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Chairman: Mr. FAKHREDDINE Mohamed (Sudan).

AGENDA ITEM 23

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: Ifni, Spanish Sahara and Equatorial Guinea (continued) (A/6300/Rev.1, chaps. IX and X; A/C.4/677 and Add.1-3)

HEARING OF PETITIONERS (continued)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Seila Uld Abeida, Mr. Suilem Uld Abdelaha, Mr. Ahamed Baba Uld Hasena, Mr. Aali Uld Said, Mr. Mami Uld Ahamed Salem, Mr. Mohamed Ali Uld Bachir, Mr. Ahmar Uld Lecuara, Mr. Mohamed Fadei Uld Brahim, Mr. Rabbani Uld Abdelaziz, Mr. Hamadi Uld Ahamed and Mr. Mohamed Uld El Hussein, of the Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara, took places at the Committee table.

1. Mr. APPIAH (Ghana) said that he had understood from the petitioners at the previous meeting that the question of whether or not a United Nations mission would be welcomed by the people of the Spanish Sahara was one which would have to be referred to the people themselves. He asked Mr. Suilem Uld Abdelaha what his views were on the question.
2. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) replied that it was an internal

matter about which the people would have to be consulted since it was their wishes which decided such things.

3. In reply to a further question from the representative of Ghana, he said that the people had not been consulted on that point before his delegation had left. His delegation was only authorized by the people to make their wishes known to the United Nations, as he had done at the previous meeting.

4. Mr. APPIAH (Ghana) asked whether the people whom the petitioners represented wanted independence now or not.

5. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) replied that independence was, of course, desirable and a legitimate aspiration, but it was something which should be considered carefully. His country was poor, with very limited resources and no army. Independence was therefore impossible at the present time. The future interests of the people must be protected. He was not sure when the situation would be such as to warrant a request for independence.

6. Mr. APPIAH (Ghana) said that at the previous meeting the petitioners had claimed that they had the support of 91 per cent of the population of Spanish Sahara. He asked how they had arrived at that figure.

7. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) replied that the figure had been reached by counting votes.

8. Mr. APPIAH (Ghana) asked if that meant that there had been a specific referendum on the question of independence which had entitled the petitioners to draw the conclusion that 91 per cent of the people supported the views they had expressed.

9. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) replied that his delegation had the effective support of 91 per cent of the population and that it had been entrusted by the people themselves with the task of coming to the United Nations, where justice and law prevailed, to present the people's case.

10. In reply to a further question from the representative of Ghana, he said that only two or three members of his delegation understood a little Spanish and that he alone could make himself understood in Spanish.

11. Mr. APPIAH (Ghana) asked whether the petitioners had seen aircraft bombing the people and cattle in the Territory.

12. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) said that that did not happen.

Untrue reports had been circulated by some people to support their claims.

13. Mr. APPIAH (Ghana) asked whether the petitioners representing the Front de libération du Sahara sous domination coloniale espagnole, who had been heard at the 1657th and 1658th meetings, were fellow-countrymen of the petitioners.

14. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) said that in his opinion they were not. They had been Saharans, but he did not consider anyone who wished to give his fatherland to foreigners to be a fellow-countryman. They had come from Morocco and represented no authority in the Sahara, since they had left the Territory.

15. Mr. APPIAH (Ghana) asked whether the people of the Sahara had livestock, whether they gave them food and shelter, and, if so, why.

16. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) said that his people did indeed possess livestock, which they fed and sheltered in order to provide food and transport.

17. Mr. APPIAH (Ghana) thanked the petitioner for having answered his questions candidly. He pointed out that the mosques, schools and so forth provided by the administering Power, which the petitioners had mentioned at the previous meeting, represented only what a slave master would do for a slave or a cattle owner for his animals, if he was to derive any benefit from them. Such things did not *per se* justify the position taken by the petitioners. If they seriously thought, before Allah, that they were speaking for 91 per cent of the population in claiming that they preferred their present status of dependence on a foreign Power to a free status which the Committee could recommend, then it was not for his delegation to dictate otherwise. It made his delegation sad, however, that in the twentieth century, when the United Nations was there to protect all countries from attack from any quarter, when men everywhere were crying out for freedom to learn from their own mistakes, the petitioners should adopt that position.

