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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

Fifth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 7 September 1954, at 2.45 p.m.

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PRESENT:Chairman:

Mr. KHALIDY (Iraq)

Members:

Mr. LOOMES Australia

Mr. FRAZAO Brazil

Mr. HLA AUNG Burma

Mr. YANG }
Mr. LIU } ChinaMr. DONS MOELLER }
Mr. BRUN } Denmark

Mr. APUNTE Ecuador

Mr. PIGNON France

Mr. APENALES Guatemala

Mr. SINGH India

Miss ROESAD Indonesia

Mr. AL-JAMALI Iraq

Mr. SPITS }
Mr. GRADER } Netherlands

Mr. SCOTT New Zealand

Mr. GIDDEN }
Mr. CASTON } United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland

Mr. GERIG United States of America

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mr. MATTHEWS International Labour Organisation

Miss BAÑOS Food and Agriculture Organization

Mr. ARNALDO United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural
OrganizationSecretariat:

Mr. HOO Assistant Secretary-General

Mr. BENSON Secretary of the Committee

EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS IN NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (A/AC.35/L.179/Rev.1, L.180, L.181)(continued)

Mr. HOO (Assistant Secretary-General), replying to a question asked at the previous meeting, said that the joint Indian and Burmese draft resolution (A/AC.35/L.179/Rev.1) would entail no additional expenditure. If, however, the United Kingdom amendment (A/AC.35/L.181) were adopted, the position would be more complicated, for the Technical Assistance Administration had found that the proposed procedure would not fit into its normal services and appropriate administration procedures would have to be devised. Since the Technical Assistance Administration, like the other units of the United Nations Secretariat, came under the general authority of the Secretary-General, it would be best if the resolution were addressed to the Secretary-General rather than to particular agencies, leaving it to him to decide on the most suitable procedures.

Mr. SINGH (India) wondered if the revised text of the joint draft resolution would meet some of the United Kingdom objections. The addition of the words "inter alia" should have made the second paragraph of the preamble acceptable. The sponsors agreed with the United Kingdom delegation that paragraph 1 of the operative part was badly placed and suggested that it should become paragraph 4. Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 would then become 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Since the very simple procedure proposed in the draft resolution would entail no additional expense, while the United Kingdom delegation would do so, the Indian delegation hoped that the United Kingdom delegation would not press its amendment.

With regard to the Guatemalan amendment, the Indian delegation felt that the Committee should continue to be formally responsible for the procedure, even though in practice the Secretary-General would execute it. There seemed little to be gained by making a distinction between the Secretary-General and the Secretariat.

In reply to a question from Mr. LOOMES (Australia), Mr. HOO (Assistant Secretary-General) confirmed that the Secretariat could undertake the additional work under the draft resolution without extra staff.

Mr. GIDDEN (United Kingdom) said that the improvements suggested by the Indian representative would make it possible to withdraw paragraphs 1 and 2 of the United Kingdom amendment but paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 would have to be maintained. Although the use of the Technical Assistance Administration and the specialized agencies might require new procedures, there seemed to be no real difficulty. The United Kingdom delegation continued to believe that no new procedure was required at all, but that if the Committee was determined to introduce one it should follow the existing scholarship arrangements under the Technical Assistance Administration and the specialized agencies rather than the procedure which had been devised for the Trust Territories. The United Kingdom delegation was opposed in principle to the equating of the Trust Territories and the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

The CHAIRMAN put the United Kingdom amendment to the vote, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraph 3 of the United Kingdom amendment was adopted by 7 votes to 5, with 2 abstentions.

Paragraph 4 was adopted by 7 votes to 5, with 2 abstentions.

Paragraph 5 was adopted by 7 votes to 5, with 2 abstentions.

Mr. ARENALES (Guatemala) withdrew his amendment (A/AC.35/L.180).

The CHAIRMAN put the joint Indian and Burmese draft resolution, as amended, to the vote.

The Indian and Burmese resolution, as amended, was adopted by 10 votes to none, with 5 abstentions.

