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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 6th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 14 October 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Aljarralah (Vice-Chair)..... (Kuwait)

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In the absence of Mr. Bowler (Malawi), Mr. Aljarrahah (Kuwait), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10. 05 a.m.

Agenda item 59: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/70/23 (chaps. VII and XIII) and A/70/67)

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1. **Ms. Sánchez** (Honduras) the failure of a number of Territories to exercise self-determination showed that, despite impressive general progress to date, the decolonization process was at a relative standstill. Decolonization had to be completed through constant and more vigorous dialogue among the administering Powers, the Special Committee on decolonization and the peoples themselves. Member States as well had to work actively with the United Nations to bring an end to colonialism.

2. Of special concern to Honduras were the remaining Territories in Latin America. The draft resolutions adopted over the past 50 years by the Special Committee had helped in particular to advance deliberations on the question of the Malvinas Islands. Her Government had been steadfast in joining those that affirmed that Argentina had a legitimate right to the currently occupied Malvinas Islands, South Georgia

Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. That claim had been repeatedly endorsed by the whole of Latin America, again as recently as during the third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in January 2015. Her delegation applauded the good offices of the Secretary-General in working towards finding a peaceful solution to the dispute.

3. **Mr. Erciyes** (Turkey), said that that the process of decolonization, though one of the Organization's great successes, remained incomplete, as there were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. As a founding Member of the United Nations, his country viewed the eradication of colonialism as a mainstay of its foreign policy. Turkey believed that any move towards self-determination should originate from and reflect the will of the dependent peoples. Administering Powers should safeguard the inalienable rights of the peoples to economic and social development until they acquired their independence. Turkey called upon all Member States to continue furthering that objective.

4. **Ms. Muhsen** (Iraq) said that her Government supported the exercise of the inalienable and lawful right of peoples to self-determination and independence while also affirming the principles of the territorial sovereignty and integrity of States. It backed peaceful means of ensuring self-determination in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Independence had been achieved by 80 States so far, and Iraq endorsed the approach of the Special Committee on decolonization in its dialogue with administering Powers about the Non-Self-Governing Territories on a case-by-case basis. Her Government believed that the Palestinian people were entitled to full control over all their land, and had the right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with relevant international resolutions.

5. **Mr. Alzayani** (Bahrain) said that colonialism had imposed suffering and foreign hegemony over the destiny of the peoples involved. The principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations included equality among peoples and the importance of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The inherent dignity of human beings was upheld in many important United Nations documents. Those principles had been highlighted in recent years by the discussions around the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015

development agenda, which had called for more effective action based on international law to remove obstacles to self-determination.

6. On the question of Western Sahara, Bahrain called upon the United Nations to seek a political, negotiated solution, and supported the efforts of Morocco in that regard.

7. His Government endorsed the approach of achieving decolonization based on the principles of equality among genders and among Territories of different sizes. Given that colonization hampered the economic development and trade of colonized lands, it hoped that the Special Committee's regional seminars and visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories would help to hasten the demise of the system by the end of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

8. **Mr. Nduhura** (Uganda) said that the failure to bring decolonization to completion had made the Committee an accomplice in the human sorrow experienced in the 17 Territories still under foreign occupation, where the people's expectations were being dashed and all sorts of atrocious crimes indefensible in the twenty-first century were being committed with impunity. His country, itself a former colony, strongly supported the struggle of the Sahrawi people, who were undergoing humiliating domination, and defended their right to self-determination. The African Union as well stood firmly behind the independence of Western Sahara, the only remaining colony in Africa. Despite Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, including the mandate to hold a referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara, countless flagrant violations of human rights, drug trafficking and the illegal exploitation of natural resources had become the order of the day, on the international community's watch. Failure to resolve the crisis in Western Sahara could exacerbate terrorist activities in the entire Sahel region.

9. **Mr. Bouah-Kamon** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, at a time when the international community had just adopted its ambitious and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there were, sadly, persistent conflicts throughout the world, and they were hindering socio-economic development and vigorous cooperation.

