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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

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Question of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands

1. The CHAIRMAN welcomed Mr. John Enfield, Secretary of the Australian Department of Territories and Local Government, Mr. Parson bin Yapat and Mr. Wahin bin Bynie, Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Council, and Mr. Cree bin Haig, Chairman of the Management Committee of the Cocos Island Co-operative.

2. Mr. KOROMA (Sierra Leone), Chairman of the United Nations Visiting Mission to Observe the Act of Self-Determination in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, 1984, introduced the report of the Visiting Mission contained in the annex to document A/39/494.

3. In carrying out its mandate, the Mission had been guided by the relevant provisions of the Charter, General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and resolution 1541 (XV), in particular its principles VI, VIII and IX. During its stay in the Territory the Mission had met all the leaders of the Cocos Malay community; indeed, in view of the small size of the population, which currently numbered 354, it could be said that the Mission had met virtually all the Islands' residents of voting age. It had covered every stage of the voting process, had concluded that the Referendum had been carried out in a free and fair manner and that its conduct had been handled scrupulously in accordance with the pertinent Referendum Ordinance. The Mission had also observed the counting of votes and the declaration of the results, noting that all 261 registered and qualified voters had cast their ballots in an orderly manner and without any interference. As would be seen from paragraph 184 of the report, 229 votes or 87.7 per cent of the total had been cast in favour of integration with Australia. The Mission was of the unanimous view that the choice of integration had been made in complete freedom and that the people of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands had exercised their right to self-determination in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

4. As stated in paragraph 193 of the report, the people of the island had requested the United Nations to guarantee that a certain number of commitments by the Australian Government would be duly honoured. In that connection, he was happy to note that the transfer deed giving the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Council ownership of land in the Islands previously leased by the Commonwealth of Australia to the Cocos Co-operative Society had been duly signed by the Australian Minister for Territories and Local Government, that work on a programme for replacement of housing on Home Island had already begun, and that the Social Security Act had been extended to the Islands' people.

5. After thanking the Australian Government for its co-operation and assistance and expressing the Mission's appreciation of the trust and confidence shown by the members of the Cocos Malay community, he commended draft resolution A/C.4/39/L.3 to the Committee, adding that the delegations of Egypt, Indonesia, Mali, Philippines and Singapore wished to be included among its sponsors.

6. Mr. WOOLCOTT (Australia) thanked the Chairman of the Visiting Mission for his presentation and said that the main parts of his delegation's statement would be delivered by Mr. Enfield, Secretary of the Australian department of Territories and Local Government and the Chairman of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Council.
7. Mr. ENFIELD (Australia) said that the day on which the people of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands had voted to integrate with Australia had been an historic day for them, for the Government and the people of Australia, and for the United Nations itself. Australia was proud of its record in the process of decolonization, both in support of independence movements in many countries, starting with Indonesia in 1946, and in relinquishing authority over territories which it had administered. It was particularly gratifying that the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea should be presiding over the Fourth Committee as it considered the results of the Act of Self-Determination in Australia's last remaining Non-Self-Governing Territory.
8. In the 10 years since the first United Nations Mission's visit to the Territory, there had been much change and considerable progress for the Cocos people. Steady social, political and economic advancement had swept away the almost feudal society which had prevailed until then under the control of the Clunies-Ross family. As the Administering Power, Australia had worked consistently towards the day when the people of the Islands would decide that they were ready to participate in an Act of Self-determination. They had made that decision in December 1983 and the General Assembly in its decision 38/420 had authorized the Secretary-General to appoint a Visiting Mission to observe the Act. The Mission's findings were set out in its report (A/39/494) which had just been introduced by the Mission's Chairman, to whom, as well as to his fellow-members on the Mission and to members of the Secretariat who had accompanied it, the Australian Government addressed its sincere thanks.
9. In voting to become a part of Australia, the people of the Islands had decided, in effect, to join those Cocos Islanders who had left the Territory to settle permanently in Australia. Integration had thus confirmed a bond which already existed between the elements of the Cocos community and between them and the broader Australian community. In voting in that manner, the community had rejected the advice of Mr. John Clunies-Ross, the Island's former owner, who had campaigned against integration. The Australian Government had welcomed the decision and, in so doing, had accepted the obligation to ensure that the Cocos Malay people would have the same rights and responsibilities as other Australians. A letter from the Australian Minister for Territories and Local Government to the Chairman of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Council setting out the steps which the Australian Government proposed to take in fulfilment of its commitments to the people of the Islands appeared in appendix VI to the report. After describing some of the steps already taken in that respect, he assured the Committee that, in welcoming the people of Cocos into the Australian community, the Australian Government would honour its commitments to them.
10. Mr. PARSON bin YAPAT (Australia), speaking as Chairman of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Council, reviewed the history of the Islands. They had been settled in the

(Mr. Parson bin Yapat, Australia)

1820s by Europeans who had brought with them, as slaves, the ancestors of the inhabitants of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, from places as diverse as Indonesia, China, New Guinea, Africa and, later, Java. For five generations, the Clunies-Ross family had held authoritarian control over the lives of the inhabitants, denying them freedom and basic rights and keeping them in ignorance, isolation and poverty.