18. Mr. ISMAIL (Malaysia) said that he had nothing against Spain and that he himself came from a Moslem country which was trying to work for the interests of Islam and of Moslem people everywhere in the world. Before his country had become independent, the British had built mosques, schools, hospitals etc. and had, in their own way, trained the people for independence. Since it had achieved independence, however, more and bigger mosques, schools and hospitals had been built and there was greater prosperity and happiness. He asked whether the petitioners would not like to manage their own affairs, control their own budget and be able to build more and bigger schools and mosques and spread the message of Islam more widely, all of which they could do if they achieved independence.

19. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) replied that he agreed that independence in itself was indeed desirable and his people hoped one day to achieve it. His country was poor, however, and it was important to protect the interests of the people and to consider the possible

consequences of independence. Many conditions must be fulfilled before it would be in a position to ask for independence.

20. Mr. ISMAIL (Malaysia) said that other countries, too, had limited resources and were not capable of standing entirely on their own. He asked whether, if help was forthcoming from the United Nations agencies to develop the resources of the country and provide technical assistance, as was happening in other countries, the people of Spanish Sahara would then prefer to manage their own affairs and to be independent.

21. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) said that his people already helped to manage their own affairs and held official posts in the administration alongside Spanish officials. His country was a great desert with very limited resources, but the people lived happily. The time had not yet come for independence.

22. Mr. ISMAIL (Malaysia) pointed out that the Sahara could not forever remain a part of Spain. Even the Spanish Government would not want that. The era of colonialism was over. If the Spanish Sahara was not capable of existing as an independent State, he wondered whether the people would consider integration with some neighbouring State.

23. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) said that he could not say what the future held for his people. It depended on the will of the people themselves. They were already free and were making progress, but it was still too early for independence.

24. Mr. ISMAIL (Malaysia) said that independence was something for which a people had to work; it did not come by itself. He asked whether the petitioners would agree that the rate of progress towards independence should be accelerated and that more pressure should be exerted on Spain to prepare the people for independence. He also asked whether the petitioners would be prepared to ask the people to work for independence.

25. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) replied that his people were not opposed to independence. They had the same aspirations as other people. It lay with them to decide what was appropriate.

26. Mr. ISMAIL (Malaysia) asked Mr. Suilem Uld Abdelahé whether he himself, as a responsible leader and as an individual, would agree to a United Nations mission visiting the Territory to find out what the United Nations could do to help the people.

27. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) replied that, as a leader, he must report to the people and try to convince them. He could say nothing without their support.

28. Mr. ISMAIL (Malaysia) thanked the petitioners. He hoped that all the people of the Spanish Sahara would work together to gain independence.

29. Mr. UMAÑA BERNAL (Colombia) said that he had been disturbed by one of the questions put to the petitioners by the representative of Malaysia. As he understood it, the aim of the process of decolo-

nization being carried out by the United Nations was to encourage, defend and in some cases impose self-determination and independence and to ensure that dependent peoples should be able to join the United Nations as independent sovereign States. The representative of Malaysia had, however, asked the petitioners whether the people of the Spanish Sahara would consider integration with some neighbouring State rather than complete independence. There was a great difference between the two. It was not the task of the United Nations to restore lost territories which were under the domination of any other Member State. What the Committee was trying to do was to help the people of the Spanish Sahara and to ensure that they would one day be in a position to join the United Nations as an independent sovereign State.

30. Mr. THIAM (Mali) asked what was the official language used in the administration of the Territory.

31. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) said that his people spoke Hassania, a dialect of classical Arabic spoken in many parts of Central Africa. As it was not a written language, the Arabic script used in all Moslem countries was taught in the Territory. Both Spanish and Hassania were spoken in administrative offices, while Spanish and Arabic script were used in official documents.

32. In reply to a further question put by the representative of Mali, he said that only a few of the petitioners with him spoke Spanish.

33. Mr. THIAM (Mali) asked how many inhabitants of the Territory had received secondary education.

34. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) said that he had no exact figures but there were students in Madrid and other Spanish cities. The majority of the nomadic nucleus in the interior of the Territory preferred to continue their traditional way of life and few attended schools. The students in metropolitan Spain were reading such subjects as medicine and law.