10. In the case of Western Sahara, his Government encouraged the Secretary-General and his Personal

Envoy in their valuable efforts to find a mutually acceptable political solution to the dispute there, and endorsed the process of negotiations between the parties that had been set in motion under United Nations auspices. The parties must now show a spirit of compromise. Morocco had made welcome efforts to find a lasting solution to the situation. Côte d'Ivoire reiterated its strong support for Morocco's plan for broad autonomy for the Sahara region within Morocco, thus preserving the country's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, and offering a serious and credible basis for a political solution to the conflict in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

11. General Assembly resolution 69/101 had called on the parties to cooperate with the Red Cross to meet their obligations under international humanitarian law; and the respective parties should protect human rights in both the Sahara region and the Tindouf camps. His Government reiterated its support for improving the political climate through confidence-building measures, as advocated by the Secretary-General. To diminish the worrying levels of wider regional insecurity, there must also be greater involvement by the international community.

12. **Mr. Menan** (Togo), hailing the work of the Special Committee on decolonization, said that the path to self-determination lay increasingly in negotiated settlements in which the will and the rights of the dependent people were safeguarded. His Government was concerned that the negotiations on Western Sahara were at a stalemate, for a settlement there had repercussions on the stability and security of the Maghreb region, currently under the threat of extremist and criminal activities.

13. He called for restraint to avoid jeopardizing the positive international impetus, given by the United Nations in particular, to the realistic, serious and credible initiative by Morocco that would allow a negotiated, political way out of the dispute. Morocco was also to be applauded for the reforms and measures it had put in place to strengthen the country's human rights institutions. Togo believed that the United Nations, as sponsor of the settlement process, should encourage the parties to work with it and to engage in frank talks on a lasting and mutually acceptable solution based on the Moroccan autonomy plan, which was still the most democratic alternative put forward. His delegation underscored the moral obligation in the

meantime to safeguard the human rights of the Saharans, particularly in the case of the refugees in the Tindouf camps.

14. **Mr. León González** (Cuba), recalling the Special Committee's adoption of annual resolutions on the colonial issue of Puerto Rico, cited the latest one, contained in its report (A/70/23, para. 22), which called on the United States to allow Puerto Rico to exercise its inalienable right to self-determination and independence under General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), so that it could deal in a sovereign manner with its own urgent economic and social needs. Various generations had fought to liberate the country from colonial domination, and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had regularly demanded the release of political prisoners held in United States jails, among them Oscar López Rivera. Furthermore, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) had expressed its full support for Puerto Rico to become an independent nation within the region.

15. His Government reiterated its support for the legitimate rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. Cuba called on both Argentina and the United Kingdom to reach a negotiated, just and lasting solution to the recognized sovereignty dispute between them as soon as possible. In that regard, any action aimed at militarizing the South Atlantic — which both the United Nations and CELAC had declared as a zone of peace — could escalate the conflict and violated the region's commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes.

16. With regard to the long-standing dispute over Western Sahara, Cuba defended the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination based on the Charter of the United Nations, international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. It reiterated its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to bring about a mutually acceptable political solution within the framework of the Declaration on decolonization.

17. Despite the brutal economic blockade to which Cuba had been subjected, the country had always sought to share what it had with the inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories, including invitations taken up by hundreds of students from Western Sahara to study in its universities. Other Member States

should contribute as well to the development of the Territories.

