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Chairman: Mr. VAN LIEROP (Vanuatu)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

Hearing of petitioners (A/C.4/44/3 and Add.1, 5-7; A/C.4/44/6 and A/C.4/44/8/Add.1)

1. The CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that it had decided to comply with the requests for hearings on the subject of New Caledonia, Pitcairn and the United States Virgin Islands contained in documents A/C.4/44/3 and Add.1, 5-7; A/C.4/44/6 and A/C.4/44/8/Add.1.
2. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Somburu (Bay Area Anti-Colonial Committee) took a place at the petitioners' table.
3. Mr. SOMBURU (Bay Area Anti-Colonial Committee) said that since 1853 the people of New Caledonia had been deprived of the opportunity to express their will without coercion, intimidation or repression. The indigenous population of New Caledonia currently found itself in a minority, constituting 60,000 people out of an overall population in the islands of more than 140,000. In such circumstances the concept "one man one vote" could not be regarded as acceptable and just, inasmuch as the holding of elections on the basis of such a formula would not guarantee the country's indigenous population the enjoyment of democratic rights.
4. The people of New Caledonia had opted for peaceful means in the campaign for their rights. Members of the Front de libération nationale Kanak socialiste (FLNKS) had been subjected to repression. In the past few years a number of active members of the independence movement had been savagely murdered. The people of that country must be given the opportunity to put forward their views openly both in the islands and beyond their borders in order to mobilize international support in the campaign for equal rights, self-determination and freedom. The problem was one which faced not only the people of New Caledonia, but many other peoples striving to become masters of their own fate. It was those peoples which were the truest allies of the people of New Caledonia. In addition, many countries represented in the United Nations could play a positive role in that endeavour.
5. He called upon the States members of the Committee to review their programmes with the aim of promoting progressive changes in the world and of enabling the Kanaks and Melanesians to join with other peoples in the struggle for freedom.
6. Mr. Somburu withdrew.
7. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Alcalay (National Committee for Radiation Victims) took a place at the petitioners' table.

8. Mr. ALCALAY (National Committee for Radiation Victims) said that the organization of which he was a member was monitoring the process of decolonization in New Caledonia. In April 1988, after many years of dispute and bloodshed, and, in particular, after the adoption of the draconian measure designed to destroy indigenous Kanak culture known as the Pons Statute, some pro-independence Kanaks had seized French soldiers on the island of Ouvea as hostages. In the resulting confrontation with French commando units 19 Kanaks and 2 French gendarmes had been killed. The incident had led the French Government to hold negotiations in Paris between representatives of the Front de libération nationale Kanak socialiste (FLNKS) and the anti-independence party known as the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR) in order to review the situation in New Caledonia. As a result of those talks the Matignon Accords had been signed.
9. During the previous week, talks designed to monitor observance of the Matignon Accords between FLNKS and RPCR had produced some positive results. The French Government was to be commended for having fulfilled its promise and for having kept the lines of communication open between the rival factions.
10. At the same time, it was important to exercise caution and not to entertain unduly sanguine hopes in connection with the currently favourable atmosphere prevailing with regard to New Caledonia, since there was no mention in the Matignon Accords of the inalienable right of the Kanak people, as the indigenous population of the Territory, to independence. It was to be feared that the Matignon Accords, instead of ensuring decolonization in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, might prove to be merely a pretext for the eventual assimilation of the Kanak people into Caldoche society.
11. In the current situation the French Government was fulfilling the role of a "neutral" mediator between FLNKS and RPCR, posing as an impartial third party. It should not be forgotten, however, that it was the French Government which had unilaterally removed New Caledonia from the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories in 1946. During a recent visit to the islands, the French Prime Minister, Michel Rocard, had reiterated his Government's pledge to maintain a French presence in the Pacific region. Still more revealing was the admission by a former head of the French security service, who stated in an interview given to the conservative New Zealand International Review that some 50 successful operations had been carried out in the region while he was in charge. Concern regarding the French presence in the region had also been expressed recently by the outgoing New Zealand Prime Minister, David Lange.
12. In conclusion, he called on the members of the Fourth Committee to exercise vigilance in monitoring the process of decolonization in New Caledonia.
13. Mr. Alcalay withdrew.
14. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Landess (Peace for Our Children's Sake) took a place at the petitioners' table.

15. Ms. LANDESS (Peace for Our Children's Sake) said that it was imperative to achieve a peaceful transition to independence in Namibia and New Caledonia. Eleven years before the beginning of the twenty-first century, more than three million people were still under the yoke of colonial domination, while countless others lived in neocolonial conditions which drained the creative potential of former colonies and perpetuated an unhealthy dependence on the colonial Powers.

16. During the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly there had been much talk about indebtedness and the repayment of debts, although the question should be asked who was in debt to whom, and should compensation with interest not be made for the hundreds of years of colonial exploitation and abuse. The industrialized nations prided themselves on their technological advances. However, the world would achieve a much higher level of development if every individual were allowed to develop his or her full potential. Thus far only a minute fraction of human intellectual potential had been utilized. It was therefore essential to establish all the conditions which would enable peoples fully to determine their own destiny.

