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CONTENTS

	Page
Agenda item 119: Observer status for the Commonwealth Secretariat at the United Nations .....	625
Agenda item 122: Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte .....	629

**President: Mr. Hamilton Shirley AMERASINGHE**  
(Sri Lanka).

**AGENDA ITEM 119**

**Observer status for the Commonwealth Secretariat  
at the United Nations**

1. The PRESIDENT: I call on the representative of Singapore to introduce draft resolution A/31/L.2 and Add.1.

2. Mr. KOH (Singapore): It is my duty and privilege, as the current Chairman of the Commonwealth Group of States, to introduce on behalf of its 33 sponsors draft resolution A/31/L.2 and Add.1. The heart of the draft resolution is to be found in its operative paragraph 1. That paragraph proposes to invite the Commonwealth Secretariat to participate in the sessions of the General Assembly as well as of its subsidiary organs in the capacity of observer. In my statement I propose to answer three questions. First, what is the Commonwealth and what does it do? Secondly, what is the Commonwealth Secretariat and what does it do? Thirdly, why should the General Assembly grant observer status to the Commonwealth Secretariat?

3. The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 36 independent sovereign States, 33 of which are Members of the United Nations. The three members of the Commonwealth which are not Members of the United Nations are Nauru, Tonga and Western Samoa. The members of the Commonwealth come from territories in the six continents and the five oceans. The Commonwealth includes peoples of different races, languages and religions. It embraces countries at every stage of economic development. Some members of the Commonwealth are non-aligned; some belong to various groupings, associations and alliances.

4. The question may be asked, What holds such a heterogeneous group of countries together? My Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, has tried to answer this question in the following way:

“We understand each other. . . We use the same diction and concepts. This does not mean that we all stay put. We are all evolving and discovering our own personalities.”

5. Therefore, in spite of their diversities, the countries of the Commonwealth do have certain things in common. They share certain traditions. For example, in all Commonwealth countries people in Government, in academic and in working life habitually use the English language. In all of them there are shared techniques and attitudes—in government, in the law, in education and in all sorts of methods and styles of life. Apart from these tangible bonds which bind them, there is something else, less easy to define, which animates and unites its members. The Prime Minister of Jamaica, Mr. Michael Manley, who, incidentally, was the Chairman of the last Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, has put it this way:

“We contain every factor which now challenges the political intelligence of mankind. We have rich nations and poor. . . Yet withal there is a strange, indefinable yet surviving goodwill. I am most tempted to say an instinctive empathy. . . The truth is that none of us. . . really understand why we have this capacity for communication and, stranger still, the continuing will to use it. But it is there.”

6. The members of the Commonwealth are also held together by their collective adherence to certain ideals. These ideals are set out in the Declaration of Commonwealth Principles, adopted by the Commonwealth Heads of Government on 22 January 1971 at their meeting in Singapore. I shall quote three of these principles in order to convey to this Assembly some impressions of the content and flavour of the Declaration of Commonwealth Principles.

7. One of these principles states:

“We believe that international peace and order are essential to the security and prosperity of mankind. We therefore support the United Nations and seek to strengthen its influence for peace in the world, and its efforts to remove the causes of tension between nations.”

8. Another principle reads thus:

“We recognise racial prejudice as a dangerous sickness threatening the healthy development of the human race and racial discrimination as an unmitigated evil of society.

“Each of us will vigorously combat this evil within our own nation.”

9. A third principle prescribes:

“We believe that the wide disparities in wealth now existing between different sections of mankind are too great to be tolerated. They also create world tensions—

our aim is their progressive removal. We therefore seek to use our efforts to overcome poverty, ignorance and disease, in raising standards of life and achieving a more equitable international society.”

10. What does the Commonwealth do?

11. The Commonwealth undertakes two types of activity. The first is consultation and the second is co-operation. In the first area, the most important event is the biennial meeting of Heads of Government of the Commonwealth countries, who meet to discuss international developments and to consider ways in which co-operation among members may be developed. The meetings are probably unique in that there is no other forum in which Heads of Government of such a wide variety of countries meet regularly for an informal exchange of views. The proceedings are private, which permits an unusual degree of frankness in discussion. The aim of such meetings is to enable the Commonwealth Governments to have a common understanding of the world's problems and of each other's problems and to help them to appreciate the motives and purposes underlying the policies which each is separately pursuing. In addition, the Commonwealth ministers of finance, law, health and education also meet regularly.