11. The situation had begun to change gradually when Australia took over the administration of the Islands, offering the islanders citizenship, resettlement and education and health care. Significant changes had taken place, however, only after the first United Nations Visiting Mission in 1974. Before that, most islanders had been apprehensive of outside interference in their customs and way of life and had, indeed, known virtually nothing about the outside world. The Australian Government, on the basis of proposals made by the Visiting Mission, had begun consulting with the leaders of the Islands on ways of advancing their status and had overcome their distrust. In 1978, Australia had bought most of the Clunies-Ross estate, distributing the land among the people themselves, and had helped the islanders establish their own Co-operative Society and an elected Islands Council, had improved education and health facilities, had lifted all travel restrictions and had raised the standard of living.

12. A subsequent United Nations Visiting Mission in 1980 had informed the islanders that they would have to make a decision about their future, and choose either independence or free association or integration with Australia. The three choices had been discussed at length with the Australian administrators, who had explained what was involved to the leaders and to the people themselves. The leaders in turn had personally met with every inhabitant individually to make sure that the three choices had been fully grasped. It had been agreed that the decision on the Islands' future should be made by secret ballot, in accordance with United Nations practice, and the ballot process had been explained to each islander. Thus, on 6 April 1984, the people of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands had decided that they would integrate with Australia.

13. They now felt proud and confident, despite their very small numbers, because they had entered a large nation and were enjoying the rights and social benefits of all Australians. The question of land control had been resolved to the complete satisfaction of the people. Most importantly, the Australian Government had promised to help the Cocos Malay people to preserve their customs and practices, as part of the family of people which made up the Australian nation.

14. Mr. WARD (New Zealand) said that the report of the United Nations Visiting Mission to observe the Act of Self-Determination in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and those of two previous Visiting Missions, described clearly the problems and constraints facing small, isolated, resource-poor, atoll Territories. New Zealand's own experience in the Pacific region made it appreciate and respect the decision of the Cocos (Keeling) Islanders to throw in their lot with Australia and take up the full privileges and benefits inherent in that decision, which, as stated in the report of the Mission, had been taken in complete freedom. Australia was no longer an administering Power, but that would certainly not signal the end

(Mr. Ward, New Zealand)

of Australia's interest and involvement in decolonization issues. New Zealand congratulated Australia on a job well done.

15. Mr. RADRODRO (Fiji) fully endorsed the view that the act of self-determination in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands had been conducted in a fair and unfettered manner and that the people of the islands had exercised their right to self-determination in accordance with the principles of the Charter and of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

16. The dependent Territories which currently came within the purview of the Committee were, with the exception of Namibia, extremely small; Cocos (Keeling) Islands, with an area of 14 square kilometres, must rank as one of the smallest. That an act of self-determination had been organized for them represented another major step forward in the process of decolonization. The administering Power should be commended for recognizing the inalienable right of all dependent peoples to exercise freely their right to self-determination and for facilitating the exercise of that right by the Cocos Malay community. The act of self-determination had also underscored that, at least for small island territories, independence was not the only logical outcome of decolonization. The people of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands had been offered all possible options, including that of independence; by a substantial majority, they had opted for integration with Australia. The fears of some, that integration would undermine the cultural identity of the Malays, had not been borne out. The Cocos Malays, displaying political maturity, had secured guarantees on issues which were of critical importance to them, including, guarantees over land, protection of their customs and traditions, and the diversification and strengthening of their economic development base.

17. The administering Power had further agreed to extend the powers of the Cocos Island Council, which represented an important instrument for the protection and perpetuation of Malay customs and traditions. Since 1974, the administering Power had established a number of relevant programmes that had prepared the Malay community to exercise its right to self-determination; those programmes would be continued. The confidence and dialogue that had marked the good relationship between the integrating parties augured well for their future.

