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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 3rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 18 June 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoué (Vice-Chairman) (Côte d'Ivoire)

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In the absence of Mr. Hunte (Saint Lucia), Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoué (Côte d'Ivoire), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

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

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Organization of work (A/AC.109/2001/L.2/Rev.1)

2. **The Chairman** drew attention to the revised tentative programme of work and timetable of the Committee (in document A/AC.109/2001/L.2/Rev.1) and said that he took it that the Committee wished to adopt it.

3. *It was so decided.*

4. **Mr. Donigi** (Papua New Guinea) said that when he had been elected Chairman of the Committee two years previously, he had come to the conclusion that there was a need to streamline its work. That process involved the operation of the Committee, rather than the form of its work. The issue was to achieve higher goals, plan the work more carefully and avoid the syndrome of dependence. It was appropriate to refer to that syndrome because it seemed that to a considerable extent the Committee depended on the information provided to it by administering Powers. The Committee's work largely consisted of reacting to the reports of administering Powers, rather than establishing goals which would enable it to work independently. In order to resolve that problem, it was important to understand that the streamlining of the Committee's work should be carried out by the Committee itself, without any outside interference. A system must be worked out which would reflect the unique character of the Committee; the technical errors which had occurred must be identified, and the existence of external factors and realities must be recognized. In order to streamline the work, planning instruments were needed, and that process should consist of three stages. First, the Committee should thoroughly analyse its work; second, it must work out a general plan; and third, it must implement it.

5. Over the past two years the Committee had succeeded in analysing its work and had proceeded to the second stage. A draft programme of work had been uniformly adopted and would be applied to each Territory on a case-by-case basis. The programme

needed to be finalized in conjunction with the administering Powers and authorities of each Territory. At the same time, the Committee could not advance to the third stage until the administering Powers began to develop a constructive dialogue with the Committee with a view to completing the second stage. It should be particularly noted that the Committee had started on the second stage, but had not yet completed it. That work should be carried out only with the cooperation of the administering Powers, and in that connection it was gratifying that New Zealand had expressed a willingness to hold informal consultations with him and other members of the Committee who wished to take part in order to finalize the programme of work for the Territory for which it was responsible.

6. **Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda) said that, in his statement, he would refer to two matters: a letter from the former Chairman of the Committee on the question of some names, titles and the like in the colonial entities and the comments made by the representative of Montserrat at the Havana seminar. With regard to the second matter, he recalled that the former chief minister of Montserrat had indicated that he was not receiving information or invitations from the United Nations. That also applied to some other Non-Self-Governing Territories. It would be logical to assume that such information would not be transmitted to the officially elected representatives of the population of those Territories. However, the matter had become clear when the representative of Montserrat had read the text of the invitation sent to the governor of that Territory.

7. It should be noted that there was no need to invite the governor, since the administering Power itself, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, would decide who to send to participate in any given event. While the governor of the United States Virgin Islands was the elected representative of the population and was authorized to speak on behalf of the people, the governor of Montserrat did not have any right to do so. In that connection, a clear concept was needed of the structure of the various colonial entities, since in a case like Montserrat, the invitation should be sent through the governor to the chief minister of the Non-Self-Governing Territory, which was under the administration of the United Kingdom.

8. There was a direct connection between what he had been saying and the letter from the former Chairman of the Committee requesting clarification of

the names of the posts occupied by the representatives of the United States Virgin Islands. That was a legitimate question, and such matters must be taken into consideration so as to avoid complications in the relations with Territories.

9. **The Chairman** said that he had proposed to convene informal consultations to discuss the situation of the inhabitants of the United States Virgin Islands. Speaking as the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, he said that he shared the view of the representative of Papua New Guinea that in order to achieve its goal, the decolonization of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, the Committee must work out new methods. His delegation also agreed that the involvement of the administering Powers was of fundamental importance. In that respect, it seemed that there was above all a lack of political will on both sides. There were of course imperfections in the Committee's work; however, in the presence of political will on both sides, the Committee would be able to make headway. Certain administering Powers were showing such political will; by their participation in the work of the Committee, they had facilitated the positive consideration of issues relating to each of their Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Requests for hearings (aide-mémoire 6/01-9/01)

10. **The Chairman** drew attention to aide-mémoire 6/01, 7/01 and 9/01 containing a number of requests for hearings regarding the questions of Gibraltar, the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and Western Sahara respectively. He took it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

11. *It was so decided.*

12. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had received 27 requests for hearings under the item entitled "Special Committee decision of 12 July 2000 concerning Puerto Rico". He took it that the Committee wished to grant those requests in accordance with its usual procedure.

13. *It was so decided.*

14. **The Chairman** drew attention to aide-mémoire 8/01, containing a number of requests for hearings on the item in question. He took it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

15. *It was so decided.*

Dissemination of information on decolonization

(A/AC.109/2001/19, A/AC.109/2001/L.4)

16. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Markham (Department of Public Information) took a place at the Committee table.*

17. **Ms. Markham** (Department of Public Information) briefly introduced the contents of the report of the Secretary-General on the dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from June 2000 to May 2001 (A/AC.109/2001/19).