18. **Mr. Ntwaagae** (Botswana) said it was regrettable that — despite the best efforts of the United Nations, the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy — the people of Western Sahara continued to be denied their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, and that the Territory was, shamefully, being held hostage by another African country. The continued illegal occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco constituted a heinous violation of international law and humanitarian law of the highest order. Botswana urged Morocco to cooperate in organizing a free and fair referendum for the Sahrawi people, and encouraged the parties to the dispute to return in a spirit of tolerance and compromise to the negotiating table. It also welcomed the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

19. **Mr. Zamora Rivas** (El Salvador) said that his Government continued to support the legitimate rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, and highlighted Argentina's efforts to resolve such a major international issue. The United Kingdom and Argentina must heed the relevant United Nations resolutions by reopening negotiations on a peaceful solution to what the Organization had defined as a dispute over sovereignty. The countries of the Central American region supported the Argentine position on the exploration and exploitation of natural energy resources and had, through the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE), reaffirmed Argentina's rights over its continental shelf and endorsed General Assembly resolution 31/49 calling upon the two parties to refrain from introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the islands were going through the recommended process of negotiation.

20. As for Western Sahara, El Salvador attached great importance to finding a peaceful, just and lasting solution in which the people's human rights and their inalienable right to self-determination were protected. It was urgent for Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente Polisario) to resume talks. His delegation was in favour of any steps aimed at creating a climate conducive to dialogue, and therefore supported the draft resolution submitted by Algeria on that point.

El Salvador was also concerned about the situation in Puerto Rico and reiterated the declaration made by CELAC at its third Summit in which it called for Latin America and the Caribbean to be a region free of colonialism.

21. The Department of Public Information was doing good work in publicizing the issue of decolonization. The website should be made available in the six official languages, using up-to-date, consistent and well-designed content that enhanced its message.

22. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) said that her country, the first Central American nation ever to host one of the Special Committee's regional seminars, had been honoured to host the seminar on the implementation of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism in Managua in May 2015. Her delegation had subsequently listened with interest to the petitioners, loyal representatives of their Territories, as they had come before the Committee to tell of their determination to free themselves from colonialism.

23. Unfortunately, the aspiration of CELAC to see the Latin American and Caribbean region free of colonialism had not yet been realized. General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX) had been the first to call, 50 years earlier, for bilateral negotiations to settle the dispute over the Malvinas Islands. Nicaragua believed that the Argentine Republic unquestionably held legitimate sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which had been usurped by force by the United Kingdom in 1833. Argentina had never ceased to denounce that action and the growing militarization of the South Atlantic, and it was unacceptable that the United Kingdom should continue to ignore repeated calls by the entire international community — in United Nations resolutions as well as in multilateral and regional forums — to resume negotiations with Argentina to bring a peaceful and lasting end to its unlawful military occupation of Argentine territory. Nicaragua also lent its full and unconditional support to Argentina's sovereignty rights over the natural resources of the Islands.

24. Puerto Rico, a colonized Latin American and Caribbean nation, should, under international law and the Declaration on decolonization, be enabled to take sovereign decisions to address its urgent social and economic needs. Thirty-four resolutions and decisions

of the Special Committee had reaffirmed the inalienable right of its people to self-determination and independence. The Fourth Committee and the General Assembly should examine the colonial situation in Puerto Rico more carefully, and the colonial Power must allow the Territory's inhabitants to fully exercise their right to self-determination. Nicaragua demanded the immediate and unconditional release, in response to international humanitarian demands of Oscar López Rivera, a Puerto Rican political prisoner who had been in jail in the United States for over 34 years.

25. It was unacceptable that the people of Western Sahara also remained unable to exercise their right to self-determination and independence, despite repeated calls by the international community for over 40 years; a solution to the situation was long overdue. The Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General should report back to the Committee on his promised visit to the Territory. Nicaragua remained committed to the Sahrawi people's national liberation struggle and hoped that the negotiations between the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic and the Kingdom of Morocco would be restarted without preconditions to enable the people to exercise their right to self-determination.

26. Against the backdrop of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations and the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, all Non-Self-Governing peoples and Territories should now be granted self-determination and independence.

