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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF
INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

Letter dated 3 June 1977 from the Permanent Representatives of France
and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the
United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to inform you that a conference was held in the New Hebrides from 15 to 18 March and on 24 and 26 March 1977 in order to seek a solution to the political difficulties in the territory. The enclosed joint statement was issued by the British and French High Commissioners at the conclusion of the Conference.

We should be grateful if this letter and the joint statement could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 24 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Jacques LEPRETTE
Permanent Representative
of France to the
United Nations

(Signed) Ivor RICHARD
Permanent Representative
of the United Kingdom to the
United Nations

* A/32/50/Rev.1.

ANNEX

Joint statement issued on 26 March 1977 by the British and
French High Commissioners of the New Hebrides

As the New Hebrides Representative Assembly can no longer function, following the refusal of the representatives of the Vanuaaku Pati to continue to sit in it as it is at present constituted, the British and French High Commissioners, on the instructions of their respective Governments, presided jointly on 15, 16, 17, 18, 25 and 26 March over a conference composed of representatives of the customary Chiefs, elected members of the Representative Assembly and non-elected members of all political parties in the New Hebrides, in order to seek a solution to these difficulties. They reaffirmed the previous joint declarations of their two Governments on the following points:

1. The agreement of the two Governments to set the New Hebrides on the road to independence;
2. The agreement of the two Governments to hold a ministerial conference in Europe next July, to be attended by representatives of all the parties in the Assembly. The principal objectives of the conference would be:
 - (a) To fix the date of the next elections;
 - (b) To define the stages leading the New Hebrides to independence;
 - (c) To discuss constitutional questions concerning the future governmental structure of the country;
3. The agreement of the two Governments to organize, as soon as possible, new elections to the new Assembly on the basis of universal suffrage. Before these elections, it would be necessary to establish new electoral rolls and to issue appropriate identity cards.

The two High Commissioners took note of the desire of all members of the conference that the two Governments should exercise their responsibilities in full during this transitional period. They heard with appreciation the wise and helpful contribution made by the representatives of the Chiefs, who proposed a compromise solution to which they had hoped that the great majority of the conference could subscribe.

The two High Commissioners noted that the Chiefs' representatives believed that a majority in the conference was in favour of their proposal. However, after careful analysis of the statements of the different groups in the conference, and after having finally heard the representatives of each group separately, the High Commissioners recognized with regret that the political

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parties and the representatives of economic interests had not been able to agree on a means of enabling the Assembly to continue to function, to elect a President or to nominate the members of the Governing Council.

The two High Commissioners have therefore agreed to recommend that their two Governments should effect an exchange of notes to provide for the dissolution of the Assembly. In order to help the two resident Commissioners to administer the Condominium in the transitional period before the new elections and, in particular, to facilitate the preparation of the elections themselves and to prepare for the ministerial conference next July, the two High Commissioners will recommend to their Governments that the exchange of notes should provide for the establishment of a Provisional Council, under the chairmanship of the two resident Commissioners, consisting of four members nominated by the Vanuaaku Pati, two by the Tan-Union and one by the Federation of Independents. The Provisional Council will have advisory, not executive functions. The preceding recommendations have been largely inspired by the proposals from the Chiefs' representatives.

In addition, the members of the Committees elected by the Assembly may continue to work together to support the functions of the Provisional Council.

The two High Commissioners earnestly hope that these arrangements will serve to maintain calm and good order throughout the New Hebrides during this transitional period.