



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 11th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VRAALSEN (Norway)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 25: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES: REPORT 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 (A/31/23 (parts IV and V), A/31/23/Add.1, A/31/23/Add.4, A/31/23/Add.6, A/31/23/Add.7 (parts I and II), A/31/23/Add.8 (parts I and III), A/31/23/Add.9 (parts I-III), A/31/23/Add.10, A/31/42, A/31/48, A/31/52, A/31/55, A/31/56, A/31/59, A/31/91, A/31/106, A/31/109, A/31/112, A/31/114, A/31/121, A/31/136, A/31/138, A/31/197, A/31/269, A/31/283)

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- (a) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
- (b) REPORT 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

AGENDA ITEM 88: 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/31/23 (part V), A/31/65 and Add.1-5, A/31/197, A/31/238):

- (a) REPORT 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
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (A/31/3 (chap. VII (sect. E)), A/31/197, A/31/238)

AGENDA ITEM 89: UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

AGENDA ITEM 90: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

1. Lord BOSTON (United Kingdom) said that in the twentieth century, the United Kingdom had dismantled an empire and rejoiced at the emergence, in its place, of so many independent nations, a large proportion of which maintained a mutual association within the Commonwealth. The approach of the United Kingdom to its dependent Territories had always been based on the Charter of the United Nations, Article 73 of which specified that the interests of the inhabitants of

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(Lord Boston, United Kingdom)

Non-Self-Governing Territories were paramount and that administering Powers should promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of those inhabitants until self-government was achieved. That meant respecting the wishes of the peoples of dependent Territories, avoiding any delays in the granting of independence and not forcing independence on those who did not want it.

2. He commended the work of the Committee of 24 and said that, although his delegation might not agree with all its findings, in each case it was confident that co-operation with the Committee was in the interests of the United Kingdom as an administering Power, of the Committee itself and of the inhabitants of the Territories. His delegation appreciated the growing awareness that, despite their many common characteristics, the Non-Self-Governing Territories were all different and deserved an individual approach.

3. His country sought to encourage the development of sound political institutions in its dependent Territories. The first step was to establish popularly elected representative assemblies, which then gradually acquired the power to make laws, to supervise the activities of the executive within internal affairs and, lastly, to choose a chief minister from among their own number. At the same time, the Governor, appointed by the Queen, progressively relinquished his powers to the elected representatives. The final stage, which was normally a transitional period before independence, involved the establishment of full internal self-government. All the various Territories administered by the United Kingdom were now at different stages in the process of progression towards independence, and the power to shape the future lay, or would shortly lie, in the hands of the people. For the United Kingdom Government, the right to self-determination did not simply mean responding to calls for independence once the Territory was in a position to become independent; it meant a process whereby increasing weight was given to the views and policies of local governments. The rate of progress, the form that progress took and the ultimate constitutional goal should accord with the wishes of the people and not with preconceived ideas imposed by others. It could not be otherwise, since different Territories required different lengths of time to achieve full independence, and during that process the people had to be able to express their wishes. Because of the wishes of the inhabitants of the Territories, the United Kingdom was not always able to act on the recommendations of the Committee of 24, since it could not impose its own ideas on the elected institutions of the Territories.

4. In response to the wishes expressed at the constitutional conference, Seychelles had gained its independence and was now a Member State of the United Nations. The Solomon Islands were on their way to becoming independent in 1977. A ministerial system of government had been established in the Territory in August 1974 and complete internal self-government had been achieved in January 1976. The framework within which independence would be achieved was now under study and the details would be settled at a constitutional conference to be held in London later in the current year. After attaining independence the Solomon Islands would continue to receive United Kingdom assistance, which at present amounted to

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(Lord Boston, United Kingdom)

more than £6 million per annum. In addition, the administering Power was paying particular attention to ensuring that the public service would be increasingly staffed by inhabitants of the Territory and to expanding training opportunities. His delegation agreed with the decision of the Special Committee concerning the Solomon Islands and wished to draw attention to the balanced and accurate way in which the Special Committee had dealt with the question of foreign investment in the Territory (A/31/23/Add.8 (part III), para. 9 (8), of the conclusions and recommendations).