27. **Mr. Shava** (Zimbabwe) said that his country, fully aware as a former colony of the evils associated with colonialism and imperialism, supported the consistent call of the General Assembly for the self-determination and independence of the people of Western Sahara, the last vestige of colonialism in Africa. The African Union, recalling the 1975 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice affirming that Morocco had never had any tie of territorial sovereignty over Western Sahara, had done well to call, at the June 2015 session of its Assembly, for the United Nations General Assembly to set a date for the mandated referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara, and to urge the Security Council to address the human rights issues and the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Territory; while also advocating that MINURSO be given a human rights mandate in addition to its primary mandate to supervise the referendum.

28. The continued foreign occupation of Western Sahara contradicted the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the authority and credibility of the Committee, and threatened the peace, security and stability of the entire continent. The situation in the refugee camps was a direct consequence of colonization, and should not be used as a distraction from the root cause. Western Saharans would not be in refugee camps in a foreign land if all had been well in their homeland.

29. The continuation of direct negotiations between the Frente Polisario and Morocco was essential to expedite the holding of the long-awaited referendum. Especially in view of the derailing of the United Nations settlement plan in the past by one of the parties, his delegation was disturbed that, despite several meetings between the two, no meaningful progress had been made. If all Member States supported the mission of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, that would surely give new impetus to the process. The observance of a ceasefire for 23 years by the Sahrawi people proved that they wished to achieve self-determination peacefully.

30. **Mr. Mgobozi** (South Africa) said that, having benefited from international solidarity and the Fourth Committee's efforts on its behalf in the past, his nation understood the importance of decolonization. The intentional protraction of the decolonization of Western Sahara, which went to the heart of the work of the Committee, was therefore disheartening. The only African colony, it had been on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories since 1963, while under Spanish colonial rule. The people of Western Sahara were engaged in a struggle for self-determination based on the principles of decolonization, promotion of human rights, international legality and the stability and security of the African continent; and their right to self-determination and independence had consistently been recognized by the General Assembly. The ongoing occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco therefore challenged the principles of the Charter and the authority and credibility of the Committee.

31. In March 2015, the African Union Peace and Security Council had declared that the prevailing stalemate heightened tension in the Territory and undermined efforts to promote integration in the Maghreb region; and in September, it had urged the United Nations Security Council to expedite the resolution of the conflict, and effectively address

human rights and what the African Union had declared to be the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Territory by Morocco. Earlier, in a June decision, the African Union Assembly had called on the General Assembly to set a date for the Western Sahara referendum and to protect the integrity of the Territory from any act by Morocco that might undermine it.

32. While applauding the efforts to expedite the process by the Personal Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General and by the Special Envoy for Western Sahara of the African Union, shuttle diplomacy was not working, and South Africa urged the Security Council to implement its own resolutions with a greater sense of urgency. In 2015 and the previous two years, the same text had been adopted for the annual Council resolution on Western Sahara, even though the inefficacy of United Nations action had reached a crisis point, and MINURSO remained the only United Nations peacekeeping mission without a human rights monitoring mechanism. The people of Western Sahara had suffered enough, and they must be liberated.

33. **Ms. Kpongo** (Central African Republic) said that her Government continued to support the 2007 Moroccan autonomy initiative for Western Sahara, which had been described by the Security Council as serious and credible and had the advantage of specificity. Morocco had made an ideal democratic commitment to cede part of its land while establishing autonomous legislative, executive and judicial institutions in its Sahara region. Her Government saw the high levels of political, economic and cultural participation among the people of the Sahara region as evidence of their natural historical belonging to Morocco. The autonomy plan offered the only workable political framework for a resolution of the dispute. She welcomed the work of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, and encouraged all parties to reach a mutually acceptable compromise settlement, which would serve also to stem the spread of some of the military and social crises or terrorist tensions in the Maghreb and the Sahel.

34. **Ms. Radwan** (Saudi Arabia) said that her Government called on the United Nations to fulfil its obligations under Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and its own Charter to end colonization. Her delegation urged administering Powers to take responsibility for engaging in constructive dialogue with all parties concerned.

