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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 20 February 2014, at 11 a.m.

Temporary Chair: Mr. Eliasson (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Chair: Mr. Lasso Mendoza (Ecuador)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

Opening of the session by the Deputy Secretary-General

1. **The Temporary Chair** said that, midway through the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, there were encouraging signs of rejuvenation of the work of the Special Committee. The General Assembly had recognized French Polynesia as a Non-Self-Governing Territory, effectively adding it to the Special Committee's agenda, and the Bureau had held several meetings with each of the four administering Powers for the first time in years, with a view to identifying next steps in the decolonization process. The intensification of face-to-face talks among interested parties and the administering Powers' acceptance in principle of visiting missions were welcome developments.

2. The international community considered colonialism a historical aberration; hence it was vital to eradicate the remaining forms of colonialism, in line with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant United Nations resolutions, and to bring the decolonization message to a wide audience. To that end, inclusive, proactive efforts by the Special Committee, the administering Powers and the Non-Self-Governing Territories could help break deadlocks or encourage the Special Committee to become involved in situations between a Territory and its administering Power.

3. The Non-Self-Governing Territories looked to the United Nations for comprehensive and sustained future initiatives. While the Special Committee had begun to open up more opportunities, the pace of decolonization remained slow. He was confident that 2014 would be a period of intensified diplomatic efforts on decolonization, building on recent progress in dialogue and consensus-building, including the planned expansion of the Special Committee's Bureau to incorporate Indonesia, and the visiting mission to New Caledonia. The Secretariat would continue to support the work of the Special Committee, which was a unique platform to advance the historic decolonization mandate of the United Nations.

Adoption of the agenda

4. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of officers

5. *Mr. Lasso Mendoza (Ecuador) was elected Chair, Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba), Mr. Minah (Sierra Leone) and Mr. Percaya (Indonesia) were elected Vice-Chairs, and Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) was elected Rapporteur, by acclamation.*

6. *Mr. Lasso Mendoza (Ecuador) took the Chair.*

Organization of work (A/AC.109/2014/L.1 and A/AC.109/2014/L.2)

7. **The Chair** said that the delegations of Argentina, Costa Rica, Ghana, Guatemala, Italy, Jamaica, Montenegro, Panama, Solomon Islands, Spain, Suriname, Turkey, Uganda and Uruguay had indicated their wish to participate in the work of the Committee as observers.

8. There was new and growing demand for the Special Committee's work, as reflected in the need to add a third Vice-Chair. It was to be hoped that positive results would be achieved in the coming year. The full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and other relevant resolutions would ensure a serious, sensitive and historically grounded approach to decolonization.

9. **Mr. Al-Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the number of countries that had requested to participate in the work of the Special Committee as observers attested to its effectiveness.

10. **The Chair** drew attention to a note by the Secretary-General, contained in document [A/AC.109/2014/L.1](#), indicating the resolutions and decisions relevant to the work of the Special Committee for the current year. The Special Committee also had before it document [A/AC.109/2014/L.2](#), which contained suggestions from the Chair concerning the Special Committee's organization of work, programme of work and timetable.

11. He took it that the Special Committee wished to approve the proposed organization of work for the current year, with the understanding that the meeting schedule might be subsequently revised if required.

12. *It was so decided.*

13. **The Chair** said that, in accordance with the decision of the General Assembly, the meetings of the Special Committee would be convened without the presence of the quorum required under rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. However, the presence of a majority of the members would be required for any decision to be taken.

Pacific regional seminar

14. **The Chair** drew attention to the letter addressed to the Chair of the Special Committee from the Permanent Representative of Fiji, expressing his Government's willingness to host the 2014 Pacific regional seminar. He took it that the Special Committee wished to accept the proposal by the Government of Fiji to host the Pacific regional seminar.

15. *It was so decided.*

16. **The Chair** thanked the Government of Fiji for its willingness to host the Pacific regional seminar. He also thanked the Government and people of Vanuatu for having offered to host the seminar and expressed the hope that a future seminar could be held in that country.