18. Miss TRUJILLO (Venezuela) said that, as a member of the Visiting Mission, Venezuela was pleased that representatives of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands were present as the Committee was about to take a decision on the draft resolution regarding the Islands. The people's act of self-determination had been accomplished in full freedom, after active preparation of the population by the administering Power. A people proud of their tradition had voted on their future, and Venezuela wished them all prosperity.

19. The CHAIRMAN said that he would take it, if he heard no objection, that the Committee was unanimous in wishing to adopt the draft resolution on the question of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands without a vote.

20. Draft resolution A/C.4/39/L.3 was adopted by consensus.

21. Mr. WOOLCOTT (Australia) said that the adoption of the draft resolution was a milestone for Australia and for the people of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. Australia believed that over the years it had administered the Territory in fairness and in accordance with the wishes of its people. After their decision to integrate, Australia had welcomed them as full and equal members of the Australian community, and it would not retreat from the obligation it had undertaken to preserve their religious beliefs and culture.

22. The CHAIRMAN, paying tribute to Australia's constructive role in the decolonization process, said that the Committee had concluded its consideration of the question of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

General debate (continued)

23. Mr. DIMITRIJEVIC (Yugoslavia) said that the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples 24 years earlier had been the source of inspiration for non-alignment, a concept which had opened up new perspectives of equality, international solidarity and non-bloc politics for those still struggling for their national and social liberation. Indeed, the independent States created in the process of decolonization had, almost without exception, become members of the movement of non-aligned countries.

24. In the midst of the current dangerous deterioration of international political and economic relations, no effort should be spared to resume dialogue on the crucial issues of peace, security, disarmament and development. The non-aligned countries had already declared their readiness to take full part in such efforts. They supported the basic ideas and proposals contained in the report of the United Nations Visiting Mission to the Cocos Islands (A/39/494); and also supported the idea of having a solemn observance in 1985 of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on decolonization.

25. To complete the evident achievements of the United Nations in the field of decolonization, it was urgent to bring about the independence of Namibia and to decolonize the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. There could be no freedom and dignity unless they were shared by all. Yugoslavia, like most of the non-aligned countries, considered that the practice of making colonial issues into international crises and conflicts between blocs or Powers had to be stopped, since it had nothing to do with the legitimate demands and aspirations of the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

26. Any transformation of a colonial problem into a political, diplomatic or even military confrontation was unacceptable. Regrettably, there were many instances of foreign military intervention for the purposes of domination. The illegal occupation of Namibia, the system of apartheid and the racist aggression of South Africa against the front-line States must end once and for all.

27. On the question of Western Sahara, the time had come to reach consensus on a just political settlement. The forthcoming summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity should be instrumental in furthering that aim.

(Mr. Dimitrijevic, Yugoslavia)

28. Yugoslavia believed that the information provided by the administering Powers, in accordance with Article 73 e of the Charter, on developments in the Non-Self-Governing Territories under their administration should be released regularly and should be more detailed and non-selective. Peoples under colonial rule must exercise their right to self-determination, independence and free choice of development on the basis of the objective economic and political conditions of their Territories. Similarly, the purpose of the United Nations visiting missions was to become directly acquainted with the political and economic development of individual Territories and with the wishes and aspirations of the indigenous populations. Such missions should be sent more frequently and the Special Committee should take more initiative in proposing them. In every case in which a people exercised an act of self-determination, the United Nations should examine whether the people had adequately understood the significance and implications of the options before them, as well as the procedures involved. That would assure that the remaining colonial peoples were exercising their inalienable rights in strict compliance with the Charter, the Declaration on decolonization and other relevant United Nations resolutions and decisions.

29. Mr. SOLTYSIEWICZ (Poland) said that the achievement of independence by many small Territories continued to be obstructed by certain Western Powers intent on preserving their economic and military interests; the most obvious example was in South Africa where the racist régime held the Namibian people and the people of South Africa itself in bondage. His delegation had not been convinced by the statements of a number of the representatives of colonial Powers who had exalted the beneficial role of investment and military activities in Namibia and in small territories such as Micronesia and Guam. The information provided by petitioners on Micronesia and Bikini regarding weapon-testing grounds, destruction, radiation and disease had confirmed once again that the economic and military interests of the colonial Powers in small Territories impeded decolonization and were contrary to the interests of the inhabitants.