35. Saudi Arabia said that the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the exercise of all their inalienable rights must be underscored. It therefore called for an immediate timetable for ending the Israeli occupation and compelling Israel to respect international law, and for cooperation by Israel with the Arab Peace Initiative relaunched by Saudi Arabia over three years earlier with a view to establishing an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. Saudi Arabia was seriously concerned about provocative measures being taken by occupation authorities and Israeli settlers, including damage to some mosques and a stepping-up of violence. It called for an immediate cessation of those measures and urged the international community to fulfil its responsibilities in that regard.

36. The Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy were making praiseworthy efforts to find a solution to the issue of Western Sahara in accordance with Security Council resolutions. Autonomy that was acceptable to both parties would be a good option. Saudi Arabia called upon all parties to be open to creative ways of achieving a political solution based on dialogue. A lasting end to the dispute was vital for the stability and security of the Sahel region.

37. **Ms. Sughayar** (Jordan) said that the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations should inspire the highest principles of justice, freedom and democracy. The fact that people remained under colonial occupation demanded more efforts and cooperation among nations and in the international community,, including further action by administering Powers and further assistance to dependent Territories. Jordan called on the United Nations to complete the process of decolonization by means that included visiting missions to the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories for the purposes of data collection but also of mediation and dialogue among the parties. Also, the holding of popular referendums under United Nations supervision made it possible to take specific Territorial characteristics into account on a case-by-case basis. Self-determination was an inalienable right and included giving peoples access to and use of their natural resources, as well as preserving their cultural history and national identity.

38. The Palestinian people had been under occupation for 65 years. Jordan urged the international community to act to end the Israeli occupation in accordance with the relevant United Nations

resolutions, and called for the establishment of a free independent Palestinian State within 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Palestinian people, like all those under occupation, should be protected from repressive or racist practices and exploitation, and their interests should be safeguarded by the United Nations.

39. With regard to Western Sahara, Jordan called on all parties to cooperate with the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy in all his good offices and with MINURSO. The United Nations was the only mediator accepted by all parties and able to bring about a rapprochement. Jordan encouraged continued bilateral discussions, together with shuttle diplomacy and other initiatives by the Special Envoy. The Moroccan proposal for autonomy was a serious and credible one, and Jordan urged all parties to return to the negotiating table to reach a just and lasting political solution that would be based on Security Council resolutions and international law, taking into account the concerns of the inhabitants of Western Sahara. Jordan welcomed efforts made by Morocco to achieve development in the region, and underlined the importance of continued cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Moroccan authorities to ensure implementation of the Office's recommendations.

40. Before granting independence, administering Powers were required to work with the United Nations to eradicate poverty, unemployment and racial discrimination in Territories under their control. It was important to speed up decolonization, and Jordan welcomed the commitment of the Secretary-General and his use of good offices to make progress within a set time frame appropriate to each situation.

41. **Mr. Chinyonga** (Zambia) said that despite sustained efforts by the United Nations and regional organizations to find a solution to the Western Sahara conflict for more than four decades, and calls by proponents of decolonization like his own country, there had been no progress in restoring rights of the people of Africa's last remaining Non-Self-Governing Territory. Like other Territories in its situation, it was being denied self-determination, which was the basis for a democratic State. His delegation supported the call by the African Union Peace and Security Council for the United Nations Security Council to step up its efforts, assume its responsibilities, set a date for the referendum in Western Sahara and do everything

necessary to expedite the end of the conflict, while effectively addressing human rights and the illegal exploitation of the Territory's natural resources and protecting it from being undermined.

42. With regard to the Palestinian-Israeli situation, Zambia, while it hailed the granting by the United Nations of non-member observer status to Palestine, was gravely concerned by the prolonged impasse and the failure by the two parties to comply with relevant United Nations resolutions or mutual agreements they themselves had reached, not least because of the worrying humanitarian situation on the ground. It urgently called on the two parties to return to a meaningful dialogue. His Government recognized the Palestinian Authority as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people's struggle for self-determination, and its inalienable right to establish a homeland of its own. Zambia believed that the Palestinian people had a right to self-determination and independence on the basis of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). It therefore supported Palestine's admission to the United Nations as a full Member.