17. The entire issue of decolonization and self-determination must be addressed on many levels. Since the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the Fourth Committee had assisted 59 colonies to gain independence. Those colonies had subsequently become Members of the United Nations as sovereign States, increasing the number of States Members of the Organization from 51 in 1945 to 159 today.

18. In the United Nations document on decolonization it was clearly stated that the racist régime of South Africa must not remain in control of Namibia's only deep-water port, Walvis Bay, and that it could not maintain a military base in that country without seriously infringing on Namibia's sovereignty. Security Council resolution 435 (1978) must therefore be fully implemented.

19. The French plan for New Caledonia was commendable, although progress in the implementation of the Matignon Accords should be monitored. The powerful of the world must realize that they could not continue to live at the expense of others. Their attempts to continue the dumping of toxic wastes and the testing of nuclear weapons must be halted. Oppression, racism and domination destroyed not only the victims but also those who victimized. Human life would have no meaning unless human beings contributed positively to the advancement and well-being of the entire global family.

20. Peace for Our Children's Sake was co-operating with a programme entitled South Africa Now, which was broadcast throughout the country. The South African Government was spending \$26 million every year on disinformation campaigns abroad. At the same time, there was a danger that the South Africa Now broadcasts, which were highly esteemed by viewers throughout the world and by prominent officials of the United Nations, would be discontinued for lack of funds. On behalf of Peace

(Ms. Landess)

for Our Children's Sake, she appealed to the representatives of the various countries to seek funding for the programme in their countries.

21. Ms. Landess withdrew.

22. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Winslow (Universite de Montréal) took a place at the petitioners' table.

23. Ms. WINSLOW (Université de Montréal) said that she had visited New Caledonia on several occasions in connection with her research work and had reached the conclusion that the Territory was a divided, colonial society. The Matignon Accords heralded a 10-year "peace period" during which economic and social development would be accelerated, particularly in the native Kanak communities. Although a number of projects were already under way, social and economic discrimination, which was a product of colonialism, persisted in the Territory. The Matignon Accords could not remedy the current inequalities, for they made no provision for the dismantling of the colonial structures in New Caledonia.

24. If the current Administration intended to decolonize, it must start with land redistribution and set up a system which was outside the control of local interest groups. During the current week the Rocard Government had started to carry on an accelerated programme of land redistribution. But the current Administration had done nothing and intended to do nothing with respect to the nickel industry. New Caledonia contained 25 per cent of the world's nickel reserves, and nickel ore represented 93 per cent of the Territory's total exports. So far the French Administration had done nothing to ensure that the Kanak population received at least part of the profits from the nickel industry.

25. Import and export trade was entirely controlled by a few European families. That hindered the development of other economic sectors in the Territory, including agriculture, and of regional trade as well. New Caledonia's isolation in the region was further reinforced by the language barrier between New Caledonians and the inhabitants of neighbouring English-speaking countries. English should be introduced in local school programmes and scholarships made available for those who wished to study at universities in other French-speaking countries and in places outside France: in Quebec for example.

26. The French Government refused to change New Caledonia's colonial structure. It stubbornly maintained that the Territory's problems stemmed from a lack of communications and from the inability of the ethnic communities to coexist in peace. France tried to play the role of an impartial "ombudsman". It wanted to establish a just colonialism, as opposed to the unjust colonialism of the past. It remained a mystery as to how a colonial structure could be used to secure decolonization. France wanted to decolonize but at the same time hoped that in 1998, when a referendum was to take place, the New Caledonians would choose to remain a part of France. Those two goals were mutually contradictory.

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(Ms. Winslow)

27. The situation in New Caledonia was a unique one and it required a similarly unique and flexible solution. France was trying to act impartially, but the continuation of the status quo would reinforce the colonial structures already present in the Territory. France must make significant efforts to remove or at least reduce New Caledonia's colonial dependence and it must give the Kanaks an opportunity to control their resources. Independence was not negotiable. Only the road to independence could be debated. The stability of the New Caledonia of tomorrow would depend on how its decolonization was handled today.

28. Ms. Winslow withdrew.

29. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. González González took a place at the petitioners' table.

30. Mr. GONZALEZ GONZALEZ declared his solidarity with all those who were fighting for freedom and independence and said that he wished to address the questions of Pitcairn and New Caledonia. General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) had enormous significance, and it was difficult to overestimate the tireless efforts of the Committee of 24 and the Fourth Committee to maintain its integrity, efforts pursued despite the attempts of imperialism to discredit the resolution and play down its importance.

31. The decision of the Committee of 24 on Pitcairn and the resolution on New Caledonia contained destabilizing elements with regard to resolution 1514 (XV), and that played into the hands of imperialism. It was not of course deliberate, for the Organization's intentions were good. But they were not sufficient. The road to hell was paved with good intentions, and hell was colonialism.