12. Consultations among Commonwealth Heads of Government and ministers sometimes lead to agreement to undertake projects of practical co-operation. The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation is a good example of such co-operation. The Fund was established in 1971 for the purpose of meeting the specific needs for technical expertise of developing countries. It is financed by all Commonwealth countries on a voluntary basis. The Fund has three programmes. The first identifies and recruits within the Commonwealth professional, technical and managerial experts requested by developing members; the second provides for practical training courses in developing Commonwealth countries, as needed by people from other developing countries; the third assists developing countries to expand their exports.

13. I shall conclude my answer to the first question—what is the Commonwealth and what does it do—by quoting the following statement from the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mr. Julius Nyerere. He said:

“The Commonwealth is people meeting together, consulting, learning from each other, trying to persuade each other and sometimes co-operating with each other, regardless of economics or geography or ideology or religion or race. It is this which makes the Commonwealth valuable.”

14. I shall now proceed to answer the second question, What is the Commonwealth Secretariat and what does it do?

15. The Commonwealth Secretariat was established in 1965. It is an international body whose members are drawn from the member countries of the Commonwealth. It serves the Commonwealth by providing the central organization for joint consultation and co-operation. The Secretariat organizes meetings and conferences of Ministers and of many others within the Commonwealth. It is responsible

for putting into effect decisions for collective action. It is the main agency for multilateral communication. It also provides technical assistance for economic and social development through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation.

16. The head of the Commonwealth Secretariat is its Secretary-General. The present Secretary-General is Mr. Shridath Ramphal, a person well known to all of us in the United Nations. He was formerly the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Justice of Guyana. There are two Deputy Secretaries-General, one of whom is a citizen of India and the other a citizen of Australia. Mr. Ramphal is also assisted by two Assistant Secretaries-General, who are nationals of Nigeria and the United Kingdom.

17. I shall now proceed to answer the third question, Why should the General Assembly agree to grant observer status to the Commonwealth Secretariat? I offer four reasons why it should do so.

18. First, a closer relationship between the United Nations and the Commonwealth will have the effect of strengthening the United Nations. This is evident from the fact that one of the principles contained in the Declaration of Commonwealth Principles is support for the United Nations.

19. Second, in many respects the United Nations and the Commonwealth have identical principles and purposes and, in other respects, aims and objectives which are both compatible and reinforcing.

20. Third, the Commonwealth has contributed, and is capable of making even greater contributions, to the work of the United Nations. I shall give two examples of such contributions. In the ongoing dialogue between developed and developing countries to establish a new international economic order, the Commonwealth has been able to make a not insignificant contribution. At the meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government held in Kingston, Jamaica, last year, the Heads of Government invited a small group of experts to draw up for their consideration a comprehensive and interrelated programme of practical measures directed at closing the gap between the rich and the poor countries. The group of experts issued two reports, the first of which was found helpful to participants in the seventh special session of the United Nations General Assembly.<sup>1</sup> My other example is taken from a very different field. It concerns one of the problems of southern Africa. When Mozambique decided to apply sanctions against Rhodesia, the Commonwealth Sanctions Committee met in London within 24 hours of the border closure. The Commonwealth delegations in the United Nations Security Council played an important role in the formulation and adoption of Security Council resolution 386 (1976) calling for assistance to Mozambique. The Commonwealth Secretariat has been closely involved in the United Nations machinery established to implement that resolution. At the request of the United Nations Secretary-General the Commonwealth Secretariat released one of its senior economic advisers to play a key role in the United Nations mission to Mozambique and later to act as joint co-ordinator of the

<sup>1</sup> See document A/AC.176/5.

world community's programme of assistance. A special Commonwealth fund for technical assistance to Mozambique has also been established. So far, 15 Commonwealth countries have pledged contributions totalling £850,000.

21. The fourth reason is that the Commonwealth embraces 33 of this Organization's 145 Members which have a total population of 1 billion. This is a not insignificant proportion of our membership and is certainly quite a substantial part of humanity.

22. For the reasons I have set out above, I urge the General Assembly to adopt by consensus draft resolution A/31/L.2 and Add.1.

23. Mr. HARRY (Australia): The Australian delegation takes great pleasure in associating itself with the Chairman of the Commonwealth group of States in warmly welcoming and supporting the proposal to grant observer status to the Commonwealth Secretariat at the United Nations.

24. As my colleague from Singapore has pointed out, the Commonwealth of nations is a unique multiracial grouping of States spread throughout the world. It is of great political, economic and social diversity, but its members have in common not only a similar historical and linguistic background but a similar approach to international affairs. All are sovereign independent nations, and most are Members of the United Nations.