43. **Ms. Fofana** (Burkina Faso) said that her nation stood in solidarity with the peoples still living in Non-Self-Governing Territories and struggling to shake off domination in order to freely determine their own future. Their situation could be resolved only with sincere commitment from the administering Powers and the international community, taking the Declaration on decolonization and the principle of self-determination as their touchstones.

44. In Africa, the situation in Western Sahara had long been at an impasse. To find a way out, all parties involved must reopen serious talks and adopt a realistic attitude of compromise in order to move towards a lasting political solution acceptable to all. In that connection, Burkina Faso applauded the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, and welcomed the extension of the mandate of MINURSO. Her Government considered that the 2007 Moroccan proposal to grant autonomous status to the Sahara region was a credible and realistic option for settling the dispute in a way that could unite the region against its growing security problems.

45. **Ms. Lodhi** (Pakistan), expressing appreciation for the Special Committee's action on the unfinished agenda of decolonization, said that without political will from the General Assembly and the Security

Council, its recommendations would not be implemented. Colonialism and foreign domination were a travesty of the universal principle of political and economic freedom. The Sustainable Development Goals just adopted by the United Nations were based on inclusivity, but the peoples in the dependent Territories, unable to exercise their self-determination, were being left behind and could not aspire to them. The Organization had a moral responsibility towards them. A concerted effort was required for uniform and non-discriminatory implementation of Security Council resolutions, as selective implementation eroded the confidence of the international community, undermined the credibility of the United Nations system, deepened conflict and compounded the sufferings of dependent peoples.

46. In South Asia, the inalienable right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir had been recognized by several Security Council resolutions. Pakistan was committed to finding a peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute that was acceptable to all sides. Leaving that long-standing dispute unresolved had been the most persistent failure of the United Nations.

47. In the Middle East, Pakistan continued to support the just struggle of the Palestinian people for peace and freedom and their quest for full United Nations membership. A strong and viable State of Palestine would be the best guarantor of peace.

48. **Mr. Pham Quang Hieu** (Viet Nam) said that his country regretted that the task of decolonization remained incomplete. Since the establishment of the Special Committee on decolonization, all had witnessed its achievements, as it worked to fulfil the principles of the Charter and of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Yet 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories that were home to nearly 2 million people still needed to be decolonized, a situation that compromised efforts to ensure universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The recent outreach by some administering Powers to the Territories under their control had been encouraging, and his delegation underscored the need to expand the practice of holding such constructive discussions. It further urged the United Nations to play a role in ensuring that administering Powers safeguarded the inalienable rights of the dependent peoples to economic, cultural and social development and self-determination until they acquired their independence.

49. **Mr. Mendoza-García** (Costa Rica), hailing the work being done by the Special Committee to build on past United Nations successes so as to make colonialism a thing of the past, said that his Government fully supported the sovereign rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The Argentine claims were just, and had been supported by several General Assembly resolutions classifying the sovereignty dispute as a special and particular colonial situation. As declared in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country was incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It had been 50 years since the General Assembly had first taken up the question of the Malvinas Islands in resolution 2065 (XX), and although successive resolutions had returned to the question, no substantial progress had been made. Costa Rica therefore urged the parties to resume negotiations to settle the dispute.

50. As for Western Sahara, Costa Rica advocated a fair, lasting, democratic political solution acceptable to all parties, based especially on the international legal provisions governing the decolonization process of the United Nations. Of specific relevance were resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV), the logical conclusion of which was that self-determination entailed the organization of referendums by which peoples considering the options of independence, autonomy or integration could express their choice. While MINURSO was doing valuable work, its mandate had to extend to the monitoring of human rights in both Western Sahara and the Tindouf camps.