32. Two of the documents (A/44/23 (Part VI) and press release GA/COL/2687) were innocent of the key word "independence". That word had enormous significance, because it really was a question of securing independence and not simply political or economic changes.

33. As far as Pitcairn was concerned, the text should include a few words indicating the Fourth Committee's disagreement with such language. Perhaps the word "independence" had been omitted with respect to Pitcairn as the island was too small to attain independence. But its inhabitants were not satisfied with the existing situation, and the Committee of 24 and Fourth Committee must support their demands. The Committee of 24 must carry out its mandate as set out in resolution 1541 (XV) and endeavour to secure the implementation of resolution 1514 (XV). Decisions and resolutions must be adopted which spoke clearly of the right of peoples to self-determination and independence. It was a question of the respect, both of small peoples and of the international community, of the fact that the world was ready to extend a helping hand to the peoples of dependent Territories. The word "independence" should therefore be added after "self-determination" in the decision on Pitcairn.

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(Mr. González González)

34. Those arguments applied equally to New Caledonia. To deny the concept of independence was to deny resolution 1514 (XV), and to deny that resolution was to deny the existence of the Committee of 24. That was tantamount to a return to the pre-1960 colonial era. It was appropriate in that connection to recall the words of the then representative of India in 1967 to the effect that resolution 1514 (XV) was the Organization's great charter of freedom. Those words remained just as apposite today. The resolution on New Caledonia must include a paragraph on the right of that Territory to independence, and all references to resolution 1541 (XV) must be removed. It was essential to do that because although today the debate was about Pitcairn and New Caledonia, tomorrow a similar problem might arise in connection with Tokelau or Guam.

35. Mr. González González withdrew.

36. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Corbin (Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee) took a place at the petitioners' table.

37. Mr. CORBIN (Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee) said that the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC) was a permanent subsidiary body of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and was the most comprehensive organization of the Caribbean countries at the ministerial level, including as associate members a number of Non-Self-Governing Territories; he wished to address the question of the devastating consequences of Hurricane Hugo for several countries of the region. Major damage had been inflicted on the United States Virgin Islands, the British Virgin Islands and Anguilla; and Guadeloupe, the Netherlands Antilles, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, Dominica and Puerto Rico had also been hit.

38. The effects of the natural disaster had been extremely serious for the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Montserrat, where some 10 people had died and 10-11,000 of the population of 12,000 had been left homeless. The island of St. Croix in the United States Virgin Islands had been almost totally devastated: more than three weeks after the hurricane, power and water supplies and telephonic communications had not been restored.

39. The CDCC had taken note of the emergency assistance rendered to the affected Territories by the administering Powers and a number of regional and international organizations. But the situation in the Territories was extremely serious, and he suggested that the Chairman should revise and supplement the draft resolutions on the Territories concerned in order to reflect the consequences of the natural disaster.

40. In that connection, the CDCC noted the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the General Assembly: item 156 on emergency assistance to Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and St. Kitts and Nevis, and to the Non-Self-Governing Territories of Montserrat and the British Virgin Islands. It also noted the applicability to those Territories, in view of their "vulnerability to natural disasters", of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 43/189. The CDCC was

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(Mr. Corbin)

ready to work with the General Assembly in providing special assistance to the countries affected by the hurricane and other island developing countries, in the programme of activities marking the 30th anniversary of the Declaration on Decolonization and in the action plan for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

41. At its 10th session the CDCC had recommended that its secretariat should consider the question of the participation of the dependent countries of the Caribbean in the programmes and activities of the United Nations system. United Nations resolutions and reports called for the extension of such participation by Non-Self-Governing Territories in the work of the Organization's technical organs and specialized agencies, primarily as associate members. In that connection, 1987 had seen the initiation of the project to ascertain the participation in the United Nations system by the Non-Self-Governing and other dependent Territories of the Caribbean. The CDCC intended to expand its links with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in order to examine the participation of Asian-Pacific dependent Territories in the work of the United Nations system. In view of the Fourth Committee's sphere of competence, it might wish to consider co-operation with the CDCC in connection with the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, and to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the constitutional, socio-economic and other links between the Non-Self-Governing Territories of the Caribbean and the Pacific and their respective administering authorities.

42. Following the granting of Namibian independence the United Nations must focus its decolonization efforts in the 1990s on the dependent island Territories, and a comprehensive and systematic examination of the dynamics of the contemporary decolonization process was essential to the success of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

43. Mr. Corbin withdrew.

44. The CHAIRMAN expressed sympathy on behalf of the Committee with the countries which had suffered the tragic consequences of Hurricane Hugo and he announced that consultations would continue concerning the possibility of revising and supplementing the texts of the relevant resolutions in order to take those consequences into account.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

45. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that he had received a communication containing a request for hearing in connection with the consideration of the question of New Caledonia under agenda item 18. He suggested that in accordance with established practice the communication should be circulated as a Committee document, with a view to its subsequent consideration.

46. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.