25. The Commonwealth has always been, and remains, essentially a consultative organization which affords its member Governments an opportunity at all levels, both political and official, to exchange views on a wide range of issues of current concern locally, regionally and internationally. It does not vote on or adopt resolutions, or even necessarily attempt to reach conclusions or decisions on the matters discussed, but sets out to promote co-operation on the basis of agreed needs and means. Its particular strength lies in the willingness of its members to operate only by consensus.

26. By its very composition, which includes both developed and developing and aligned and non-aligned countries, the Commonwealth has interests that coincide with those of the United Nations. Indeed, the same security, economic and humanitarian issues appear on the agenda of each organization.

27. For example, the Commonwealth has for some time had a Fund for Technical Co-operation which gives assistance to its developing members. Ambassador Koh has mentioned that at their last meeting in Jamaica the Commonwealth Heads of Government initiated studies which proved useful in connexion with preparations for the seventh special session of the General Assembly and for the fourth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Earlier this month Commonwealth Ministers of Finance endorsed in general terms the further report by the Commonwealth Group of Experts "Towards a New International Economic Order"<sup>2</sup> and agreed that its

proposals should be given due consideration in framing national and international policies. The Finance Ministers considered that many of the proposals put forward by the group were practical and amenable to early implementation.

28. Ambassador Koh has also referred to the pledge made by the Heads of Government at Kingston to assist Mozambique should it decide to apply sanctions against Rhodesia. The subsequent Security Council resolution calling for assistance to Mozambique owed much to the example of the Commonwealth Sanctions Committee.

29. It is important, however, to appreciate that there is no wasteful duplication of effort involved in this parallel debate and activity in the three examples I have given. The Commonwealth Secretariat, a small but well-qualified and effective organization, has taken particular care to ensure that the work of the Commonwealth complements and supplements that of the United Nations and does not cut across or interfere with it.

30. It is to the new Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Ramphal, that we owe the most explicit redefinition of this role, and it is he who has acted to strengthen the relationship between the Commonwealth and United Nations Secretariats in a constructive and understanding manner. He is, I know, thoroughly alive to the necessity for the type of co-ordination which reduces paper work by replacing unnecessary correspondence which multiplies it. We pay a sincere tribute both to Mr. Ramphal and to our Secretary-General, Mr. Waldheim, for having created the favourable conditions in which the initiative before us has been presented.

31. We believe that the granting of observer status to the Commonwealth Secretariat will, by facilitating the Commonwealth's contacts with the United Nations, contribute to the functions of both in a mutually beneficial and harmonious way.

32. It is for these reasons that we, together with all the other members of the Commonwealth in the United Nations, have sponsored draft resolution A/31/L.2 and Add.1. We recommend to the General Assembly that it adopt this proposal in the spirit in which it has been put forward: by consensus.

33. Mr. HARRIMAN (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation is privileged to join with the line-up of 32 Commonwealth States unanimously sponsoring a motion which seeks to invite the Commonwealth Secretariat to participate in the sessions and work of the General Assembly and its organs in the capacity of observer.

34. I was privileged to lead the Nigerian delegation to a meeting of officials to look into the question of the establishment of the Commonwealth Secretariat and another Commonwealth organ, the Commonwealth Foundation, in December 1964. The mandate of the Secretariat was limited, hinging mainly on the preparation and servicing of meetings at all levels, and in particular the meetings of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers. The Secretariat, *ipso facto*, is mandated to follow up the decisions reached by the Prime Ministers.

<sup>2</sup> *Towards a New International Economic Order: a further report by a Commonwealth Experts' Group* (London, Commonwealth Secretariat, 1976).

35. With its association with the General Assembly and its organs, the Commonwealth Secretariat will no doubt be better placed to undertake these tasks, for the Commonwealth association has the primordial objective of promoting, through its unique bodies, the ideals of the United Nations, as well as its decisions.

36. The Commonwealth Secretariat, established and operating both as a symbol and as a servant of the Commonwealth, obviously draws its inspiration and guidance from the resolutions of Heads of State or Government of member States. My delegation has been very encouraged by the dynamism with which it has undertaken its duties and by its contribution towards the implementation of a number of decisions of the United Nations in accordance with its mandate from the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conferences. My colleagues who have spoken before me have elaborated on all this and perhaps I may be allowed to mention some of the activities of the Commonwealth Secretariat which my delegation has followed with approval, and indeed with practical support. I shall refer to the activities of the Secretariat concerning the situation in southern Africa.