Mr. PIGNON (France) explained that he had abstained from voting in order to reserve his Government's position until the matter came before the General Assembly.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS 222 (III), 448 (V) and 747 (VIII): COMMUNICATIONS
RELATING TO THE CESSATION OF THE TRANSMISSION OF INFORMATION: GREENLAND
(A/AC.35/L.155 and Corr.1)

Mr. BRUN (Denmark) reminded the Committee of the note of 3 September 1953 in which his Government had informed the Secretary-General that on 5 June of that year a constitutional amendment had been adopted whereby the status of Greenland had changed from that of a Non-Self-Governing Territory to that of an integral part of the Kingdom of Denmark, its people being represented in the Danish Parliament on an equal footing with the rest of the Danish population. The Danish Government had added that in the light of that change it considered its responsibilities under Chapter XI of the Charter to be terminated and had therefore decided to cease transmitting the information required by Article 73 e.

Greenland's history as a Non-Self-Governing Territory had been somewhat different from that of other Territories, in that it had never been a colony in the classical sense of the word. From the time of its discovery in the tenth century, when it had been settled by Scandinavian immigrants, it had always been connected with one of the Nordic realms. It had come under the Danish-Norwegian Crown, remaining with Denmark when the two countries had separated in 1814. Though the Norsemen there had died out after five centuries and their place had been taken by Eskimos migrating from Canada, the Danish Kings had always considered themselves Kings of Greenland. In the early 18th century the missionary Hans Egede had established the principle which had since been the basis for Danish work in Greenland that the Greenlanders should enjoy the same fundamental rights as all other peoples. Denmark itself had at that time been governed by an absolute monarchy and there had therefore been no question of Greenland's becoming autonomous. In 1849 the Danish people had acquired the free constitution under which they were still living. The provisions of that constitution had not been extended to Greenland, for a very good reason. The Eskimo people had become thoroughly adapted to the rigorous conditions in which they lived; their economy, indeed their lives, depended entirely on the seal, which gave them food, fuel, clothes and material for building their boats and houses. The Greenlanders were a hardy, independent, self-supporting and undoubtedly happy people. It was that condition that the Danish Government had

endeavoured to maintain for two hundred years after Hans Egede's arrival there; it had given the people schools and a health service but had sheltered them from the outside influences which would have disrupted their economy and way of life. It had therefore excluded Greenland from the 1849 Constitution. Nevertheless, local self-government had been instituted in the 1850's and had since been extended again and again. Illiteracy had been practically eliminated in the 1850's.

After 1920, however, great changes had begun to occur. The climate of Greenland had become warmer, with the result that the seal had become more and more scarce. Meanwhile the population had been rapidly increasing in number. Fortunately another result of the change in climate had been the appearance of fish in Greenland waters in a number hitherto unknown. Thus fishing had replaced seal hunting as the principal occupation of the Greenlanders and the new industry had resulted in the introduction of a money economy into Greenland, forcing the Greenlander to adopt a co-operative rather than an individualist way of life. The revolutionary change in Greenland's economic life and the maturity gained by the Greenlanders through education and through participation in political life had necessarily led to a change of Greenland's political status within the Danish realm. The objective of the Danish Government's policy was no longer to protect the Greenlanders through isolation, but to lead them into the Danish community as citizens on an equal footing, in every respect, with other citizens. There had never, incidentally, been any racial discrimination, as was illustrated by the fact that the population of Greenland was of mixed Scandinavian-Eskimo origin.

In addition to the foregoing changes, Greenland's geographical position had acquired a new significance as modern means of communication developed; Greenland was in fact near the focus of great economic activity and many of the shortest air routes between the great centres of population passed over the territory.

As a result of all those developments, and in accordance with the wishes of the people, Denmark had adopted a new policy towards Greenland. When Constitutional changes had been introduced in 1953, an amendment had been adopted which included Greenland in Denmark as an integral part with the same rights and privileges as were possessed by other parts of the Kingdom. Greenland was now represented in the Danish Parliament by two representatives elected by direct secret ballot, and possessed an electorate composed in

exactly the same way as the Danish electorate. This was in fact an over-representation, as one representative would bear a closer proportion to the number of electors.