35. In reply to a further question from the representative of Mali, he said that a number of his people had returned to the Territory after receiving higher education in Spain. They shared the views of his group.

36. Mr. THIAM (Mali) asked whether the petitioners had a political organization and, if so, what its programme was.

37. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) said that they represented the people of the Territory and had no political organization. An abundance of political parties impeded progress.

38. Mr. THIAM (Mali) said that he had been taught as a Moslem that the first duty of a Moslem was to fight for the self-determination of his country.

39. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) observed that that was a tradition and that such traditions should be adapted to current realities.

40. Mr. THIAM (Mali) said that it was painfully obvious that the administering Power had done nothing

to develop the Territory, since such education as there was was carried on for religious purposes.

41. Mr. DIALLO Seydou (Guinea) asked what the petitioners wanted from the United Nations, since they appeared to have no political party and no policy.

42. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) said they were asking the United Nations to protect their rights since certain countries wanted to annex their Territory.

43. Mr. DIALLO Seydou (Guinea) said the people of the Territory had four choices: integration with Mauritania, with Morocco or with Spain, or independence. He asked which the petitioners would choose.

44. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) said that they wished to continue at their own pace along the road to independence. They would ask for independence at the earliest possible opportunity, but until then they wished to continue to co-operate with Spain.

45. Mr. DIALLO Seydou (Guinea) said that it was increasingly evident that the Committee should be extremely cautious in accepting statements by administering Powers about their colonies. The Spanish Government had expressed its readiness to grant independence to the Spanish Sahara, whereupon petitioners had appeared before the Committee stating that they did not want independence.

46. Mr. EASTMAN (Liberia) observed that the petitioners apparently wished only to air grievances which were not the concern of the Committee.

47. Mr. TAMANO (Philippines) observed that it was contradictory for the petitioners to state that they wanted independence while maintaining that the administering Power was treating them well. If that was the case, the people of the Territory should be ready for self-determination now. He asked how many tribal groups the petitioners represented.

48. Mr. AHAMED BABA ULD HASENA (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) said that the Territory had 26,000 inhabitants belonging to tribes of various sizes and the petitioners represented all of them.

49. Mr. TAMANO (Philippines) asked whether the tribes had been told that the petitioners would appear before the Committee to speak in the name of all the tribes.

50. Mr. SEILA ULD ABEIDA (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) replied that the fact that the petitioners were going to the United Nations had been broadcast over the radio and travellers to the interior had been told. Meetings had been held in various parts of the Territory as a result, and the visit of the petitioners had been approved.

51. Mr. TAMANO (Philippines) asked whether the petitioners would commit themselves definitely to accepting a United Nations mission to Spanish Sahara, bearing in mind the fact that its purpose would be to find out how many of the people wanted independence.

52. Mr. SEILA ULD ABEIDA (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) replied that the petitioners were

not rejecting independence outright. The Spanish Sahara was not yet fully ready for independence.

53. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) said that the visit of a United Nations mission was a matter which required discussion. The petitioners would have to consult public opinion in the Territory before committing themselves.

54. Mr. TAMANO (Philippines) asked whether it was true that the Spanish authorities had encouraged the Islamic religion and whether the Spanish Sahara had been represented at the World Conference of Moslems held at Al-Azhar University at Cairo.

55. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) said that it was not necessary to go to Cairo to practise the Islamic religion. There had been no representative of the Spanish Sahara at that Conference in view of the distance involved.

56. Mr. TAMANO (Philippines) said that he was not satisfied with that answer. He asked whether the people of the Spanish Sahara were free to go and study at Al-Azhar University and, if so, whether any were there at the moment.

57. Mr. SUILEM ULD ABDELAHE (Comisión elegida por el pueblo del Sáhara) replied that there were no students from the Spanish Sahara at Al-Azhar University.

58. Mr. TAMANO (Philippines) said that it was clear from that answer that the people of the Spanish Sahara were not really free to practise their religion, for if they were they would send students to the University, which was the foremost seat of Islamic learning in the world. He spoke as a Moslem, and the only Moslem minister in his Government.