37. The Commonwealth is an association which has made a great impact on freedom and unity throughout the world. The southern African area is essentially an area of the Commonwealth. First, South Africa received the Mandate over Namibia as a member of the Commonwealth with dominion status at that time. Having been expelled from that body, which bases its actions on moral values, South Africa therefore has no right to remain in Namibia and, *ipso facto*, the Commonwealth has the obligation to work hard and with all its might to get South Africa to relinquish Namibia, which came under its Mandate during the period when it was not a fully sovereign member of the Commonwealth. The moral obligation on the Commonwealth group to play a leading role in the establishment of the values of the Commonwealth itself—the values that are the essential rubric of the Commonwealth association, namely multiracialism and equality—are very important. The activities of the Commonwealth Secretariat, which my delegation has followed with great enthusiasm, involve unflinching support for the struggle of our brothers in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa to win independence and to eradicate the evil system of *apartheid* and colonialism imposed upon them through the system which I have described and through the Commonwealth, in the form of the then British Empire.

38. It is our view that the international community must play its part in providing concrete material support to this struggle in which the Commonwealth must play a leading role.

39. The Commonwealth association has, through its great leaders, made an impact on international society. We recall names like Pandit Nehru, Kwame Nkrumah, the late Bandaranaike, and excellent leaders like Julius Nyerere and President Kaunda, not to forget my own leaders in Nigeria, like Tafawa Balewa, who have all played a leading role in the formation of the Commonwealth.

40. My delegation and I believe that the association of such leaders, from all continents in the world, has a moral

force and a substantial role to play in the international community.

41. My delegation believes that the granting of observer status to the Commonwealth Secretariat to enable it to observe the sessions and work of the General Assembly and of its subsidiary organs will considerably assist the Secretariat's capacity with regard to these and other activities which are fully consistent with the goals and objectives of the United Nations.

42. Mr. PFIRTER (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Argentina has asked to speak simply to state as explicitly as possible its profound satisfaction with the draft resolution which this General Assembly will shortly adopt.

43. The ties of friendship between my country and all the Commonwealth countries that in some cases have existed for more than a century, both individually and collectively, make us feel particularly happy at a decision which will, no doubt, contribute towards strengthening those bonds of friendship. On the other hand, it is obvious that the United Nations as a whole has major reasons to give special importance to the inclusion of the Commonwealth Secretariat in the meetings and work of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies in the capacity of observer.

44. Indeed, precedents show that through the years the Commonwealth Secretariat has made important contributions to international progress in the most varied spheres, particularly in the socio-economic field, and we have no doubt that these positive contributions which, in many cases, had direct repercussions on Latin America, will substantially increase with the new status which the Commonwealth Secretariat will acquire today in this world forum.

45. In conclusion, I should like to recall that most of the countries of the Commonwealth have acceded to independence in recent years. They have done so with the invaluable help of the resolutions and machinery provided by this Organization, through its policy of decolonization, which, as set forth in the General Assembly resolutions on this subject, has made an adequate response to the different features of each particular case. This far-reaching event redoubles our satisfaction.

46. The PRESIDENT: Since there are no further speakers and if there is no objection, may I take it that the General Assembly decides, by consensus, to adopt the draft resolution in document A/31/L.2 and Add.1, which invites the Commonwealth Secretariat to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and of its subsidiary organs in the capacity of observer.

*The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 31/3).*

47. The PRESIDENT: I offer my hearty congratulations to the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Secretariat and to the staff of the Commonwealth Secretariat itself on the attainment by the Commonwealth Secretariat of observer status, which gives it the right to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and of its subsidiary organs in the capacity of observer.

48. The Commonwealth Secretariat represents an organization on which the sun never sets. Politically speaking, it extends from Guyana to Wellington, but if we speak in strictly longitudinal terms it stretches from Apia in Western Samoa at 160 degrees west longitude to Nuku'alofa in Tonga at 160 degrees east longitude.

49. It gives me special satisfaction as a President coming from the Commonwealth itself to welcome the Commonwealth Secretariat in its newly acquired status. I express the hope that this new relationship between the Commonwealth Secretariat and this Organization will lend vitality to our work and be to the benefit of both parties.

#### AGENDA ITEM 122

##### Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte

50. The PRESIDENT: I should like to suggest to members of the General Assembly that we close the list of speakers in the debate on this item at 5 o'clock tomorrow afternoon, so that our work may be better organized. If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

*It was so decided.*

51. Mr. HIMIDI (Comoros) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, first of all I should like to associate myself with the tribute paid to you by my colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and to renew the hope of the Comorian delegation that our work will be crowned with success.