Greenland had therefore ceased to be a Non-Self-Governing Territory within the meaning of the Charter and Denmark was no longer required to submit information under the terms of Article 73 e.

In ceasing to be an administrative Power, Denmark would automatically withdraw from membership of the Committee.

It had always been the policy of Denmark to assist the population of Greenland in its march towards a richer life. Greenland had never for Denmark been an object of exploitation. Denmark had invested great amounts in Greenland's industries, in its health service, schools and public utilities. It was a great task to create in Greenland conditions parallel to the conditions in other parts of Denmark but that task would be carried through.

On leaving the Committee he wished to express his appreciation of the friendliness and co-operation he had always received from its members. He thanked the Secretariat for all its help; the visit Mr. Hoo and Mr. Benson had paid to Greenland some years earlier had been particularly appreciated. The Danish delegation had learned much from his participation in the Committee's work and it was not without regret that he bade it farewell.

The CHAIRMAN, on behalf of the Committee, welcomed the Greenland members of the Danish delegation. Their presence at the session was a practical application of the principles of Chapter XI of the Charter. It was the General Assembly's duty to ensure that, when a Territory attained a full measure of self-government, that self-government was effective and real; in that context the presence of the Greenland members was of deep symbolic significance. The Danish Government's communication (A/AC.35/L.15 and Corr.1) represented the first instance of the practical application of General Assembly resolution 742 (VIII) and would be considered by the Committee in a spirit of international co-operation which Mr. Lannung, the previous Danish representative on the Committee, would approve. He hoped the Danish representative would convey to his Government the Committee's appreciation of Mr. Lannung's work at previous sessions.

Mr. SINGH (India) pointed out that Indian policy with regard to the cessation of the transmission of information was consistent in all cases.

The United States Report by the President to the Congress for the Year 1953: US Participation in the UN referred on page 183 to the Indian proposal, made in the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly, eighth session for the establishment of an ad hoc committee to hear Puerto Rican minority political parties. An important principle was reaffirmed in the United States representative's statement, recorded on page 184 of the same Report, that if at any time the Puerto Rican Legislative Assembly adopted a resolution in favour of more complete or even absolute independence, the President would immediately recommend to the Congress that such independence should be granted.

His delegation would require time to study the summary of information transmitted by the Government of Denmark (A/2653) and the statements made by the Danish delegation on 3 September 1954 (A/AC.35/SR.101) and at the present meeting. Meanwhile, however, it was clear from General Assembly resolution 742 (VIII), paragraph 9, that the Committee was bound to scrutinize, in the light of the list of factors annexed to that resolution, the information transmitted by any Government in support of a declaration that a given Territory no longer needed the protection of Chapter XI of the Charter.

The information provided by Denmark showed that the population of Greenland was fully literate and that, especially since the introduction of constitutional reforms in 1950, it enjoyed wide opportunities for the expression of political opinion; hence factor A.1 - the most important in the third part of the list of factors - was adequately covered. Factor B.1 in the same part of the list was amply covered by the more than proportionate representation of Greenland in the Danish Parliament. The information before the Committee appeared to indicate full compliance with the factors concerning internal constitutional conditions, enumerated in section C of the third part. The Committee should, however, consider carefully whether factors A.2 and C.2, concerning respectively freedom of choice and local rights and status, were fully complied with in the case of Greenland. He would like to know whether the United States of America, for example would support the same principle with regard to freedom of choice for Greenland as it had done with regard to Puerto Rico in the statement to which he had referred.

The apparent reluctance of non-administering members of the Committee to recognize the attainment by Territories of a full measure of self-government

stemmed purely from a sense of duty to ensure that such self-government was genuine and complete. While many more Territories should be granted self-government in the near future, the General Assembly was in duty bound to retain the right to receive information under Article 73 e of the Charter and to retain an interest in the inhabitants of those Territories until it was assured that full self-government had been attained.