30. Poland would continue to extend its solidarity to all peoples fighting for the complete elimination of colonialism and apartheid and pledged sustained support for the just struggle of the colonial people and their national liberation movements, particularly the African National Congress in South Africa and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) in Namibia; such support included the provision of educational and training opportunities for students from Namibia and Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation fully supported the demand that the colonial Powers withdraw their military bases from colonial Territories immediately and unconditionally; the General Assembly should take suitable steps to enable the population of those Territories to exercise freely their right to freedom and independence. Increased attention should be devoted to the dissemination of relevant information on the decolonization process to mark the 40th anniversary of the United Nations and the 25th anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). The Special Committee of 24 should continue to make all possible efforts to accelerate the decolonization process and the administering Powers should be obliged to co-operate with the Committee in the elimination of all strongholds of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

31. Mr. OBUNYASI (Kenya) said that Kenya fully supported General Assembly resolution 38/54 and would urge the administering Powers of Non-Self-Governing Territories to enter into constructive negotiations for the total elimination of the vestiges of all forms of colonialism.

32. With reference to items 105, 106 and 107, his Government fully supported General Assembly resolution 38/53 and would continue to provide moral and financial support. Kenya had extended facilities for formal studies, technical and vocational training to the inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories within the limits of its national resources.

33. His delegation appealed to all specialized agencies currently collaborating with the racist South African régime to cease doing so; in the view of his delegation, specialized agencies should provide assistance to the people of Namibia and South Africa which would prepare them for independence. His delegation also appealed to all States and organizations to continue to offer scholarships to students from South Africa and Namibia.

34. On agenda item 103, Kenya urged the administering Powers to continue to provide relevant information to the Secretary-General in accordance with article 73 e of the Charter.

35. Kenya supported the principle of self-determination for the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories irrespective of their size and population; it believed that the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories had the inalienable right to decide their own political, economic and social future without outside interference. It supported the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 35/118, particularly the plan of action for the full implementation of the Declaration. He appealed to all States, agencies and individuals to increase their financial support to the students from South Africa and Namibia.

36. Miss MILLAN (Colombia) said that the issue of decolonization had led to the development of a substantial body of international jurisprudence based on certain principles enshrined in the Charter, particularly the self-determination of peoples, the territorial integrity of States and respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, without discrimination. General and complete decolonization required not only positive input by the administering Powers but the co-operation of the entire international community and of the peoples under colonial domination who must decide their own future. Her delegation therefore appealed to all States in a position to do so to provide study and training facilities for the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing-Territories as a contribution to the twin causes of peace and progress.

37. The Special Committee of 24 had stressed the need to make the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing-Territories aware of the options available to them and of the responsibilities in that connection of the administering Powers. Her delegation therefore strongly supported the practice of sending frequent visiting missions to the dependent Territories, with a view to assisting them to take the decisive step which preceded independence.

(Miss Millan, Colombia)

38. As a member of the United Nations Council for Namibia, Colombia expressed its solidarity with the Territory; it reiterated its strong support for the United Nations resolutions which had been universally accepted as the basis for the achievement of Namibian independence and for SWAPO as the sole legitimate representative of the Namibian people. The international community should make an unprecedented joint effort with a view to achieving the independence of Namibia and other colonial Territories in the important anniversary year of 1985.

39. Mr. DIAWARA (Mali) viewed the issue of the Western Sahara as a problem of incomplete decolonization and his delegation accordingly continued to support all efforts which would assist the people of that Territory to achieve their inalienable right of self-determination through a peaceful and fair referendum. The Assembly of Heads of States and Government of the Organization of African Unity, at its nineteenth ordinary session, had laid down the lines along which a settlement might be sought and, in that connection, his delegation continued to place its hopes on negotiations as the means of resolving the conflict.

40. On the issue of the Non-Self-Governing Territories addressed in document A/39/23 (Part VI), his delegation continued to be of the view that negotiations between the various parties concerned represented the best means for solving those problems; the efforts which had been made to improve the economic and social situation of the inhabitants of those Territories were particularly welcome.

41. The failure of the Lusaka Conference in May 1984 had once again demonstrated the bad faith of the racist Pretoria régime which had continued to link Namibian independence with the withdrawal from Angola of Cuban troops who had come at the request of a sovereign Government. The people of Namibia would only achieve their independence and national sovereignty if Security Council resolution 435 (1978) was strictly enforced. His delegation reaffirmed its continuing support for the front-line States which continued to make heavy sacrifices to assist the people of Namibia and South Africa to achieve their independence.

42. His delegation appealed to those States who had a special responsibility for international peace and security to increase their pressure on South Africa to abide by international law; it also appealed to the specialized agencies to provide moral and material support to the peoples of the colonial Territories and their national liberation movements, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 35/118.