52. On this historic date, when a Franco-Comorian dispute is being submitted to the judgement and lofty assessment of the international community, I am performing the duty of informing you, as specifically as possible, of the origins, the ramifications, and all the details of the Comorian question, which is entirely the creation of France.

53. I do not need to repeat what was stated by my colleague, Mr. Muzawar, the Minister for Foreign Affairs [*28th meeting*], who has been called to another mission and has entrusted me with the task of giving this Assembly the necessary additional information to enable members better to realize the true dimensions of the drama of French aggression on Comorian territory.

54. Several factors have been taken into account by the Comorian people and leaders in initiating, provoking, accelerating and giving substance to the process of accession to independence of the Comoro Islands.

55. Among these factors, I should like to specify these. Firstly, 130 years of contact between our two peoples and our two cultures have had the effect of exercising a reciprocal and undeniable permanent influence on the one and the other. Secondly, during 130 years of colonization, the single and indivisible entity of the Comoro archipelago was recognized by all French laws. Thirdly, it was those same French laws that thus set the conditions for the various stages of the institutional evolution of the Comoros from the decree of 9 September 1889 on annexation to the law of 23 November 1974 on independence. Fourthly, an international socio-political framework and a general ethical standard have, to say the least, been established and

elaborated to ensure respect for law and punishment for injustice.

56. By virtue of these factors and in accordance with the desire expressed by the Comorian people, negotiations were held between the Governments of France and of the Comoros which led to the signature on 15 June 1973 of the document entitled "Joint Declaration on the Accession to Independence of the Comoro Archipelago".<sup>3</sup>

57. That document solemnly confirmed the accession of the Comoros to independence and sovereignty and unambiguously reaffirmed the legally sacred nature of the political unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros. In the same spirit, the people of the Comoros, as well as the international community, took note with satisfaction and relief of the public statement of the highest authority in the French State, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

58. The terms of the statement of 24 October 1974 were crystal clear regarding the commitment of the State of France to respond faithfully to the aspirations of the Comorian people as well as to the requirements of the international authorities.

59. Along the same lines and in accordance with the proclamation of independence by the elected representatives of the Comorian people on 6 July 1975, the United Nations admitted as a full Member the State of the Comoros, comprising four islands, Anjouan, Grande-Comore, Mayotte and Mohéli, on 12 November of that same year.

60. It was therefore with astonishment and genuine indignation that the Comorian people witnessed the painful and incomprehensible spectacle of the conduct of the French Government in regard to the new Comorian State.

61. That spectacle, unprecedented in the history of decolonization, was essentially marked by an omnipresent military occupation by the French army and administration of the Comorian island of Mayotte—and this on the very morrow of independence; by the massive deportation of Comorian citizens born on the island of Mayotte and the shameful looting of their goods, although their only crime was to have chosen total freedom for their country; and by a deliberate and systematic determination to break and destroy all natural, geographical, historical, economic, cultural and human ties among the inhabitants of the Comorian archipelago. In order to give concrete expression to its will to demolish the political and geographical unity of the Comoros, France, with undisguised cynicism, started an entire pseudo-legislative process so as to make this sadistic mutilation of the Comorian nation final.

62. In organizing belated, unjustified and illegal referendums on the Comorian island of Mayotte, after the Comorian State had been admitted in its entirety to membership in the United Nations, the Government of France once again revealed its total scorn for its own institutions and its commitments to the Comorian people

<sup>3</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 23*, chap. XI, annex, appendix II.

and at the same time, to the surprise of all observers and jurists throughout the world, launched an outrageous challenge to international morality.

63. This evil action had its negative and pernicious effect and it is being perpetuated in international bodies. That is why, by an abuse of its right to the veto, France was able to obstruct Security Council condemnation of its deliberate aggression against the Comorian State on the island of Mayotte.

64. Despite all these combined disloyal actions, the declared purpose of which was to humiliate the Comorian people and stifle its legitimate claims, the leaders of the young State of the Comoros have at all times seized every favourable opportunity to establish dialogue with France, so as to put an end to these perfidious practices of which the Comorian people is a victim.

65. At the request of the Government of Comoros, at the beginning of October 1975 negotiations were started in Paris between France and the Comoros. That was made possible by the genuine willingness of my Government as expressed on 3 August 1975, the very day when the present régime took office.