New and more comprehensive procedures were needed to deal with decisions by Governments, as in the present instance, that Chapter XI no longer applied to formerly dependent peoples. The Committee should consider the establishment of suitable machinery, perhaps an ad hoc committee, to consider each new case. In particular he would suggest that, as the United Kingdom did in the case of any of its own Territories on the eve of self-government, the United Nations should send representatives to visit any Territory about to receive its independence. He hoped such a visit would be received by the Government concerned, not as indicating a desire to supervise or to criticize, but as a means of dispelling any shadow of doubt regarding the correctness of the action taken and as a gesture of congratulation on the stage reached by the Territory in its international democratic evolution. He would be glad to learn the Danish reaction to that suggestion. He reserved the right to introduce a resolution or amendment to the effect that a small United Nations group should be sent to visit each Territory which attained self-government; should such a resolution prove unnecessary he would request the Rapporteur to refer to the suggestion, and any observations made upon it, in the Committee's report.

He asked whether any communications contesting the validity of the change in Greenland's status had been received at the United Nations. The Secretariat reply to that question should also be included in the Committee's report.

In conclusion, he associated himself with the Chairman's welcome to the Greenland members of the Danish delegation, both as individuals and as an indication of Denmark's observance of the principle that dependent peoples should participate in all decisions concerning their Territories.

Mr. HOC (Assistant Secretary-General) said that no communications with respect to Greenland's status had been received other than those from the Danish Government.

The meeting was suspended at 4.10 p.m. and resumed at 4.45 p.m.

Mr. AL-JAMALI (Iraq) would like further information on the action taken by the Danish Government to extend to North and East Greenland suffrage to the Danish Parliament (A/2653, page 3) and on the extent to which the Danish Government, in deciding to cease the transmission of information under Article 73 e of the Charter, had taken into account the list of factors annexed to General Assembly resolution 742 (VIII).

Mr. SPITS (Netherlands) said that, from the information before the Committee, it was clear that Greenland's new status had been reached after full consultation with the inhabitants of the Territory and in fulfilment of their wishes. The General Assembly should accordingly recognize that status and commend the wise policy of the Danish Government. Since the Assembly had never succeeded in defining what was meant by "a full measure of self-government" it would be fruitless to examine whether self-government was fully present in any particular case. His Government had frequently entertained doubt whether the list of factors annexed to resolution 742 (VIII) could appropriately be applied; in practice self-government was a matter of fact rather than principle. In Greenland's case the voluntary association of the Territory with the metropolitan country on an equal footing, the adequate representation accorded it in the Danish Parliament and the establishment in the Territory of internal administrative organs were sufficient indication that self-government had been attained and that the cessation of the transmission of information was justified.

Self-government was less a matter of legislation than of the application of such legislation, the responsibility for which rested with the metropolitan Government. Denmark upheld its democratic institutions in exemplary fashion, a fact which guaranteed that the association of Greenland

on an equal footing with Denmark would be maintained. His delegation would support any resolution recognizing that Greenland had attained a full measure of self-government.

Miss ROSSAD (Indonesia) asked whether the powers of the National Council of Greenland in relation to Danish bills for measures affecting the Territory (A/AC.35/L.155, Annex I, page 3) were limited to deliberation and recommendation, and whether a bill affecting Greenland which had not been tabled before, or had been rejected by, the National Council was ever referred to the Danish Parliament for enactment. She also wished to know whether the National Council was empowered to consider matters other than those referred to it by Parliament or the Government.

In reply to a question from Mr. APUNTE (Ecuador), Mr. BENSON (Secretary of the Committee) stated that the complete text of the Danish representative's statement at the present meeting was reproduced in Press Release PM.2828.

Mr. GIDDEN (United Kingdom) associated his delegation with the Chairman's remarks of welcome to the Greenland members of the Danish delegation. The people of Greenland and the Danish Government were to be congratulated warmly on the attainment by Greenland of self-government, which constituted a tribute to Danish wisdom and to the maturity of the Greenland people. His delegation was happy that the objectives of Chapter XI of the Charter had been attained in a further instance.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.