51. **Mr. Sarufa** (Papua New Guinea), noting that several of the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were regrettably in his country's region of the Pacific, said that efforts should be redoubled to render colonialism obsolete in the twenty-first century. The work of the Fourth Committee remained crucial to advancing the unfinished decolonization of New Caledonia, given the special political issues in question in that Territory.

52. In Western Sahara, his delegation supported the constructive political process being conducted under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to bring about a mutually

acceptable and durable political settlement involving all relevant parties. The negotiations should, as recommended in Security Council resolutions, be based on realism, compromise and good faith, and the parties were urged to be flexible. The Moroccan authorities and the other relevant parties had made a welcome commitment to working with the United Nations. However, given the resource constraints in the United Nations system, there was a vital need for synergy and coherence in the United Nations involvement in Western Sahara and the Special Committee's work on the issue.

53. His Government saw the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a worthy proposal allowing self-determination through democratic means that respected individual and collective rights, while also providing for the reunification of families separated by the dispute. It offered a potential platform for a negotiated political settlement to such a long-standing question.

54. **Mr. Ndong Ella** (Gabon) said it was disturbing that, halfway through the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, there remained 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Organization should renew its efforts to help Territories narrow their gaps in terms of information and training, with a view to advancing their economic and social progress. It was therefore incumbent on the administering Powers to complete the decolonization of the Territories under their control, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and the specificities of each case.

55. On the question of Western Sahara, Gabon supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to ensure a lasting, mutually acceptable political solution to the dispute under the aegis of the United Nations. The security situation should be handled carefully to prevent the threats endemic in other parts of the region, including terrorism, from spreading to Western Sahara. The negotiations therefore needed to be given renewed impetus. Gabon welcomed the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a credible means of ending the current impasse and reaching a lasting agreement, and praised the steps Morocco was taking to advance human rights, improve the humanitarian situation and introduce political, economic and social initiatives in the Sahara region. All the parties must compromise and engage actively in substantive negotiations in accordance with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. All the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region should

also join efforts to ensure stability and development while minimizing the destabilizing effects of the rampant terrorism in the area, so that the Maghreb could move forward as one.

56. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that the growing instability and insecurity in the Sahel owing to the rise in terrorism, trafficking and transnational crime increased the urgency of resolving the dispute in Western Sahara, which was already disrupting the Maghreb, and of addressing the root causes of such threats before they could spread to other areas of Africa that had even less capacity to deal with them. Burundi therefore called on the two parties to the dispute to engage in genuine negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General. Each party should accept that not all its demands could be met, and seek instead a mutually acceptable political solution based on realism and compromise, as stipulated in Security Council resolution 2218 (2015), thus enabling renewed cooperation among all the States of the Maghreb. The Secretary-General should at the same time continue to promote improved relations between the two States primarily concerned, including an eventual opening of their shared border.

57. Seeing the matter as a regional issue for the Sahel, his delegation reiterated the provisions of the various Security Council resolutions calling for substantive, realistic negotiations as the only means of achieving a political solution, and full cooperation by the parties and the States of the Arab Maghreb Union with the United Nations and with each other in order to increase stability, security and integration in the region. With that regional dimension in mind, Burundi called upon the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to forge connections with other North African countries and subregional organizations.

58. During the Personal Envoy's recent visit, the Moroccan authorities had reaffirmed their full support for the political process led by the United Nations and their commitment to furthering its success. Burundi considered the autonomy plan presented by Morocco as a realistic and viable option for settling such a long-standing dispute. His country called on the parties immediately concerned to work exclusively under the good offices of the United Nations Secretary-General to negotiate a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution. Burundi, having just restored democracy with United Nations support, could attest to its effectiveness.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

59. **Mr. Sherry** (United Kingdom), replying to the delegations of Honduras, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, said that his Government had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas of both Territories, nor about the principle and right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and article 1 of the two United Nations human rights covenants, by virtue of which they freely determined their political status and pursued their economic, social and cultural development. Argentina had made reference to international support for sovereignty negotiations, including United Nations resolutions, but none of those modified the obligation of nations to respect the legally binding principle of self-determination. There could be no dialogue on sovereignty unless it was the wish of the Falkland Islanders. The United Kingdom was not militarizing the Islands, as its forces in the South Atlantic were defensive and at appropriate levels to ensure defensive capabilities against any potential threat. Its military presence had in fact been significantly reduced over time.