66. The mission which my Government has assigned itself includes four objectives, namely: the reconciliation of all Comorians of every social origin, on every island and of all political tendencies; the establishment of normal relations with France; the convening of a constitutional conference including the whole range of political parties in Comoros, with the Government of France as the principal co-ordinator; and finally, a study within an appropriate context to establish new structures for Franco-Comorian co-operation.

67. Last May, when there was nothing to warrant optimism, my Government responded positively to the invitation to participate in the Franco-African summit held in Paris under the presidency of Mr. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.<sup>4</sup>

68. During my delegation's stay in the capital of France, to indicate its devotion to ensuring a better future, my Government, through the sustained action of its representative, who took an active part in the work of the conference, was thus able to renew contacts and undertake useful talks with eminent parliamentary and Government personalities and, more particularly, with the President of the French Republic himself.

69. Everything then led us to hope that a new page in the history of the relations between France and Comoros was about to begin on the basis of mutual understanding, friendship and respect.

70. We must point out here that, apart from all those formal negotiations, we have always shown a special interest in, and lent an attentive ear to all those who, as

mediators, have endeavoured to create better and more hopeful conditions.

71. To mention only one example, quite apart from all the natural affinities which attract us to the great French-speaking family, and particularly to Senegal, we have chosen that country, a friend of France, to represent our interests in Paris.

72. Despite the goodwill which the Government of Comoros has always shown, the Government of France, in October 1975, by demanding that Comoros recognize the French Parliament as having legitimate rights over Mayotte, demanding the withdrawal of the candidacy of the Comoros for membership in the United Nations and refusing to allow the Mayotte secessionist group to participate in the talks on the constitutional future of the Comorian archipelago, brought about the suspension of that happy initiative by the Government of Comoros.

73. That hostility was made all the more obvious when, on 27 October 1975, 10 days after the Security Council recommendation to admit Comoros to membership in the United Nations, the Government of France, through its Prime Minister, requested an emergency meeting of its Parliament to discuss the bill on a new partial consultation of the inhabitants of the Comorian island of Mayotte.

74. On 28 November 1975, only 16 days after Comoros was admitted to the United Nations, the general representative of the French Republic to the Comoros announced at Moroni the brutal and unilateral withdrawal of all financial, economic and cultural assistance by France to the Comorian State.

75. In addition to those acts of reprisal and despite the intervention of mediators, the French military and administrative authorities in Mayotte are frantically endeavouring to ensure the final separation of the Comorian inhabitants of Mayotte from those of the other three sister islands which have been freed from colonialism.

76. Thus, if Comorians, including those who were born there, wish to go to Mayotte, they must obtain an entry visa—a measure which, curiously enough, does not apply to the nationals of metropolitan France.

77. Similarly, economic and trade relations, which should follow the natural trend of the unity of the archipelago, have also been diverted to the island of Réunion and Paris.

78. Furthermore, telephone communication with outside countries have to go through Réunion and, even more serious, the postal, monetary and customs unity has been broken.

79. All this proves clearly, despite fallacious statements by the representatives of France here and elsewhere, that there is a deliberate effort definitively to cut off the Comorian island of Mayotte from the Comorian archipelago.

80. The international community, faced with those vexatious and unfortunate manoeuvres, must remain vigilant and firmly penalize all those stalling tactics in flagrant violation of the fundamental principles of our Charter. We

<sup>4</sup> Conference of Heads of State and Government and Ministerial Delegations of Benin, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, France, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritius, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, Upper Volta and Zaire, held at Paris on 10 and 11 May 1976.

have heard without surprise—because we have already been so astonished—and with complete calm these various statements that have been made before members by the representatives of the French State, and we leave it to the Assembly to assess the true facts. Thus, we have taken note of several informal proposals which have been presented by persons of all views, from far and near, who are interested in the destiny of the Comoros group.

81. What is more, we solemnly repeat before this Assembly, which is the only judge in the circumstances, our constant will to seek a just and equitable solution by means of any form of discussion which will safeguard the political unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros and respect for its sovereignty and our common interests.

82. Finally, it is our hope that this supreme organ will adopt a decision which will take into account, as it should, the right of all peoples to national independence, to political unity and to territorial integrity, in order permanently to strengthen each country's chances of surviving the tempests of the times and the greed of others, whoever they may be.

83. Mr. BOYA (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): The item on the agenda of the meeting this morning, namely the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte, is of particular importance to the delegation of the People's Republic of Benin, because that item is related to the right to an independent and sovereign existence of the four islands which taken together make up the new young Republic of the Comoros, which is a full Member of our Organization. Indeed, the question of Mayotte, which has been artificially created by the French colonialists and neo-colonialists, was a last-minute attempt to consolidate in the Mozambique channel the strategic position of Western imperialism, which is being threatened more and more as a result of the dislocation of the Portuguese empire.