43. Mr. SEMILETNIKOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that great successes had been scored in the cause of decolonization since the adoption, on the Soviet Union's initiative, of the historic resolution containing the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. In Africa, progress would undoubtedly have been still more significant without the threat to peace and security created by South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia and the continuing colonial exploitation of that country by South African and Western monopolies. The United Nations must not slacken its efforts to ensure the complete and final elimination of the remnants of colonialism, racism and apartheid.

(Mr. Semiletnikov, Byelorussian SSR)

44. In the so-called small Territories, imperialist Administering Powers, the United States foremost among them, were still depriving the local populations of the right to their own natural resources and obstructing their path to self-determination and independence. Far from assisting economic and political development, the Administering Powers' use of island Territories in the Pacific, Atlantic, Indian Ocean and Caribbean regions as military bases served for the suppression of national liberation movements and the maintenance of the colonial Powers' military presence in those regions, thus running counter to the interests of international peace. Arguments advanced by representatives of some Western countries to the effect that the existence of military bases was beneficial to small colonial Territories because of the latter's allegedly special characteristics were unconvincing. On the contrary, many United Nations documents and, in particular, those emanating from the Special Committee on decolonization showed that the situation in a number of colonial island Territories was extremely grave. Puerto Rico, exploited by imperialist transnational corporations and transformed by the United States into an outpost for committing aggression in the Caribbean and for holding at gunpoint the countries of Central America, was a particularly striking example.

45. The continuing existence of even small colonial possessions represented a serious threat to peace, as the full-scale war waged by the United Kingdom for the preservation of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) had amply demonstrated. The concern of Latin American States at the United Kingdom's actions aimed at the Islands' further militarization was entirely understandable.

46. In the strategic Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Micronesia), the Administering Power, in contravention of the Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement, was pursuing a policy of de facto annexation and imposing various forms of neo-colonial dependence such as "commonwealth" and "free association" on separate parts of the Territory. In the almost 40 years of its administration, the United States had deliberately held back social and economic progress in the Territory in order to impede the Micronesian people's independent development. At the same time, it was actively using the Territory for military and strategic ends. In the hope of achieving the definitive transformation of Micronesia into a United States military base in the western Pacific, the Administering Power was seeking to impose long-term military agreements on the Micronesian people. The United States was failing to fulfil its trusteeship obligations under the Charter, creating instead a serious threat to the security of countries in the region and to international peace as a whole. The tragic consequences of United States nuclear-weapon tests for the populations of the Bikini and Eniwetok atolls, the effects of radioactive fallout on Rongelap and Utirik, the plight of the former inhabitants of Kwajalein, transformed by the United States into a testing ground for intercontinental ballistic missiles, were known to all.

47. The United Nations should take all necessary measures to compel the United States to discharge in full its obligations under the Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement and to frustrate its attempts to confront the world with the accomplished fact of Micronesia's colonial enslavement. His delegation would support all effective steps aimed at the early and complete implementation of the Declaration and other United Nations decisions in the field of decolonization.

/...

48. Mr. CASIECHETTY (Sri Lanka) said that over 100 Territories had freed themselves from colonial shackles since the Second World War; others were still anxiously striving for their moment of destiny. Forces were at work, however, which sought to obstruct and even reverse the inexorable march towards freedom, particularly in Namibia.

49. The administering Powers in small Non-Self-Governing Territories should make every effort to assist the dependent peoples to be self-reliant, economically and politically, and to increase their awareness of the choices available to them. Measures to accelerate the process of decolonization should be adopted and the relative lack of technological sophistication of dependent peoples should not be used as an excuse for the administering Power to remove those peoples from their traditional homelands to alternative locations, in order that the vacuum so created might be filled for the economic, military or strategic advantage of the rulers.

50. Non-governmental organizations had an important role to play in the process of decolonization through the widespread dissemination of information on the situation in the colonial Territories and on the objectives and activities of the colonial peoples, as well as by monitoring the activities of foreign interests impeding decolonization. United Nations visiting missions had played a pre-eminent role in securing first-hand information on the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In that connection, it has been pointed out that, when an administering Power informed the General Assembly that the people of a Non-Self-Governing Territory were ready to participate in an act of self-determination, it would be advisable first to send a survey mission to the Territory in order to determine the state of political consciousness and preparedness of the people concerned.

51. The ideals and principles of the newly emergent nations were shared by the Non-Aligned Movement; as an active member of that Movement, Sri Lanka shared those ideals and looked forward to an era freed from the blight of colonialism.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.