60. **Mr. Díaz Bartolomé** (Argentina) said that the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were an integral part of Argentina's national territory that had been illegally occupied by the United Kingdom and were the subject of an internationally recognized sovereignty dispute between the two countries.

61. All relevant General Assembly resolutions had urged the two Governments to resume negotiations with the aim of finding, as soon as possible, a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute. The Special Committee had adopted its most recent resolution along similar lines in June 2015. His delegation regretted that the United Kingdom Government wished to distort history to cover up the usurpation that Argentina had unfailingly protested since the British invasion. Instead, the United Kingdom should act lawfully and responsibly and respond to the General Assembly's call for renewed negotiations to resolve the sovereignty dispute peacefully, taking into account the interests of the inhabitants of the Islands.

62. Given a colonial situation that had been recognized as special and particular, the principle of self-determination, which Argentina respected, was not applicable in the case of the Malvinas Islands. The General Assembly had made that clear in the course of the adoption of resolution 40/21 in 1985 by rejecting the inclusion of any reference to self-determination as requested by the United Kingdom, and none of the other General Assembly resolutions on the question accepted the relevance of that principle to the specific situation of the Malvinas Islands.

63. Argentina rejected as false the British assertion that its military presence was in response to events of 1982, and recalled the military events of 1833 and the context of the United Kingdom's imperialistic activities at that time. To any sensible observer, Argentina, since the restoration of democracy in 1983, could not seriously be considered to represent a military threat. However, his country did see the United Kingdom's military activities in the South Atlantic as a threat to regional security, and its military presence had been rejected by many regional forums including the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and CELAC.

64. Argentina reaffirmed its legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which were an integral part of the nation's territory.

65. **Mr. Singh** (India) said that his delegation rejected the untenable reference by the representative of Pakistan to Jammu and Kashmir as utterly irrelevant to the work of the Committee, for the state of Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India. The Indian Constitution guaranteed fundamental rights to all its citizens. The citizens of Jammu and Kashmir had chosen their destiny peacefully in accordance with universally accepted democratic principles and practices. Democratic elections held under the scrutiny of international media had enabled the people there to express their wishes and freely elect their own representatives.

66. **Ms. Sayed** (Pakistan), replying to the representative of India, said that his assertions were untenable, as the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir had been recognized by numerous Security Council resolutions, and the denial of that right for

over 60 years was therefore highly relevant to the discussions of the Committee. Jammu and Kashmir had never been an integral part of India. Several Security Council resolutions had recognized Jammu and Kashmir as disputed territory, and stated that the outcome should be decided by the will of the people there as part of a free plebiscite conducted under the auspices of the United Nations; for which no electoral exercise conducted by the Indian authorities could be a substitute. Those resolutions had been accepted by India and Pakistan, and were binding on both parties. Their implementation remained pending.

67. **Mr. Singh** (India), rejecting the remarks by the representative of Pakistan, encouraged her to engage in introspection about the direction of her country rather than abusing the right of reply and the time of the Committee.

68. **Ms. Sayed** (Pakistan), noting that she would refrain from suggesting that the representative of India would do well to reflect on his own country's domestic problems, said that the issue of Jammu and Kashmir could not be dismissed by empty rhetoric, as it would always be a major bone of contention between India and Pakistan. Durable peace and security in the region depended on a just and lasting settlement of that dispute in accordance with Security Council resolutions. Her Government was convinced that the United Nations was the most appropriate forum for raising the issue.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.