84. All the tragi-comic manoeuvres, such as the alleged referendums of 8 February and 11 April 1976 and the suppression of all assistance to the young Republic of the Comoros can be explained only within the well-known context of imperialist strategy, a strategy which the French colonialists and neo-colonialists have mastered so well. If that is not so, what do they expect us to believe when they tell us that they wanted to preserve the political and administrative identity of Mayotte, while during the whole of the colonial period the four islands which make up the Republic of the Comoros were politically and administratively ruled as a single entity, and the colonizers never tried to make the inhabitants of one or the other island follow a different path.

85. Why, therefore, this sudden interest with respect to the inhabitants of Mayotte precisely when they have become independent? Why are the French authorities trying to void the results of the referendum of 22 December 1974, by which the Comorian people as a whole, by an overwhelming majority, expressed its wish to accede to independence in political unity and territorial integrity? What, indeed, is behind the obstinacy of France in not admitting that the four islands, which France itself always considered as an entity, have acceded to independence as a perfectly viable unit?

86. The contradictions and the hypocrisy which are being concealed behind the policy so far followed by the French authorities in the question of Mayotte are too flagrant to escape the attention of the international community. That attention is now being drawn to the injustice imposed on the Comorian people, which wishes only for peace and security and which desires to build up its national economy and resolve the many problems resulting from the colonial régime.

87. My delegation would like to refer to the resolutions which were adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth [*resolution 3291 (XXIX)*] and thirtieth sessions [*resolution 3385 (XXX)*], to those adopted at various sessions of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity and of the Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, which urged the French Government to put an immediate end to its attacks on the sovereignty, the integrity and the territorial unity of the Comorian State.

88. The colonialist manoeuvres of the French Government in fact constitute aggression against the young Comorian State and contribute to creating a dangerous situation in that region. Contrary to what they want us to believe, my delegation feels that the interests of the population of Mayotte are Comorian. The destiny of the populations of the four islands is linked by history and geography; the interests of Mayotte cannot, therefore, be truly furthered and protected except within the framework of a unified Comorian State and certainly not through some artificial, ill-defined and over-extended links with a country whose interests are not at all identical with those of Mayotte—far from it!

89. Our Organization has the duty to defend the territorial integrity of the Comoros. It must demand that the French Government immediately take appropriate measures in order to protect the unity and the territorial integrity of the Comoros in the light of the results of the referendum of 22 December 1974. Any other delaying tactics of the French Government should be denounced and opposed by our Organization.

90. The delegation of the People's Republic of Benin will associate itself with all measures aimed at putting an end to French colonialism and at safeguarding peace and security in that region.

91. Mr. HUMAIDAN (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation had the honour of sponsoring the resolution whereby the Comoros was admitted to our Organization, and at the plenary meeting held on 12 November 1975 when the Comoros was admitted to membership in the United Nations [*resolution 3385 (XXX)*], the Chairman of the Arab group of States made a statement on behalf of all the Arab countries to congratulate the new State on its admission, in which he said:

“We welcome the people of the Comoros to the international community and urge all States to respect the sovereignty, national integrity and unity of the Comoros. . .”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 2402nd meeting.*

It is a matter of deep concern to many countries, particularly those which have ties of friendship and co-operation with France, which includes the Arab and African countries, that the island of Mayotte is kept outside the sovereignty of the Comoros.

92. My delegation considers that the people of the Comoros explicitly affirmed its will to accede to independence in the referendum held on 22 December 1974. In that referendum, the number of Comorians opting for independence exceeded 94 per cent of those who expressed their opinion, and that indicates, in a collective way, the will of the Comorian people to accede to independence. From the logical point of view, nothing can justify the separation of one of the islands of the archipelago from its motherland. On the contrary, we consider that the present situation is incompatible with resolution 1514 (XV), which states that any attempt to disrupt the national unity and territorial integrity of a country is contrary to the United Nations Charter.

93. We sincerely hope that this problem will be solved without any further delay and that Mayotte will be reintegrated in the Comorian islands, particularly since responsible French authorities at the highest level have expressed their desire that Mayotte be returned to the Comorian islands and their confidence that this will be done.