5. The New Hebrides, a Territory jointly administered by France and the United Kingdom, was also moving along the path of orderly, democratic constitutional development. The French and United Kingdom delegations had circulated a joint communiqué on the most recent discussions at the ministerial level between the two Governments with regard to the Territory. The administering Powers recognized the right of the inhabitants of the New Hebrides to decide their own future and would not stand in the way of any status they might choose, as long as it reflected the clearly expressed wish of the people, in accordance with the principle of self-determination. Earlier in 1976 a New Hebrides Representative Assembly had been established which would in due course assume greater responsibilities, leading the Territory progressively to internal self-government. As indicated in the communiqué in question, France and the United Kingdom were trying to rationalize the joint administration and arrange for the Assembly to elect its own President in 1977. A passport for the inhabitants of the Territory was also being prepared.

6. As was shown in the Committee's report, the Gilbert Islands had made significant progress towards internal self-government and would achieve independence in 1978. On 1 November a local Minister of Finance would be appointed and the Territory would proceed to full internal self-government on 1 January 1977. Later general elections would be held, followed by a constitutional conference on the details of independence. The order-in-council of the United Kingdom providing for internal self-government contained provisions to safeguard the position of the community on Ocean Island (Banaba) and in response to the wishes of that community the implementation of internal self-government had been deferred from 1 November 1976 to 1 January 1977. The problems of Ocean Island were difficult but his delegation shared the Special Committee's view that they could be solved by negotiation.

7. In 1974 a Visiting Mission of the Special Committee had observed the referendum by which the people of Tuvalu had chosen to be separated from the Gilbert Islands. The new Territory, which had 6,000 inhabitants, had a House of Assembly consisting of eight members who chose the Chief Minister and he in turn appointed the remaining Ministers. The Chief Minister had said that independence should follow perhaps in two or three years with the assistance of the administering Power. The United Kingdom, faithful to its policy, would not stand in the way of independence if that was the clearly expressed wish of the people of the Territory.

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(Lord Boston, United Kingdom)

8. In Bermuda the party which in the past had opposed independence now formed the Government, but some of its members had given indications that they did not have closed minds on the subject of independence. It would be quite inappropriate for the Government of the United Kingdom to intervene in the political life of the Bermudians to ensure that they realized that they had a right to self-determination, as it was asked to do in paragraph 4 of the Special Committee's decision on Bermuda. The political life of Bermuda was active and lively, and even if that were not the case the Government of the United Kingdom would not have the power to intervene, since its responsibilities were limited to external affairs, defence and internal security. One example of the degree of autonomy enjoyed by Bermuda was the policy restricting the sale of land to non-Bermudians. That policy had been so successful that non-Bermudians were now selling their land to Bermudians. Another example was the legislation, adopted by the Bermuda Parliament, to ensure that there was no discrimination in wages and salaries by reason of sex, race or religion. Most workers were covered by collective agreements which helped to ensure the implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work. The Committee had rightly called for improvements in standards of living. However, it should be noted that the Bermudians enjoyed the highest average per capita income of any Territory in the Caribbean.

9. The United Kingdom's other dependent Territories in the Caribbean, namely, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands, Cayman Islands and the British Virgin Islands, had well-developed institutions of self-government and in none of them had a widespread desire for independence been expressed. The local governments had their own plans and priorities and preferred to concentrate on the immediate future. The Special Committee's Visiting Missions to Montserrat and the British Virgin Islands had resulted in useful recommendations. As the Special Committee had noted, the dilemma of small island Territories was that, with their limited resources, they might never be able to be independent economically. His delegation endorsed the Committee's view that that problem merited careful examination in the United Nations.

10. In general his delegation agreed with the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Committee on the Territories under its administration. However, the resolution on the Falklands adopted at the meeting held on 17 September was a notable exception. He wished to refer the members of the Committee to the view expressed by the representative of the United Kingdom at that time, as set forth in the record of the meeting (A/C.109/PV.1055). The United Kingdom was committed to the principle of self-determination for all Non-Self-Governing Territories, and it followed that the freely expressed wishes of the inhabitants must be a prime consideration for it in considering the future of the Falklands. The United Kingdom had been unable to accept earlier General Assembly resolutions on the Falklands because they did not give due weight to that essential factor. They did not accord to the people of the Falklands the right to have their wishes taken into account, a right which was allowed to the peoples of other Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Special Committee's resolution went even further, for it

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(Lord Boston, United Kingdom)

implied that the discussions which had taken place between the United Kingdom and Argentina since the adoption of earlier General Assembly resolutions could have only one outcome, namely, recognition of Argentine sovereignty. The United Kingdom was ready at all times to engage in a dialogue with Argentina on the question of the Falkland Islands, but it could not be expected that with respect to that Territory it would waive its policy of insisting that the wishes of the population should be a prime consideration.

