK (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed their support for the work of the Special Committee.

19. The CHAIRMAN said that the representative of Argentina had asked to participate in the meeting as an observer. He took it that the Committee wished to accede to his request.

20. It was so decided.

21. Mr. ESTREME (Observer for Argentina) expressed his country's willingness to cooperate fully with the work of the Special Committee.

22. The CHAIRMAN said that, in accordance with the decision of the General Assembly, the meetings of the Special Committee would be convened without the presence of the quorum required under rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. That would enable the Special Committee to declare its meetings open and to continue its work without the required quorum. Nonetheless, the Special Committee could not take a decision without a quorum.

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## OTHER MATTERS

23. Mr. RODRÍGUEZ PARRILLA (Cuba) said that, although the decolonization process was in the final stages, the Special Committee still had to contend with tremendous obstacles. Certain States continued to impede the work of the Special Committee, despite the General Assembly's reaffirmation year after year of its determination to ensure the immediate and full implementation of the Declaration on decolonization and the need to carry out activities within the framework of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. On repeated occasions, the Special Committee had expressed its willingness to initiate a constructive dialogue with the administering Powers, recognizing the importance of their cooperation to the full implementation of the Declaration. Indeed, the consensus achieved on sensitive issues concerning New Caledonia, Tokelau and Guam illustrated the effectiveness of such dialogue. It was regrettable that not all the administering Powers had responded to the Special Committee's appeal.

24. His delegation would participate actively in the consultations to be held in the coming months in connection with the in-depth critical review of the Committee's work and hoped to contribute specific proposals with regard to the Special Committee's future activities. The documents prepared during his term as Acting Chairman might be useful in that connection. His delegation also hoped that the recommendations concerning the regional seminars contained in the report of the Special Committee covering its work during 1998 and other relevant recommendations would be duly taken into account with a view to improving the efficiency of the seminars, which were irreplaceable mechanisms for addressing problems concerning the Non-Self-Governing Territories and obtaining first-hand information on their situation. Such recommendations would be valuable input to the preparations for the regional seminar to be held in the Caribbean region in 1999, and he hoped they would be implemented during the current session.

25. In conclusion, the note by the Chairman on the organization of work (A/AC.109/1999/L.2) constituted an excellent point of departure for the work of the Special Committee during the current session; the introduction of tentative dates in the programme of work was particularly helpful.

26. The CHAIRMAN noted that, in introducing the draft report of the Pacific Regional Seminar at the 1495th meeting, the Rapporteur of the Seminar had made a number of recommendations, which were contained in documents A/AC.109/2121 and A/53/23 (Part I). At the same meeting, the Special Committee had taken note of those recommendations. With its consent, they would be taken into account in the preparations for the next regional seminar to be held in the Caribbean region. He took it that the Special Committee wished to proceed accordingly.

27. It was so decided.

28. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to a non-paper submitted by the Acting Chairman of the Special Committee, which had been prepared in accordance with the Special Committee's decision taken at its 1500th meeting on 12 August 1998. The non-paper contained new elements concerning assistance to Non-Self-Governing Territories by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations. He suggested that those new elements should

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be taken into consideration for possible inclusion in the text of the Special Committee's resolution on the subject.

29. He also drew attention to a paper submitted by the Acting Chairman, contained in the annex to document A/AC.109/L.1886. It was suggested that informal consultations on that subject should be conducted as soon as possible with a view to convening a meeting of the Special Committee in the near future in order to carry out a critical review of its work and formulate a plan of action for its future activities.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.