94. Furthermore, at a press conference on 24 October 1974 Mr. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing stated the following:

“... The population [of the Comoros] is homogeneous, with practically no people of French origin, or only very few. . . was it reasonable to imagine that a part of the archipelago should become independent and that one island, whatever sympathy one might have for its inhabitants, should retain a different status? ”

President Giscard d'Estaing continued:

“... one must accept contemporary realities. The Comoros are a single unit, they have always been a single unit, and it is natural that their fate should be a common fate, even if some of them. . . may have wanted a different solution.

“On the occasion of the attainment of independence by a Territory, it is not for us to propose to shatter the unity of what has always been the single Comoro archipelago.”

95. My delegation will support any measure, any draft resolution, seeking to reintegrate Mayotte in the Comorian archipelago. My country has had the honour of receiving an official delegation from the Comoro islands in order to consider what measures can be taken to assist that young State, and the Government of the United Arab Emirates has made every effort to improve the economic situation of that country. We shall spare no effort in giving this assistance, and we invite all countries of the world to come to the aid of the Comorian people so that the structures of that young State may be built up and the well-being of the friendly people of the Comorian archipelago ensured.

96. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia): France relinquished a whole empire, and rightly. It did that in the best French

tradition. I recall how it fell to my delegation to lodge a complaint against France on the question of Algeria. At that time the French considered Algeria as three Departments of France. I told my good friend the Ambassador of France, none other than Mr. Georges-Picot, that I had studied the map very carefully but could not find Algeria across the River Seine. It is to the glory of the French people that they, in the person of General de Gaulle, came to see that Algeria should be independent.

97. I gave this as background because, after all, some French factions—and perhaps a few people in the French Parliament—wish to consider Mayotte as a Department of France, forgetting that there is the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean separating them. Anything that militates against the territorial integrity of a small people which has been liberated from colonial rule or from any other arrangement that is tantamount to being ruled from abroad should be discouraged.

98. Therefore, I stand here not so much to criticize a great State Member of the United Nations as to appeal to it to end this anomaly, because, after all, the territorial integrity of the Comoro archipelago should remain intact if for no other reason than economic reasons. France should remain the friend of the Comoros, including that integral part of it, the island of Mayotte.

99. France states that a referendum was held in Mayotte. But what would happen if we used the criterion of a referendum in regard to other places? I can assure the Assembly that if one were to ask the Bretons in France whether they wished independence, there would be great disarray. There are activists in Brittany; there is what is called regional nationalism. What if one were to hold a referendum in Belgium, where there are two ethnic groups, the French-speaking Walloons and the Flemish-speaking Flemings? I am afraid there would be a lot of trouble. What would happen if one were to ask the Scots and the Welsh in the United Kingdom whether they were in favour of separatism? I am sure there would be a great deal of disarray in the British structure of government. I mention those countries only as examples; I could go on *ad infinitum*.

100. Of course, there may be a few persons in any country who would opt to belong to another country, whether colonial or otherwise. But what determines nationality is the common interest. Language is not enough if there is no common interest. And the common interest of Mayotte dictates that it go with the other islands of the Comoros.

101. This reminds me of the story about Solomon's wisdom. When two women were claiming a child, Solomon suggested that each take half of that child. The real mother then said, “Give the child to the other woman”. She said that because she wanted to save the child's life. I hope that France will exercise the proverbial wisdom of Solomon in this case and not amputate, so to speak, a part of the Comoros by exercising suzerainty over the island of Mayotte.

102. In conclusion, I would again appeal to our French friends not to create a problem. They must be aware that the majority in this Assembly—not out of solidarity, but on



the basis of justice—will vote in favour of the integrity of the islands in the Comoro archipelago.

103. It is not too late for France to avoid the submission of a draft resolution that could exacerbate matters. We appeal to France to enable the people of Mayotte and the people of the other islands to cheer France for its reasonableness, for following the path that it chose by liberating the other islands. In that way the ties between France and the Comoros, across the sea and the ocean, will be strengthened.

104. I associate myself completely with what was said by the representative of the United Arab Emirates. He gave a very lucid analysis of the question, and I need not repeat

what he said. I would merely appeal once again to France to take measures in the spirit of what is known in France as *noblesse oblige*. Why does France not demonstrate in this case that magnanimity that it has demonstrated in the past? France relinquished a whole empire, and yet it wishes to keep this *bagatelle*—that is a good French word. I say to the French representatives: come to this rostrum, before we take any action, and state that you will magnanimously solve this question, that you will solve it in a reasonable way—perhaps through negotiations with the people of the Comoros. I ask France not to exacerbate matters and embitter what has for the past few years been a marvelous relationship with the French Republic.

*The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.*