11. In conclusion, he said that his statement had not been exhaustive and his delegation would have occasion to speak on Belize later.

12. Mr. ROSENZWEIG-DIAZ (Mexico) recalled that in the introduction to his 1966-1967 report, the Secretary-General had referred to the small territories as "entities which are exceptionally small in area, population and human and economic resources". In the view of the Mexican delegation, their isolation and their lack of communications and resources made an independent existence even more precarious for some of them. In resolutions 742 (VIII), 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV), the General Assembly had specified certain factors to be used as a guide in determining whether Territories, in different parts of the world, had attained self-government, regardless of the views of the administering Power on the subject.

13. The right of small Territories to self-determination and independence was indisputable. As the Special Committee had frequently stated in different decisions on small Territories, geographical or economic conditions should not prevent the inhabitants from deciding their own future. If the necessary conditions for progress towards self-government were to be created, there must be full co-operation between the administering Power and the United Nations, through the Special Committee. The Mexican delegation noted with satisfaction the participation of various administering Powers in the work of the Special Committee, which would make for the full and speedy implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. He also pointed out that the principle of self-determination could not be applied without popular consultation through an electoral system based on universal suffrage, and that such consultation must be conducted under United Nations supervision so as to ensure that neither side could dispute the results.

14. One of the most effective procedures available to the Special Committee for the performance of its decolonization tasks was the dispatch of visiting missions, which enabled it to be fully informed about conditions in the different Territories and helped to promote better understanding between the Special Committee and the administering Power, for the benefit of all parties concerned.

15. The administering Power of each Territory should systematically adopt a policy of training local skilled personnel, so that foreign personnel could gradually be replaced by local personnel in the management of the Territory's affairs. In the economic field, a policy of diversification should be followed and, wherever possible, a policy of developing industries suited to the natural resources of the area. In the social field, it was imperative to adopt measures

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(Mr. Rosenzweig-Diaz, Mexico)

to ensure an equitable distribution of the national income to help achieve a better balance between the different social classes. The specialized agencies and bodies within the United Nations system could and should make a valuable contribution to the accomplishment of those tasks.

16. His delegation fully concurred with the position taken by the Special Committee in document A/31/23/Add.9 (Part III) (para. 9, subpara. 5, p. 5) in endorsing the view of the Visiting Mission to Montserrat that the viability of the independence of some small Territories merited careful examination within the United Nations system.

17. Mr. DALTON (Argentina), exercising his right of reply, said that his delegation was sorry to note that there was no new or positive element in the position of the United Kingdom regarding the dispute over the Malvinas and that it showed no willingness to comply with the General Assembly's resolutions on that subject. The delegation of Argentina also deplored the fact that the United Kingdom had not suitably received the decision adopted unanimously at the recent Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned countries, held at Colombo, supporting the just and legitimate claim of Argentina to the Malvinas, which were considered a special case deserving special treatment in the process of decolonization.

18. His delegation noted that the representative of the United Kingdom preferred to continue to ignore General Assembly resolutions 2065 (XX) and 3160 (XXVIII) and the decision recently adopted by the Committee of 24, recommending that negotiations to settle the dispute should be expedited by the United Kingdom and Argentina. In his view, it was unnecessary for the United Kingdom to stress its willingness to enter into a dialogue as a contribution towards solving the problem, for there was always a dialogue between countries which maintained normal diplomatic relations.

19. Lastly, he said that he would comment in detail on the statements made by the United Kingdom representative when the Committee dealt with that particular question.

20. Lord BOSTON (United Kingdom), exercising his right of reply, repeated that the wishes of the inhabitants of the Falkland Islands must be the paramount consideration and that his Government was willing to enter into a dialogue with the Argentine Government on the subject.

REQUEST FOR HEARING

21. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that he had received from Mr. Abdallah M. Kamil a request for a hearing relating to French Somaliland (A/C.4/31/8/Add.3). If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee decided to grant that request.

22. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.