17. As in previous years, the Special Committee would schedule the 2014 Pacific regional seminar to coincide with the International Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories, which was commemorated in the third week of May. He suggested that the seminar should be held from 21 to 23 May 2014.

18. *It was so decided.*

Committee visiting mission to New Caledonia

19. **The Chair** said that, with regard to the request received from the President of the Congress of New Caledonia, there had been broad agreement among delegations that the Special Committee should undertake a field visit to that Territory. Moreover, the delegation of France had conveyed its Government's consent to such a visit. He therefore took it that the Special Committee wished to send the proposed visiting mission to New Caledonia.

20. *It was so decided.*

21. **The Chair** said that the Bureau had proposed that the visiting mission should be composed of four Special Committee members, namely, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea and Sierra Leone; an independent electoral expert to be chosen by the mission; and three Secretariat support staff. He took it that the Special Committee wished to approve the proposed composition of the visiting mission.

22. *It was so decided.*

23. **Mr. Aisi** (Papua New Guinea) said that his delegation welcomed the cooperation shown by the administering Power in consenting to the visiting mission. The Melanesian Spearhead Group had received a communication from the President of the Congress of New Caledonia, proposing that the visiting mission should take place from 4 to 11 March 2014.

24. **The Chair** said that, while he would make every effort to work within the time frame suggested by the President of the Congress of New Caledonia, more time would in principle be required to plan the visiting mission.

25. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) said that the proposed dates were too soon to allow the necessary preparation; furthermore, they were not feasible for her delegation, owing to a scheduling conflict. She therefore suggested that the Special Committee should discuss a potential change in the dates for the mission.

26. **Mr. Koroma** (Sierra Leone) said that the Chair should convene a meeting, preferably within the next few days, to resolve the scheduling issue.

27. **Mr. Thomson** (Fiji) said that, during recent talks with his delegation, the President of the Congress of New Caledonia had stressed that the visiting mission must inspect the electoral lists ahead of the provincial elections scheduled for May; it was for that reason that the dates of 4 to 11 March had been proposed. Time was of the essence, particularly since the elections in question were a key part of the process leading to the Territory's self-determination under the Noumea Accord.

28. **Mr. Dabouis** (France) confirmed that his Government had informed the President of the Congress of New Caledonia of its readiness to welcome a visiting mission of the Special Committee to the Territory. The exchange had been

forwarded to the Committee. He reiterated that his delegation was willing to work with the Bureau to determine the optimal dates for the visit, and underscored that the elections were to be held in May. It was therefore important for the Special Committee to conduct the visiting mission as soon as possible.

29. **The Chair** said that he would convene a meeting without delay on the issue of the dates for the visiting mission. Discussions would also be held with the administering Power.

Other matters

30. **Ms. Joseph** (Saint Lucia) said that, more than three decades after her own country had attained its independence, 7 of the 17 listed Territories were islands in the Caribbean, while many others were Pacific islands. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) had consistently proposed new initiatives, such as the creation of a working group that would issue specific recommendations regarding island Territories and the appointment of an independent expert to assess the situation on the ground. Several of those proposals had subsequently been endorsed by the General Assembly and only needed to be implemented. The Special Committee should therefore take up the matter in the context of its organization of work.

31. She expressed her condolences to the delegation of Papua New Guinea on the death of Ambassador Peter Donigi, who had made a valuable contribution to the eradication of colonialism.

32. **The Chair**, in response to a suggestion by **Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia), said that he would send a letter of condolences to the family of Ambassador Donigi on behalf of the Special Committee, expressing its appreciation for his service as former Chair of the Committee.

33. **Mr. Aisi** (Papua New Guinea) thanked the members of the Special Committee for their condolences, which he would convey to the family of Ambassador Donigi and the people of Papua New Guinea.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.