18. **Ms. Maldonado** (Department of Political Affairs) said that, in relation to the activities described in the report of the Department of Public Information, the Department of Political Affairs had over the past year continued to provide substantive information, input and advice. The Palestine and Decolonization Section of the Department of Public Information and the Decolonization Unit of the Department of Political Affairs had kept in contact regarding the activities of the Committee. A member of the Department of Public Information had covered the Caribbean Regional Seminar at Havana, and both Departments were currently working on an information brochure on the work of the Committee and on assistance that might be available to the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

19. The Caribbean Regional Seminar in Havana, the first within the context of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, had provided an opportunity to strengthen and expand contacts with individuals and non-governmental organizations concerned with decolonization in the region. Statements by one of the Vice-Chairmen of the Seminar and by the Rapporteur explaining the initiatives of the Committee with regard to the development of work programmes for specific Territories had been highly appreciated by the participants.

20. Also during the period under review the Decolonization Unit had continued to respond to queries from Member States, representatives of the Territories, schools, non-governmental organizations and individuals seeking information on decolonization and on specific Territories. The Department of Political Affairs had continue to prepare contributions to United Nations publications containing information on decolonization, such as *Basic Facts about the United Nations* and the *Yearbook of the United Nations*. The Department of Political Affairs would work jointly

with the Department of Public Information to ensure appropriate information coverage to publicize United Nations objectives and activities within the framework of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, with particular emphasis on the work of the Special Committee as well as on assistance programmes for Non-Self-Governing Territories.

21. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic), noting the great importance of the work of the Department of Public Information and the responsibilities allotted to it, said that over the past two years, its staff had made considerable efforts to report on events taking place in the area of decolonization, such as the seminars held in Cuba and Saint Lucia, thereby emphasizing the role of the United Nations in that sphere.

22. The Department's publications were also noteworthy, promoting awareness in the international community regarding the real conditions in which the decolonization process was taking place, and making it possible to clarify the incomplete or distorted information appearing in the world press on that subject. There were two aspects to the dissemination of false information: it was done either deliberately to damage the United Nations and its Secretary-General, or out of ignorance of the history of the decolonization issue and the efforts which had been deployed by the United Nations in order to resolve it. In the second of those two cases, the situation might still be rectified; but it was essential that cases of deliberate distortion of information should be exposed and made public knowledge.

23. The Chairman drew attention to the draft resolution contained in document A/AC.109/2001/L.4.

24. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2001/L.4 was adopted.*

25. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had completed its consideration of the item.

Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (A/56/67; A/AC.109/2001/L.5)

26. **The Chairman** drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the item under consideration (A/56/67) and expressed appreciation to the administering Powers for the information they had provided, which would enable the Committee to make a full analysis of the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. He also drew attention to the

draft resolution contained in document A/AC.109/2001/L.5.

27. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2001/L.5 was adopted.*

28. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had completed its consideration of the item.

Question of sending visiting missions to Territories (A/AC.109/2001/L.6)

29. **The Chairman** drew attention to the draft resolution in document A/AC.109/2001/L.6.

30. **Mr. Donigi** (Papua New Guinea), recalling that a week earlier the Chairman had circulated amendments to draft resolution A/AC.109/2001/L.6, requested that the Committee should defer taking action on it so that his delegation could hold consultations with the representatives of Guam.

31. **Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda), referring to the question of sending visiting missions to Territories, asked whether it would be possible for the Committee to approve a mission to a Territory which had requested that a mission should be sent and was prepared to cover part of the costs.

32. **Mr. Sattar** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the Committee's budget provided for sending three visiting missions a year; such missions were carried out on the basis of an official request from the Territory concerned and with the consent of the administering Power.

33. **Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda) said that he was not fully satisfied with that reply; he had asked about the possibility of sending an extra mission in addition to the three missions provided for by the budget.

34. **The Chairman** said that he would have to consult the secretariat on that question.

35. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic), referring to the statement by the representative of Papua New Guinea, said that his delegation had no objection to his request. With regard to the question of financing visiting missions, the problem, in his view, was not how to find resources for them, but that some administering Powers were preventing them from being carried out. That approach was doing nothing to help the Committee carry out its programme of work, although cooperation in that respect would benefit not

only the peoples of the Territories, but also the administering Powers themselves.

36. **Mr. Donigi** (Papua New Guinea), referring to the comments made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda, said that the question of sending visiting missions to Territories was one of the items on the Committee's programme of work; the administering Powers should therefore cooperate with visiting missions, which were an effective means of determining the wishes of the population of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and also of informing them of the course of implementation of the Committee's programme of work. It was within the competence of the Chairman of the Committee to determine the parameters and establish the objectives of visiting missions.

37. **The Chairman**, speaking as the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, said that he supported the view of the representative of Papua New Guinea that visiting missions to Territories were an important means of implementing the Committee's programme of work.

38. Speaking as Chairman, he recalled that the representative of Papua New Guinea had requested that action on draft resolution A/AC.109/2001/L.6 should be deferred so that his delegation could hold consultations with the representatives of Guam. He suggested that consideration of the item should be resumed at a later meeting of the Committee.

39. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

40. **The Chairman** suggested that, following the practice of previous years, the Committee should authorize the Rapporteur, when preparing the Committee's report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, to edit the draft resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee in order to bring them in line with the format used by the General Assembly.

41. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.