59. He felt that there was a need for a United Nations mission to visit the Territory to survey conditions and to make a report.

The petitioners withdrew.

AGENDA ITEM 69

Question of Fiji: 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 (continued)* (A/6300/Rev.1, chap. VIII; A/C.4/L.844 and Add.1 and 2)

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTION A/C.4/L.844 AND ADD.1 AND 2 (continued)

60. Mr. GHAREKHAN (India), speaking on behalf of the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.4/L.844 and Add.1 and 2, said that he wished to introduce an oral revision. In order to meet the views that had been expressed during the debate, the sponsors had agreed to insert the words, "in consultation with the administering Power," after the words "requests the Chairman of the Special Committee" in operative paragraph 4. It was quite normal that the administering Power should be consulted regarding the dispatch of a visiting mission. The sponsors hoped that

the amendment would enable delegations which had had reservations to reconsider their position and that the overwhelming majority of the Committee would vote in favour of the draft resolution.

61. Mr. BRUCE (Togo) said that everyone agreed that the situation in Fiji was complicated and did not fit the classical colonial pattern. The Committee should not recommend identical measures for each colonial Territory, as was being done in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the draft resolution. In his delegation's opinion, the Committee should recommend the holding of general elections only after it had determined whether there was a desire on the part of the various communities in the Territory to cooperate and had ascertained the degree of integration of the various groups. It would have been useful if some petitioners had appeared before the Committee so that members could have obtained an accurate picture of the situation in the Territory. Unfortunately that had not been possible and the Committee's knowledge of the Territory was based solely on the 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/6300/Rev.1, chap. VIII) and on an article that had appeared in The New York Times of 20 November 1966. The sponsors had therefore thought it advisable to recommend that a sub-committee should be sent to Fiji for the purpose of studying at first hand the situation in the Territory. His delegation's sole concern was the well-being of the people of the Territory. It considered that to adopt the draft resolution as it stood would be to prejudge an issue with which the Committee was not sufficiently acquainted.

62. His delegation therefore formally proposed that operative paragraph 3 should be deleted and that an earnest appeal should be addressed to the administering Power not to hinder the dispatch of the sub-committee.

63. Mr. APPIAH (Ghana) supported the Togolese proposal. His delegation found itself unable to support operative paragraph 3, for purely logical reasons. It was generally agreed that Fiji presented a unique problem and that the Committee should have heard petitioners from the Territory in order to obtain a better idea of the situation there. In its resolution of 7 September 1966 (Ibid., para. 120), the Special Committee had wisely recommended the appointment of a sub-committee to visit Fiji for the purpose of studying the situation at first hand and had requested the Chairman of the Special Committee to appoint the sub-committee as early as practicable. His delegation considered that it was essential for the Committee to have first-hand information before it could make appropriate recommendations.

64. He supported the proposal for the deletion of paragraph 3 and endorsed the appeal to the administering Power to do its utmost to facilitate the sending of the sub-committee.

65. Mr. KANAKARATNE (Ceylon), speaking on behalf of all the sponsors of the draft resolution, opposed the Togolese representative's proposal. There was nothing in paragraph 3 that contradicted paragraph 4. It was true, as the United Kingdom representative had

*Resumed from the 1657th meeting.

said, that elections had been held in the Territory two months previously. Paragraph 3 was designed to ensure that elections were conducted in accordance with the principle of one man, one vote, whereas the earlier elections had been based on a complicated communal roll voting system, in which each voter had been obliged to vote for all three candidates. In the sponsors' opinion, elections should be conducted on the basis of a common roll, a system which had worked satisfactorily at Suva.

66. Paragraph 4 endorsed the decision of the Special Committee to appoint a sub-committee and was in no way connected with the holding of general elections in the Territory. Members should not fall into the

error of regarding paragraphs 3 and 4 as being inextricably intertwined. In order to make it possible for the Togolese representative to reconsider his position, the Ceylonese delegation would be grateful if the administering Power could tell the Committee at that stage whether it would receive the proposed mission.

67. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, in view of the changes that had been proposed, the Committee should defer the vote on the draft resolution until a later meeting.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.